

The Impact of Youth Unemployment on the Escalation of Social Problems: Evidence from Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

The situation of youth unemployment has emerged as one of the biggest socio-economic problems in Afghanistan, causing a host of social issues that pose a risk of community instability and sustainable development. Although it is important, there is still little empirical evidence on the linkage between youth unemployment and social issues in Nangarhar Province. The study looks into the role of youth unemployment in exacerbating social issues by questioning 232 respondents from the different groups of youth including unemployed youth, employed youth, students, informal workers and the community representatives using a structured questionnaire. The study has added value to the literature by supplying empirical evidence from a conflict affected area, and by analyzing the relationship between unemployment and various aspects of social issues in a unified framework. The study results show that youth unemployment is positively correlated with social issues (crime, drug abuse, psychological stress, violence and social instability) with statistically significant values. The regression analysis also shows that youth unemployment is a major determinant of social problems, and the research instrument also had high reliability and internal consistency. The results support the alternative hypothesis, where youth unemployment is one of the significant factors which can cause social problems in Nangarhar Province. The results of the study have significant policy and research implications with focus on the comprehensive employment creation, vocational training, support of youth entrepreneurs and targeted youth development programs for the reduction of youth unemployment, social cohesion in Afghanistan and sustainable socio-economic development.

KEYWORDS: Youth Unemployment, Social Problems, Crime, Social Instability, Employment

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is one of the more pressing socio-economic issues in developing countries and especially in countries that are politically unstable, economically constrained, experiencing a fast population growth, and with limited employment opportunities. Unemployment among young people has emerged as a significant issue in Afghanistan, given that many of the country's population are young people, affecting economic growth, social integration and stability in the nation (Rashedi & Behzad, 2025). The lack of decent jobs for youth not only decreases their economic involvement but makes them more vulnerable to poverty and other social issues. Hence, having an understanding of the link between youth employment and some social problems is critical for effective approaches to achieving sustainable development and social stability.

Past research focused on youth unemployment has been conducted largely from an economic lens analyzing unemployment rates, including economic growth, income inequality, poverty and education-labor market mismatch. These studies have shown that unemployment has negative impact on livelihoods of individuals and affects their productivity at national level (Rao, 2025). Other studies have been conducted on the social impact of youth unemployment, which indicate a correlation between joblessness and crime, drug use, psychological stress, social exclusion, and insecurity in young people. If young people are not able to contribute to the economy in an effective way, they may feel frustrated, hopeless and excluded from their communities, which can lead to their engagement in negative social behaviours (Mensah, 2026).

In Afghanistan, the conflict, inadequate economic institutions, lack of industrial development, lack of investment and labor market instability have exacerbated youth unemployment over the years (Pooya, 2025). While unemployment was identified by several studies as a significant economic problem, most previous research has examined unemployment at the national level or the direct economic impacts. There is little research and attention paid to the effects of youth unemployment on the formation and worsening of certain social issues in each province in Afghanistan. This restriction leads to a big gap in knowledge, especially regarding the impact of unemployment on young people in their local community.

Refers to a special context that needs to be studied separately as a result of its socio-economic and security situation. The province has some problems such as low employment opportunities, poor industrialization, population pressure, economic problems, and labor market constraints. These have introduced extra obstacles for educated and uneducated youth to secure sustainable employment. In addition, the gap between education and employment has contributed to a rise in the unemployment rates of the educated among youth, meaning that when there are jobs available, they lack the skills that are required. (Bashir et al., 2024; Yar & Noori, 2024).

These problems can have a negative social impact and result in local instability (Gluckman et al., 2023; Jenson, 2019).

While some of the earlier studies in Afghanistan and elsewhere have studied the unemployment and its impacts, few studies have empirically analyzed the direct linkages between youth unemployment and social issues in Nangarhar Province. In the existing literature, the link between youth unemployment and various aspects of social problems such as crime, drug abuse, psychological stress, violence, and social instability has not been given adequate attention in relation to a specific province. Hence, the need of context-specific research which can give empirical facts regarding social impacts of youth unemployment in Nangarhar province is considered.

