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SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF PROLONGED YOUTH JOBLESSNESS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF ANXIETY, FRUSTRATION, AND SOCIAL DEVIANCE

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Abstract

Youth unemployment is not only an economic condition but also a social and psychological experience that can undermine emotional well-being, personal identity, family relationships, and community participation. This study examines the reported socio-psychological consequences of prolonged unemployment among young people in Larkana District, with particular attention to anxiety, depressive symptoms, reduced self-confidence, social withdrawal, family tension, and perceived vulnerability to deviant behavior. The study is presented as an exploratory mixed-method investigation based on a purposive sample of 200 respondents and qualitative key-informant interviews, as described in the source research draft. The supplied survey summary reports severe levels of anxiety (52.1%), depressive episodes or despondency (48.6%), loss of self-confidence (65.2%), social withdrawal (39.5%), and behavioral difficulties such as insomnia or aggression (44.0%). It also reports that 78% of unemployed respondents experienced persistent household tension. These figures are reproduced as reported and should be interpreted cautiously because respondent-level data, scale descriptions, sampling details, and interview transcripts were not supplied for independent verification. The analysis is informed by Jahoda's latent deprivation approach and research synthesizing the relationship between unemployment and mental health. The paper argues that employment policy should incorporate accessible psychosocial support, family-sensitive counselling, career guidance, skills development, and community-based reintegration. It concludes that unemployment interventions are likely to be more responsive when they address both labor-market exclusion and the psychosocial pressures experienced by young people.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from education to employment is a major stage in the lives of young adults. Paid work can provide income, but it can also organise daily routines, create opportunities for social contact, support a sense of purpose, and contribute to personal status. When young people remain outside the labour market for extended periods, the absence of work may therefore affect more than household finances. It may influence how individuals understand their capabilities, how they relate to family members, and how they participate in community life. Unemployment is associated with poorer psychological well-being across a substantial body of research. A meta-analysis by McKee-Ryan et al. (2005), covering 104 empirical studies, found that unemployed people generally reported lower

psychological and physical well-being than employed people. Paul and Moser (2009), in a broader meta-analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, also found a meaningful association between unemployment and psychological distress, including depressive and anxiety-related symptoms. These findings do not mean that every unemployed person develops a mental health disorder. Rather, they indicate that unemployment can operate as a significant stressor, with effects shaped by duration, financial resources, social support, personal circumstances, and the availability of alternative roles. The issue is particularly important in settings where employment is closely connected to adult identity, family responsibility, and social respectability. In such contexts, prolonged joblessness may expose young people to repeated questions about their future, comparisons with employed peers, financial dependence, and expectations to contribute to household income. These pressures may intensify feelings of frustration and social exclusion. The experience is also not uniform: young women and men may face different barriers, while rural and urban youth may have unequal access to education, transport, digital connectivity, vocational training, and formal employment. The present study focuses on Larkana District and examines the reported psychological and social dimensions of prolonged youth unemployment. It considers anxiety, depressive symptoms, confidence, withdrawal, household tension, and the perceived relationship between frustration and social deviance. The study is intended to contribute a district-level perspective to discussions that often concentrate on aggregate labour-market indicators.

1.1 Background and Context

Pakistan's labour-market context illustrates why youth employment requires attention beyond the headline unemployment rate. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey 2020–21 reported a national youth unemployment rate of 11.1% for people aged 15–24 and a youth not-in-employment, education or training (NEET) rate of 32.5%. For Sindh, the reported NEET rate was 36.2%, with a marked gender difference: 10.3% for young males and 64.9% for young females (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2022). NEET is a broader indicator than unemployment because it includes young people who are neither employed nor participating in education or training; it should not be treated as an unemployment rate.