This study proposes to focus on the relationships between youth unemployment and rising social issues in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, to fill these gaps. This study is different from past studies, which primarily addressed the economic dimensions of unemployment, because it looks at the social implications of youth unemployment and how unemployment is associated with other social problems in the community such as crime, drug addiction, social instability, and other issues. It is a contribution to the extant literature because of the evidence it provides from a conflict affected province and practical recommendations it offers to anyone interested in youth employment and social development, including policy makers, development agencies, and stakeholders.

Hence the primary aim of this study is to study the effect of youth unemployment on social issues in Nangarhar Province. The study, specifically, addresses the link between youth unemployment and crime, drug abuse, social instability and sustainable social development and how to reduce the unemployment and increase the social stability of youth in Afghanistan.

1.1 Research Problem

The issue of youth unemployment is a serious socio-economic problem in Afghanistan, especially for young people, which lack employment opportunities, investment, skills, and continue to struggle with economic and security issues. Compared to other groups, youth are one of the most vulnerable in the labour market in Afghanistan, where they have limited access to decent work and are highly susceptible to fluctuations in economic conditions (ILO, 2023). In addition, Afghanistan's population demographics are young and very large shares of the population are entering the labour force annually, thereby further compounding the challenges of employment and economic resources (UNFPA, 2022). The fall in economic activities and lack of private sector growth have additionally decreased employment chances for youth (World Bank, 2023).

These are compounded in Nangarhar Province due to low levels of industrialization, reliance on informal employment, inadequate investment opportunities and socio-economic fragility. Youth unemployment, which is growing, could have adverse economic consequences for young people and also lead to other social issues, such as poverty, crime, drug abuse, psychological stress or social instability. But, due to its significant position this topic, there is very little empirical study done on direct linkage between youth unemployment and the aggravation of social issues in Nangarhar Province. The current study has concentrated on the economic side of unemployment at national level and has neglected its social implications in the context of specific provinces.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap of the study by examining the effect of youth unemployment on social issues in Nangarhar Province. In particular, the study investigates the role of youth unemployment in relation to crime, drug addiction, social disintegration and other social issues at the community level and the main factors that have a bearing on the impact of unemployment on social problems. The results of this research should serve as evidence to inform the creation of effective employment and youth development strategies that are specific to their area.

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 Main Objective

- This study is designed to investigate effect of youth unemployment on the increase in social problems in Nangarhar province.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- To explore and determine the main reasons behind youth unemployment in Nangarhar Province.
- To investigate the relationship between the youth unemployment and social problems.
- To review the impacts of unemployment on young people on a social and psychological level.
- To determine the proportion to which the youth unemployment is responsible for the social instability in the province.
- To debate education and skill development as a key element to solve the youth employment issue.
- Analyse the link between youth unemployment and social issues to produce evidence for informed policies in Nangarhar Province.

1.3 Research Question

- What are the main factors contributing to youth unemployment in Nangarhar Province?
- Is there a significant relationship between youth unemployment and social problems in Nangarhar Province?
- What are the social and psychological effects of youth unemployment on the young people in Nangarhar Province?

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- How much is youth unemployment the cause of social instability in Nangarhar Province?
 - What is the significance of education and skills development in combating youth unemployment in Nangarhar Province?
 - Is there any relationship between youth unemployment and social problems, which gives evidence for informed policymaking in Nangarhar Province?

1.4 Hypothesis

H1: Relationship between Youth Unemployment and Social Problems

H2: Social and Psychological Effects of Youth Unemployment

H3: Youth Unemployment and Social Instability

H4: Employment, Skills Development and Youth Employment

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is important as it explores the relationship between youth unemployment and social problems in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. It adds to the current body of literature by adding empirical data to the existing data on the social costs of youth unemployment in terms of crime, drug abuse, psychological stress, and social instability.