Internationally, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) reported that 64.9 million young people aged 15–24 were unemployed worldwide in 2023, while the global youth unemployment rate stood at 13%. The ILO also emphasised that recovery in employment indicators has not removed concerns about insecure work, unequal access to decent jobs, and young people's anxiety about employment prospects. These international and national indicators provide context, but they do not establish the specific unemployment rate or mental-health prevalence in Larkana District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Prolonged unemployment can create a cycle in which limited employment opportunities contribute to financial dependence and reduced social participation, while the resulting psychological distress may make job search and skill development more difficult. In Larkana District, the source study describes young unemployed people as experiencing anxiety, despondency, loss of confidence, family tension, and social withdrawal. However, the local evidence available for this expanded manuscript is presented only in aggregate form. The absence of respondent-level records and detailed measurement information makes it necessary to distinguish reported findings from independently verified clinical or causal conclusions. The central problem addressed by this study is therefore the limited understanding of how prolonged youth joblessness is experienced psychologically and socially at the household and community levels. It asks how unemployment is associated with distress and confidence, how family and community responses may intensify that experience, and how frustration may relate to vulnerability to harmful or socially disapproved coping behaviours.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How is prolonged unemployment associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional stability, and self-confidence among young people in Larkana District?
2. How do family expectations, financial dependence, social stigma, and community feedback shape the experiences of unemployed youth?
3. How do frustration and social alienation relate to young people's perceived vulnerability to substance misuse, petty crime, aggression, or other forms of deviant behaviour?
4. What forms of psychosocial, educational, and employment-related support may help reduce the adverse consequences of prolonged youth unemployment?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the reported prevalence of psychological and behavioural difficulties among unemployed youth in the study sample.
2. To explore the relationship between prolonged joblessness, self-confidence, and social participation.
3. To investigate the role of family tension, social stigma, and financial dependence in the lived experience of unemployment.
4. To examine perceived pathways between frustration, alienation, and vulnerability to harmful coping behaviours without assuming that unemployment inevitably causes crime or deviance.
5. To develop policy recommendations integrating employment services with psychosocial and community support.
6.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to labour economists, local government, educational institutions, mental-health practitioners, vocational training providers, and community organisations. It highlights the importance of treating unemployed youth as individuals facing interconnected economic, emotional, and social pressures rather than as a single labour-market category. Its district focus may also help policymakers consider how local institutions can connect career guidance, skills training, counselling, and family support.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Employment as a Source of Psychological Structure

Jahoda's (1982) latent deprivation approach explains that employment provides benefits beyond wages. These include time structure, social contact, collective purpose, status, and regular activity. Unemployment may remove or weaken access to these functions, leaving individuals with less predictable routines and fewer opportunities for social recognition. The framework is useful for understanding why financial assistance alone may not fully address the psychological consequences of joblessness.

The latent deprivation perspective does not imply that all paid employment is psychologically beneficial or that unemployment affects everyone in the same way. Work quality, job security, autonomy, workplace relationships, and personal circumstances matter. Nevertheless, the framework suggests that interventions for unemployed youth should provide structured activities, supportive social networks, meaningful participation, and opportunities to develop a sense of competence while employment is being sought.

2.2 Unemployment and Psychological Distress

Meta-analytic evidence indicates a consistent association between unemployment and reduced well-being. McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) found lower psychological and physical well-being among unemployed people across the studies they reviewed. Paul and Moser (2009) reported that unemployment was associated with higher levels of mental-health problems, including distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, and reduced self-esteem. The strength and direction of these relationships may vary across individuals and contexts, and longitudinal evidence is important because poor mental health can also make it harder to obtain or retain employment.

For this reason, the present study uses the terms 'reported anxiety symptoms' and 'depressive symptoms' when discussing the supplied survey

percentages. A questionnaire-based report cannot establish a clinical diagnosis unless the instrument, scoring procedure, cut-off points, and clinical assessment process are documented. The distinction is important for both research accuracy and responsible policy design.

2.3 Duration of Unemployment and the Experience of Job Search

The duration of unemployment may shape the way job seekers interpret repeated rejection and uncertain prospects. A short period without work may be understood as a temporary transition, whereas prolonged joblessness can weaken expectations of success and increase pressure from household members. The experience may also be affected by the availability of savings, family support, informal work, access to transport, digital resources, and the perceived fairness of recruitment processes.

The supplied study draft suggests that psychological difficulties become more pronounced when unemployment extends beyond 12 to 24 months. However, it does not provide a duration-by-symptom cross-tabulation, statistical coefficients, or significance tests. Accordingly, this manuscript treats the duration relationship as a proposition reported in the source narrative rather than as a quantified finding independently demonstrated by the available table.

2.4 Family Expectations, Stigma, and Social Relationships

Family relationships can serve as a protective resource during unemployment, but they can also become a source of pressure. Emotional support, practical assistance, and encouragement may reduce distress. By contrast, repeated criticism, comparisons with employed relatives, and expectations of immediate financial contribution may increase shame and conflict. Social stigma can also affect the unemployed person's willingness to attend gatherings, maintain friendships, or seek help.

The household is therefore an important setting for understanding unemployment. In communities where occupational achievement is strongly associated with adulthood and social standing, unemployment may be interpreted as an individual failure even when the causes are structural. Such interpretations can obscure the roles of limited job creation, skills mismatch, unequal access to opportunity, and economic constraints.

2.5 Frustration, Alienation, and Deviant Behaviour

Frustration-based explanations propose that blocked goals and perceived barriers can produce anger or distress. In the context of unemployment, repeated unsuccessful job searches and the inability to meet expected social roles may contribute to frustration. However, it would be inaccurate to assume that unemployed youth inevitably engage in crime, substance misuse, or other forms of deviance. Most unemployed people do not necessarily engage in harmful behaviour, and any observed association may be influenced by poverty, social exclusion, peer networks, substance availability, neighbourhood conditions, and access to support.

A careful analysis should therefore distinguish between (a) psychological distress, (b) perceived exposure to risky environments, and (c) actual involvement in specific behaviours. The source draft reports concerns about petty crime, substance abuse, and civil unrest but provides no prevalence estimates or individual-level evidence for these outcomes. These themes are consequently discussed as perceived risks and areas for further investigation, not as proven effects of unemployment in the sample.

2.6 Youth Employment and Policy Context

The ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 stresses that young people continue to face challenges related to decent work, insecurity, educational mismatch, and unequal opportunities. The report notes that active labour-market programmes can improve youth employment outcomes, particularly when interventions combine skills development, entrepreneurship support, employment services, and soft skills (ILO, 2024). For the present study, this supports a multi-dimensional policy response

in which vocational and job-placement services are connected with psychosocial support.

2.7 Research Gap

Much of the established literature examines unemployment and well-being at national or cross-national levels. The present study seeks to add a local perspective by focusing on the reported experiences of unemployed youth and families in Larkana District. Its contribution is exploratory: it brings together psychological symptoms, household tension, social withdrawal, and perceived behavioural risks within one district-focused framework. Stronger claims about prevalence, causation, or subgroup differences would require access to the original dataset and a more fully documented research protocol.

3. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is primarily informed by Jahoda's (1982) latent deprivation approach. It also draws on a general stress-process perspective in which prolonged exposure to an unwanted condition may generate psychological strain, while social support and coping resources can influence the intensity of that strain. Together, these perspectives provide a framework for examining how unemployment may affect both individual well-being and social relationships.