The results can inform policymakers, governmental bodies, developmental bodies, and education bodies in designing relevant job creation, education, and skills development initiatives for young people. The study can further contribute to the strengthening of the employability, social integration and social and economic stability of young people in Nangarhar Province.

Lastly, this study is helpful for further research on youth unemployment and the social consequences of it in Afghanistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 International Views on Youth Employment

Youth unemployment has been recognized as a major socio-economic problem, affecting sustainable development around the world. The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2023), the World Bank (2024), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2022) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2021). The youth unemployment rate in developing and conflict-affected countries is significantly higher than for adults. On the main factors contributing to youth unemployment, there is a consensus among these organizations that

employment opportunities are scarce, rapid population growth, weak economic structures, political instability, and skills mismatch are the main contributors. Despite the consensus, their vocabularies vary in focus. The ILO mainly emphasizes on labour market indicators and employment trends while the World Bank emphasizes on the macroeconomic implications of unemployment, including a decrease in productivity and economic growth. UNDP focuses on the overall context of human development, such as poverty, social exclusion issues, and community insecurity, while ADB focuses on the quality of education and vocational training and on labor market policies. The differences show that youth unemployment is a multi-dimensional issue and has to be addressed from both an economic and social policy perspective.

2.2 Youth Unemployment and Social Problems

The literature is extensive and shows that youth unemployment contributes, and does not solely contribute to social problems in addition to its negative economic impact. The longer young people remain unemployed, the stronger the risk of drug abuse, violence and crime, especially in fragile societies, and of social unrest, says UNDP (2022). In the same way, Tariq (2026) notes that the chances of being socially marginalized, of having limited civic involvement or of being excluded from society for good are higher among the youth who lack employment. The United Nations (2021) also highlights that unemployment has a negative impact on the engagement of youth in community development and governance.

While there are constant claims of adverse social effects, the studies vary in their analytical approaches. International organizations are primarily using national and cross-country data while empirical academic studies are those focused on single social outcomes and applying quantitative statistical methods. For instance, using econometric methods, Raphael and Winter-Ebmer (2001) were able to determine that there was a significant positive correlation between unemployment and property crime. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023) found that youth without jobs are at higher risk of experiencing drug abuse and engaging in illegal economic activities, especially in areas where there are limited employment opportunities. Although the different studies used different methodology and geographical scope, they all come to the same conclusion that youth unemployment is a risk for social instability.

2.3 Education, Skills Development and Employability

There is a large literature documenting that youth are not only suffering from joblessness, but that youth unemployment is a major cause of social issues. The absence of employment for a prolonged period among youth puts them at higher risk of crime, violence, drug abuse, and social unrest, especially in fragile societies,

according to UNDP (2022). Likewise, Tariq (2026) identifies that the social marginalization of youth without jobs can be correlated with a decrease in civic participation and long-term social exclusion. The United Nations (2021) also points out unemployment affects the involvement of the youth in community development and governance.

These studies consistently point to negative social outcomes, but vary in their mode of analysis. International organizations predominantly use national and cross-country data and empirical academic research focuses on particular social outcomes and applies quantitative statistical methods. Citing the results of Raphael and Winter-Ebmer (2001), who used an econometric approach, they found a positive correlation between unemployment and property crime. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023) found that young people with no employment are at a higher risk of drug abuse and engaging in illegal economic activities especially when economic opportunities are restricted. Although the various studies are conducted in different ways and cover different regions, all studies have found that youth unemployment is a risk factor for social instability.

2.4 Psychological effects of young unemployment

Additionally, previous studies have shown the psychological implications of youth unemployment. According to Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory, the consequences of unemployment extend beyond the loss of income, affecting also social identity, purpose, and psychological well-being. In line with this theoretical approach, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that young people who are unemployed are much more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, stress and low self-esteem (González-Rodríguez et al., 2024). Despite the variety of theories and ways psychological measures are taken, studies show that prolonged unemployment has negative consequences on mental health and indirectly to other social issues.