Conceptual component	Proposed mechanism	Possible outcome examined
Prolonged unemployment	Loss of income, routine, occupational identity, and access to work-related social contact	Financial dependence; reduced daily structure
Psychological strain	Repeated job-search setbacks and uncertainty	Anxiety symptoms; depressive symptoms; reduced confidence
Family and community response	Criticism, comparison, stigma, or supportive encouragement	Household tension; social withdrawal; perceived belonging
Coping resources	Counselling, peer support, skills training, meaningful activity	Resilience; help-seeking; continued job-search engagement
Risk context	Accumulated frustration combined with limited support and adverse environments	Potential vulnerability to harmful coping behaviours

The framework is explanatory rather than a tested causal model. The available data do not permit formal mediation or moderation analysis. In particular, the study cannot establish that unemployment alone causes deviant behaviour or that psychological symptoms directly produce criminal activity.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The source study describes an exploratory and descriptive mixed-method design. The quantitative component is based on a structured survey involving 200 respondents, while the qualitative component consists of semi-structured key-informant interviews. A mixed-method approach is appropriate for a topic that includes both measurable self-reported experiences and context-dependent accounts of family and community relationships. The manuscript retains this design as stated in the source material; however, further methodological particulars should be added from the original field records before journal submission.

4.2 Study Area and Population

The study area is Larkana District, Sindh, Pakistan. The target population is described as unemployed youth and family members. The source draft refers to youth aged 15–29 in its discussion, but it does not specify the precise eligibility criteria used during recruitment. The final study protocol should clarify the age range, minimum duration of unemployment, residence requirement, and whether family members were included in the same 200-person survey or interviewed separately.

4.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The source draft identifies a purposive sample of 200 respondents. Purposive sampling can be useful in exploratory research when participants are selected because they have direct experience of the issue. However, it does not provide every individual in the district with a known probability of selection. The findings should therefore be interpreted as sample descriptions rather than representative estimates for all unemployed youth in Larkana.

4.4 Data Collection Instruments

The source material states that structured questionnaires incorporated psychological self-assessment measures for anxiety, depression, and self-confidence. It does not identify the names or versions of these instruments, the language of administration, the scoring ranges, the cut-off values, or evidence of local validation. These details are essential. If standardised scales were used, the authors should report their full names, citations, reliability estimates for the present sample, translation procedures, and scoring rules. If the items were developed by the researcher, they should be described as researcher-developed indicators rather than validated clinical scales.

The qualitative component is described as semi-structured interviews with clinical psychologists, community leaders, social workers, and affected youth. The number of interviewees, recruitment process, interview duration, recording and transcription procedures, and language of interview are not specified in the supplied material. These details should be inserted from the fieldwork documentation.

4.5 Data Analysis

The source draft reports the use of descriptive statistics for survey data and thematic discourse analysis for interview transcripts. For a complete empirical report, the authors should provide frequencies and denominators for each item, explain how missing responses were handled, and report the statistical tests used to examine relationships between unemployment duration and symptom severity. If only descriptive statistics were calculated, the paper should avoid describing the results as statistically significant or as demonstrating correlation. For the qualitative component, a transparent thematic procedure should be reported, including familiarisation with transcripts, initial coding, theme development, review of themes, and selection of anonymised quotations. The final article should include representative quotations only if they are available in the original transcripts and can be used without identifying participants.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The source draft does not provide information about ethical approval, informed consent, confidentiality, or safeguarding procedures. Because the research concerns mental health and potentially sensitive behaviours, these matters must be documented before publication. Participants should have been informed about the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw, confidentiality protections, and referral options if an interview caused distress. Where participants were younger than 18 years, appropriate parental or guardian consent and participant assent procedures should be reported.

4.7 Methodological Limitations

The present expanded manuscript is constrained by the information available in the supplied draft. The raw dataset, questionnaire, scale names, interview guide, transcripts, sampling frame, and detailed fieldwork dates were not provided. Consequently, the percentages below are reproduced from the source summary and have not been recalculated. The sample is described as purposive, limiting generalisability. The cross-sectional and exploratory design, as described, cannot establish causation or determine whether

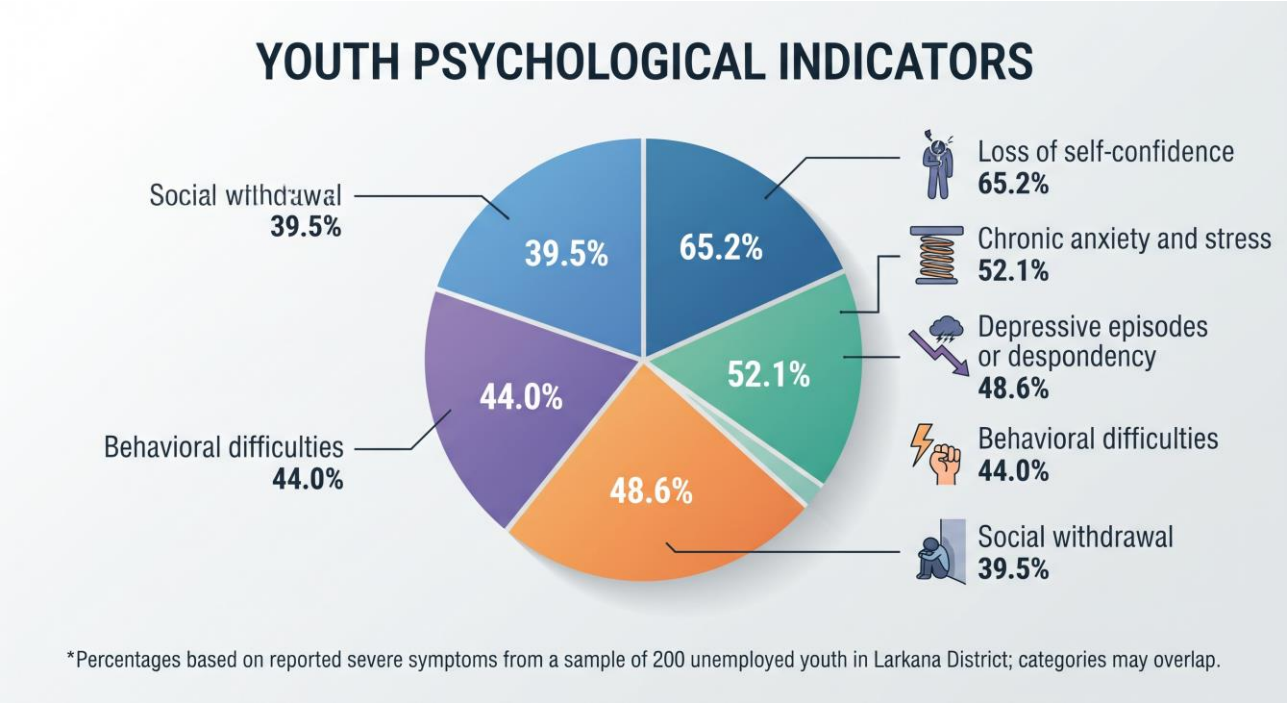
psychological distress preceded unemployment. Clinical diagnoses cannot be inferred from symptom percentages without documented diagnostic procedures.

5. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the numerical findings supplied in the original manuscript. The table is retained without altering the reported percentages. The source does not provide item-level counts or denominators, so percentages are not converted into respondent counts. It is also unclear whether the symptom categories were mutually exclusive or whether respondents could report more than one difficulty.

5.1 Reported Psychological Indicators

Psychological indicator / symptom	Mild to moderate (%)	Severe / clinical (%)
Chronic anxiety and stress	34.5	52.1
Depressive episodes / despondency	28.0	48.6
Loss of self-confidence	22.4	65.2
Social withdrawal / isolation	41.0	39.5
Behavioural difficulties (insomnia / aggression)	31.2	44.0



Aggregate survey figures reproduced from the supplied research draft. The original draft attributes the survey summary to 'Ikram (2010)', but a complete bibliographic record and the underlying dataset were not supplied. The figures therefore require confirmation by the author before publication.

The highest reported severe category is loss of self-confidence (65.2%), followed by chronic anxiety and stress (52.1%) and depressive episodes or despondency (48.6%). These values

suggest that confidence and emotional well-being are important areas for further investigation in the sample. They should not be described as clinical prevalence rates unless the underlying instrument and clinical thresholds justify that terminology.