2.5 Afghanistan Context of Youth Unemployment

Afghanistan has one of the toughest labour market conditions in the world, resulting from long-term conflict, political instability, a contracting economy and a lack of private-sector investment (Pooya, 2025), and despite a recovery following 2021, employment is noticeably lower, especially for young people and women. According to the World Bank (2024), the economic slowdown has decreased the demand for labour, deepened poverty, and widened informal jobs, with a particular lack of sustainable employment opportunities for educated young people in Afghanistan. Likewise, Pooya (2025) states that Afghanistan has undergone an inverted structural

change from relatively productive industries to less productive agriculture and informal jobs, which also led to its economic growth lagging behind and higher youth unemployment.

A few other Afghan scholars have also studied the causes of unemployment. According to Aziz (2021), the factors leading to unemployment in Afghanistan are insecurity, high population growth rate, low level of industrial development, low level of private sector investment, and increasing youth population. The study further contends that the long-term impact of unemployment on the Afghan youth elevates their economic dependence, dissatisfaction with their social status and intentions to migrate. The results of this study show that unemployment in Afghanistan is not only an economic problem, but also multidimensional social problem that is related to national stability and development.

2.6 Youth Unemployment and Social Problems in Afghanistan and Nangarhar Province

The impact of youth unemployment on society is very clear in eastern provinces of Afghanistan, including Nangarhar Province. Nangarhar's youthful population and its long history of security problems, internal displacement and cross-border migration has caused significant strains on the local labour market. The National Statistics and Information Authority (Wasimi & Qaid, 2022) indicates that Nangarhar has witnessed high population growth rate and high proportion of youth in the labour force with limited employment opportunities. The Afghanistan Socio-Economic Outlook (Pooya, 2026) also suggests that the high unemployment rates have led to an increase in poverty, social vulnerability, and household insecurities in the country.

According to the previous studies unemployment of Afghan young people is related to some social issues. Aziz (2021) suggests that a long period of unemployment has the potential to lead to criminal activity, drug abuse, social frustration, and irregular migration. Similarly, UNODC (2023) found that economic deprivation and unemployment are also significant risk factors for drug use and engagement in illicit economic activities in Afghanistan. These studies recognize the link between unemployment and social issues but they concentrate on national level, and offer limited empirical data, in particular from Nangarhar Province. Therefore, there is a lack of quantitative data that has been able to explain how youth unemployment affects youth's psychological health, social instability and drug use in Nangarhar.

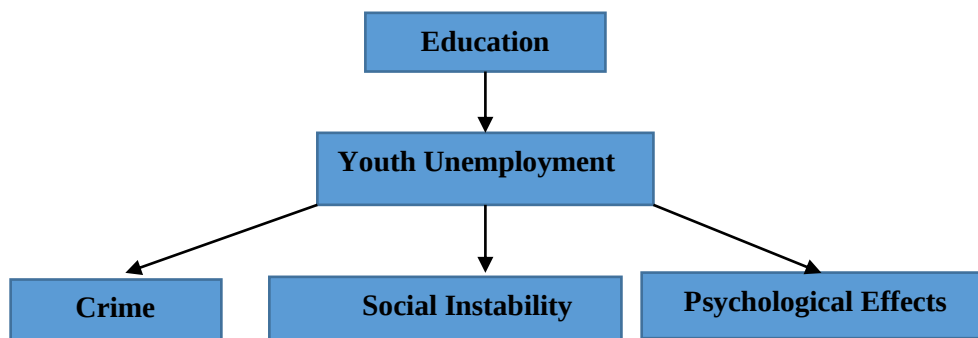
2.7 Research Gap

Previous international studies offer a wealth of evidence on the causes and effects of youth unemployment, but there are some important gaps in the literature. First, the majority of the existing studies are conducted at the

national or cross-country level, and not at the provincial or local level. Second, previous Afghan studies are mainly on the economic dimension of unemployment and offer little empirical data directly linking unemployment with crime rates, drug abuse, psychological distress, and social instability. Third, very few studies incorporate several aspects of social problems in one analytical perspective with quantitative statistical analyses. So, there is not much of empirical evidence to explain the relation between youth unemployment and social problems in the Nangarhar Province.