5.2 Household Tension and Family Relationships

Reported social indicator	Percentage	Interpretation based on supplied draft
Respondents reporting persistent household tension	78%	A substantial proportion of the sample reportedly experienced tension at home in connection with unemployment.

The source draft associates household tension with financial dependence, criticism, comparisons with employed peers, and parental concern about future prospects. These explanations are plausible themes within the study's framing, but the supplied material does not include interview quotations or a breakdown by gender, age, or duration of unemployment. The 78% figure should therefore be reported as a descriptive finding from the source summary, not as a district-wide estimate.

5.3 Social Withdrawal and Perceived Risk Behaviours

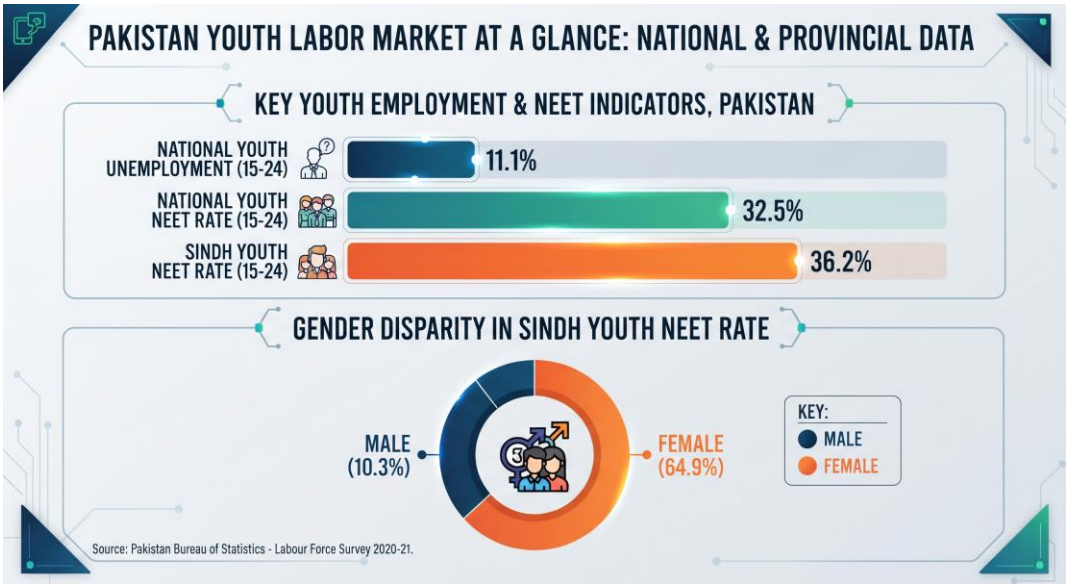
The supplied table reports severe social withdrawal or isolation for 39.5% of respondents. The narrative also identifies petty crime, substance abuse, aggression, and civil unrest as possible maladaptive outlets for frustration. However, no numerical estimates of involvement in these behaviours are provided. The manuscript therefore does not quantify the prevalence of social deviance and does not claim that unemployment caused criminal conduct. The qualitative component should be used to clarify whether respondents discussed personal involvement, observed community trends, fear of such risks, or general perceptions.

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5.4 National and Provincial Context

Indicator	Geographical coverage	Reported value	Reference / interpretation
Youth unemployment rate (15–24)	Pakistan	11.1%	PBS Labour Force Survey 2020–21
Youth NEET rate (15–24)	Pakistan	32.5%	Includes youth outside employment, education, and training; not equivalent to unemployment
Youth NEET rate (15–24)	Sindh	36.2%	PBS Labour Force Survey 2020–21
Male youth NEET rate (15–24)	Sindh	10.3%	PBS Labour Force Survey 2020–21
Female youth NEET rate (15–24)	Sindh	64.9%	PBS Labour Force Survey 2020–21

Source: PBS Labour Force Survey 2020–21. These figures provide wider context only; they are not estimates for Larkana District and are not directly comparable with the study's purposive sample.