Hence, the present study aims to fill the above gaps by empirical evidence from Nangarhar Province of Afghanistan. It is a unique study in that it looks at the impact of youth unemployment on a number of social issues such as crime, drug abuse, psychological impacts and social instability all at the same time. This study uses quantitative statistical analysis, such as the correlation and regression analysis, to provide context-specific evidence that can be used to supplement the academic literature and evidence-based policymaking in the field of youth employment and social development in Afghanistan.

2.8 Conceptual Framework



The conceptual link between education, youth unemployment, crime, social instability and psychological effects is shown. Education is regarded as one of the significant factors affecting young people's employability. Less education can be a factor in higher youth unemployment. Youth unemployment, in turn, is suggested as the independent variable that can increase the risk of crime, social instability, and adverse psychological consequences for youth. The framework proposes that better education and employment opportunities for young people can help to reduce youth unemployment rates, which in turn can lead to reduced crime rates, increased social stability, and improved mental health.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative in nature to investigate the correlation between youth unemployment and social problems which tend to rise with youth unemployment in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. In conducting the study, the researcher uses descriptive and analytical research methods. The gathered information is statistically processed to determine the impact of youth unemployment on social issues such as crime, social instability and psychological impacts.

3.2 Study Area

This study took place in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The province has been chosen because it has a high youth population and is encountering several socio-economic issues such as unemployment, poverty, and mounting social issues. Nangarhar is an area, which is suitable to analyse the linkage between youth unemployment and social problems of youth.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population in this study is young people aged 18-35 years, both unemployed and employed youth, and relevant stakeholders with first-hand experience of the issue of youth unemployment and its associated social impacts. The study population comprises university students/graduates, informal workers, educators, community representatives, government officials and community social activists' representatives.

Table 1: Population

No.	Category	Population
1	Unemployed Youth	180
2	Employed Youth	120
3	University Students/Graduates	90
4	Informal Workers	70
5	Educators and Community Representatives	40
6	Government and Local Officials	25
7	Social Activists and NGO Representatives	25
Total Population		550

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Stratified random sampling technique was used to have proportional representation of different groups within the target population. Stratified sampling was used as it was deemed suitable as the population includes different social and occupational categories. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = total population size

e = margin of error (0.05)

By applying the formula:

$$n = \frac{550}{1 + 550(0.05)^2} = \frac{550}{2.375} = 232$$

Therefore, the final sample size of this study was 232 respondents.

Table 2: Sample

Category	Population	Sample Size
Unemployed Youth	180	76
Employed Youth	120	51
University Students/Graduates	90	38
Informal Workers	70	30
Educators and Community Representatives	40	17
Government and Local Officials	25	10
Social Activists and NGO Representatives	25	10
Total	550	232

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected with a structured questionnaire for the study. A questionnaire was used with closed-ended questions that used a five-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was based on the following areas:

- Youth unemployment conditions;
- Social issues including crime, drug abuse and social instability;
- Factors that may account for the variations in the psychological effects of unemployment
- Education and work experience.

3.5 Instrument Development

The research instrument was designed with reference to previous studies and material from relevant theory regarding the youth unemployment and social problems. The questionnaire was divided into different sections to measure demographic characteristics, unemployment factors, social problems, psychological effects, and educational factors.

Respondents' perceptions were measured using a five point Likert-scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.6 Variables of the Study

The study includes the following variables:

3.6.1 Independent Variable

- Youth Unemployment

3.6.2 Dependent Variables

Social problems in this study are the negative social effects of youth unemployment against the property and financial crimes (theft, robbery and fraud), drug abuse (drug use and addiction), social instability (family conflicts, community insecurity and violent behavior) and psychological effects (stress, anxiety and depression, loss of self-confidence).

3.6.3 Control Variables

- Age

-
- Gender
 - Marital Status
 - Education Level
 - Employment Status

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was checked by experts in the field of the social sciences and research methodology to ensure its validity. The suggestions they made to them were taken on board to make the items clearer and more relevant. A preliminary test was carried out prior to the actual data collection. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.70 or higher were deemed as acceptable internal consistency.

3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The statistical technique used are as follows:

- Demographic and research variables were summarized using descriptive statistics, frequency, and percentage, mean, and standard deviation.
- Inferential statistics: Correlation and regression analysis were conducted to analyse the relationship between youth unemployment and social problems.
- Data classification: Data were classified by relevant categories based on the characteristics of the respondents.
- Where possible, time-based information was analysed to establish patterns of social problems (trend analysis).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3: Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	63.79
	Female	84	36.21
Age Group	15–18 years	38	16.38

	19–22 years	74	31.90
	23–26 years	82	35.34
	27–29 years	38	16.38
Educational Level	No Formal Education	18	7.76
	Primary Education	34	14.66
	Secondary Education	61	26.29
	Higher Secondary Education	57	24.57
	University Education	62	26.72
Employment Status	Employed	51	21.98
	Unemployed	126	54.31
	Self-employed	32	13.79
	Informal Work	23	9.92
Respondent Category	Unemployed Youth	76	32.76
	Employed Youth	51	21.98
	University Students/Graduates	38	16.38
	Informal Workers	30	12.93
	Educators & Community Representatives	17	7.33
	Government & Local Officials	10	4.31
	Social Activists & NGO Representatives	10	4.31
Total		232	100

Table 3 shows the socio-demographic data of the respondents. The study was conducted with 232 respondents from various social and occupational groups of Nangarhar Province. In terms of gender, a majority of the respondents were males (63.79%) and the female's respondents constituted 36.21% of the sample size.

As regard the age segmentation, the age group of 23 to 26 years had the largest share of respondents (35.34%) while for 19 to 22 years, 31.90% of the respondents were present. The respondents aged 15-18 years and 27-29 years accounted for 16.38 % of the sample. The age groups of 15-18 years and 27-29 years made up 16.38 % of the sample.

As far as educational qualification is concerned, the most significant group was the university educated (26.72%), with the secondary (26.29%) and higher secondary (24.57%) education groups coming next. Fewer people could be found with primary education (14.66%) or no education at all (7.76%).

From the employment status, over half of the respondents were unemployed (54.31%), 21.98% were employed, 13.79% self-employed, and 9.92% were engaged in informal work. This distribution reflects the focus of the study on the examination of the relationship between the problem of youth unemployment and social problems.

The majority of the youth were unemployed (32.76%), followed by employed youth (21.98%) and university students/graduates (16.38%) based on categories of respondents. The presence of teachers, government officials, community members, and representatives from NGOs added a different level of perspectives on the social impacts of youth unemployment.

4.1 Reliability and Validity

Standardized question items were used to measure youth unemployment and social problems, which was used in Nangarhar Province in this study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability and internal consistency of the instruments. The validity and reliability of these scales as indexes of unemployment-related problems and social problems like crime, drug abuse, psychological stress and social instability have been confirmed with previous studies. The instrument reliability was determined using the Cronbach's alpha technique, which was seen to be acceptable if the alpha value was more than 0.70 (based on Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Table 4: Reliability and Validity