6.

DISCUSSION

6.1 Psychological Consequences of Prolonged Joblessness

The reported survey pattern is consistent with research suggesting that unemployment can be associated with reduced psychological well-being. The prominence of low self-confidence in the supplied figures is particularly relevant to the latent deprivation perspective: work can provide opportunities for achievement, recognition, routine, and social contribution. When these functions are absent for an extended period, individuals may begin to question their competence or future prospects. The current data, however, do not establish the direction of causality or show whether confidence differed significantly across unemployment-duration groups.

The reported anxiety and depressive-symptom percentages also align with the broader evidence synthesised by McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) and Paul and Moser (2009). The comparison is conceptual rather than statistical because the measures, samples, and contexts differ. A stronger local analysis would compare respondents with different unemployment durations and, where possible, include an employed comparison group.

6.2 Family Pressure and Social Stigma

The reported 78% household-tension figure indicates that family relationships deserve attention in the interpretation of youth unemployment. Financial dependence may become a source of conflict when household resources are limited or when family members expect young adults to contribute economically. At the same time, families may be an important source of emotional and practical support. The policy implication is not to portray families as the cause of distress, but to recognise that families need information and support to respond constructively to prolonged joblessness.

6.3 Alienation and Social Participation

Social withdrawal can reduce access to informal job information, peer encouragement, and community support. This creates a potential feedback loop: unemployment may limit social participation, while withdrawal may reduce access to networks that can help with job search and skill development. Community activities, mentoring, and accessible employment services may help maintain social connection during periods without work.

6.4 Frustration and Deviance: A Cautious Interpretation

The source manuscript links frustration and alienation with possible involvement in harmful behaviours. This is an important policy concern, but the relationship should be treated carefully. Unemployment is not a sufficient explanation for criminality, substance misuse, or political unrest. Most unemployed youth should not be characterised as a threat to public order. Risk is likely to depend on a wider set of individual, household, institutional, and neighbourhood factors. Future research should use clearly defined behavioural measures and avoid stigmatising language.

6.5 Implications for Labour-Market Policy

The findings support a broader approach to youth employment policy. Skills training and job placement remain essential, but programmes may be more effective when they also provide career counselling, psychosocial support, structured peer activities, and referral pathways for people experiencing significant distress. The ILO (2024) similarly highlights the value of combined active labour-market interventions, including skills development, entrepreneurship support, employment services, and soft skills.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examines the socio-psychological dimensions of prolonged youth unemployment in Larkana District. The supplied survey summary reports substantial levels of severe anxiety and stress, depressive symptoms or despondency, loss of self-confidence, social withdrawal, and behavioural difficulties. It also reports persistent household tension among 78% of unemployed respondents. Taken together, these findings underline the importance of understanding unemployment as a condition that may affect psychological well-being, family relationships, and social participation as well as income.

The conclusions must remain proportionate to the available evidence. The study summary does not provide raw data, validated instrument details, interview transcripts, or a complete sampling and ethics record. The reported percentages should therefore be verified before publication, and references attributed to the original draft should be completed or replaced with traceable sources. The study does not establish that unemployment causes crime or that the reported symptom percentages represent clinical diagnoses. Its strongest contribution is to identify psychosocial concerns that deserve systematic investigation and policy attention.

8. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is exploratory and the available manuscript contains aggregate findings rather than the underlying data. The purposive sample of 200 cannot be assumed to represent all unemployed youth in Larkana. The supplied material does not identify the validated instruments, provide reliability estimates, or describe the interview sample and coding process. It also does not include a comparison group of employed youth or longitudinal observations. Future research should use a transparent sampling strategy, validated and culturally appropriate measures, clear definitions of prolonged unemployment, and a documented ethics protocol. A longitudinal design could help establish whether distress changes as unemployment continues or after participants enter work. Researchers should also examine differences by gender, education, rural/urban residence, household income, and access to social support.

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