Scale / Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Youth Unemployment Scale	4	0.88	Good Internal Consistency
Limited Job Opportunities for Youth	Included in scale		
Lack of Skills Causes Unemployment	Included in scale		
Education is Not Enough for Employment	Included in scale		
Educated Youth are Still Unemployed	Included in scale		
Social Problems Scale	6	0.90	Excellent Internal Consistency
Unemployment Increases Crime	Included in scale		
Unemployment Leads to Drug Abuse	Included in scale		
Psychological Stress and Depression	Included in scale		
Violence and Social Instability	Included in scale		
Social Isolation among Youth	Included in scale		
Engagement in Illegal Activities	Included in scale		
Overall Research Instrument	10	0.89	High Reliability

Cronbach alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of research instrument. The findings in Table 4 reveal that the internal consistency of all the major constructs were considered acceptable. The Youth Unemployment Scale was comprised of 4 questions, and had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.88, which is considered good reliability. Likewise, the Social Problems Scale (six items) had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, indicating excellent internal consistency.

The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.89, indicating high reliability of the questionnaire and thus appropriate to measure the relationship between youth unemployment and social problems in the Nangarhar Province.

A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or higher is considered as acceptable reliability; 0.80 or higher, good reliability; and 0.90 or higher, excellent internal consistency (as per the commonly accepted research standards).

Table 5: Correlation Analysis between Youth Unemployment and Social Problems

Variables	Spearman's Rho (ρ)	p-value	Significance Level
Youth Unemployment & Social Problems	0.72	<0.01	Statistically Significant

As seen in Table 5, the values of correlation analysis indicate a significant relationship that is positive between youth unemployment and social problems ($\rho = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the more youth are unemployed, the more serious social issues are likely to be, such as crime, social instability, and psychological issues. The correlation coefficient has a high value, indicating a strong correlation between the two variables.

Table 6: ANOVA Test for Regression Model (Effect of Youth Unemployment on Social Problems)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig. (p-value)
Regression	642.18	1	642.18	978.45	<0.001
Residual	150.72	230	0.655		
Total	792.90	231			

The ANOVA results presented in Table 6 indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 978.45$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that youth unemployment significantly predicts social problems among respondents in Nangarhar Province. The significant F-value confirms that the regression model provides a better explanation of variations in social problems compared to a model without predictors.

The result supports the hypothesis that youth unemployment has a statistically significant effect on increasing social problems.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients Analysis (Effect of Youth Unemployment on Social Problems)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t- value	Sig. (p- value)
(Constant)	0.714	0.041	—	17.41	<0.001
Youth Unemployment	0.127	0.022	0.118	5.772	0.003

The regression coefficients presented in Table 7 show that youth unemployment has a positive and statistically significant effect on social problems. The coefficient for youth unemployment ($B = 0.127$, $\beta = 0.118$, $t = 5.772$, $p = 0.003$) indicates that an increase in youth unemployment is associated with an increase in social problems.

The significant p-value (<0.05) confirms that youth unemployment is a significant predictor of social problems among respondents in Nangarhar Province. Therefore, the study hypothesis that youth unemployment significantly contributes to increasing social problems is supported.

4.2 DISCUSSION

From the above results, it is observed that there is a significant and positive correlation between youth unemployment and increase in social problems in Nangarhar province in Afghanistan. The correlation analysis revealed a strong correlation of ($\rho = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) and the regression analysis revealed that youth unemployment is significant in predicting social problems ($B = 0.127$, $\beta = 0.118$, $p = 0.003$). The findings support the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that increase in youth unemployment is one of the factors that will increase the level of social problems.

The results are consistent with the latest research showing that youth unemployment has economic, psychological, social and behavioral consequences for the youth, such as higher risk of poverty, mental health issues, marginalization and involvement in risky behaviors, including drug abuse and criminality (Vancea & Utzet, 2017; Rahman et al., 2024). New evidence also indicates that limiting the availability of jobs can be detrimental to social stability and social security, particularly in conflict-affected and developing countries (UNDP, 2024; World Bank, 2025).

The results show that the regression effect size is medium, but unemployment is an important factor in the social problems in the province. The moderate value of the β coefficient suggests that socioeconomic issues such as poverty, lack of education, feeling unsafe, and poor economic status may also be contributing to the growing social issues (Chen et al., 2012).

Moreover, the socio-economic situation of Afghanistan, such as the political instability, lack of investment in the private sector and inadequate vocational training programs, can exacerbate the negative impacts of youth unemployment (ILO, 2023; UNICEF, 2025). A lack of employment and distress for many young people puts them at risk for social isolation, drug abuse and crime (Goroso et al., 2025).

To conclude, it is evident that there is a pressing need for employment generation programmes, vocational education and training courses, entrepreneurship support and youth development policies in Nangarhar Province to combat the worryingly high unemployment rate and to help ensure social stability. Further studies should focus more on other socio-economic and environmental factors which influence youth-related social issues in Afghanistan.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that youth unemployment is not only an economic problem but also a great socio-economic issue which affects the overall social development of Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The results reveal that declining opportunities for youth can have a negative impact on social cohesion, individual health and wellbeing and community stability. Thus, there is a need to tackle the issue of youth unemployment in an all-encompassing manner that takes into account economic opportunities and social development requirements.

The study stresses the importance of creating better employment opportunities for youth to advance sustainable development and lessen the vulnerabilities of youth. The establishment of decent employment, vocational and technical education, through entrepreneurship and linking education and the labour market needs are important strategies that help to empower young people and improve their contribution to society.

Moreover, the problem of youth unemployment needs to be tackled collectively by joint action by the government institutions, education institutions, private sector and development partners. Youth skills development, inclusive economic growth and employment generation policies can help to ensure social stability and long-term development.

Finally, unemployment among the youth should be considered a multidimensional development problem that needs a multi-faceted policy approach. Developing the capacity of the young people and ensuring they have the opportunity of a decent economic future can build social resilience and contribute to a more stable and prosperous future for Nangarhar Province and Afghanistan.

5.1 Recommendations

On the basis of the results from this study, the following specific policy recommendations are made that can have an impact on alleviating youth unemployment and the social issues related to that in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.

First, labour-market reforms should be sought that would enhance the link between educational systems and the labour market. Labour-market needs and needs of young people should be regularly reviewed by government institutions and academics and vocational education and training designed to equip young people with the skills they need in the current and emerging labour markets.

Secondly, targeted youth employment programmes must be implemented, especially for unemployed and vulnerable youth. Such programmes should comprise short-term employment programmer, internships, career guidance programmes and skill-development programmer, among others, to enable youth to move from no work or out of school to productive employment.

Third, youth entrepreneurship must be promoted with easily available financing options such as Small Business Grants, Microfinance facilities and Business Development services. Special financial assistance must be given to the young entrepreneurs in Nangarhar Province for promoting the establishment of small and medium enterprises and self-employment opportunities.

Fourth, public–private partnerships must be strengthened to create more employment. The government should work with private sector, university and NGO to develop employment packages, training in the workplace and development of market oriented skills.

Fifthly, the vocational and technical training centres should be strengthened and their programmes aligned to the economic opportunities and labour-market needs in the area. Training areas need to be determined according to the employment opportunities of Nangarhar Province such as agriculture, information technology, construction, trade and small industries.

Lastly, targeted policies for marginalized and vulnerable youth, such as community-based and psychological support services and inclusive employment policies, should be given special attention. These interventions can be effective to lower the social vulnerability and promote sustainable social and economic development in Nangarhar Province.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted in Nangarhar Province; thus, results from this Province may not be entirely applicable to other provinces of Afghanistan. Data was also collected through self-report, and therefore subject to individual bias. Furthermore, the number of respondents, and the method of data collection, could have been affected by time and resource constraints. Other factors, including poverty, insecurity and economic conditions were not fully explored.

Future studies, similar to this study should be expanded in larger samples and multiple research methods across other provinces in Afghanistan. Other factors like poverty, education, insecurity and government policies on youth unemployment and social issues should be studied in the future.

5.3 Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in relation to this research

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