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A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan: Insights from Lower Dir Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ¹ Rizwan Ullah ² Tauqeer Abdullah ³ Shahid Khan ⁴ Latif Ullah ⁵

Abstract: *A Paradigm-Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan has deep-rooted socio-economic implications, particularly affecting students and young graduates. The Lower Dir region within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa serves as a unique context for examining the multi-faceted dynamics shaping students' evolving perceptions of job security. Our study investigates these factors and their impact on students in this region, aiming to offer comprehensive insights into the shifting paradigms of job security. The research uses Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift theory as a theoretical framework to explore changing perceptions of job security. The conceptual framework delves into socio-economic factors impacting students' perceptions in the Lower Dir region. The study universe encompasses students within Lower Dir, focusing on understanding their evolving attitudes regarding job security. Sampling methods employed the Sekaran table to determine a sample size of 327 from the total population of 3,426. Data collection involved structured interviews with a Likert scale. SPSS software was used for data analysis, including univariate and bi-variate analyses and a T-Test to understand the association between variables. The research suggests addressing socio-economic determinants to shape students' perceptions, informing policy-making and educational interventions. The study recommended that policy interventions should align educational curricula with industry demands, fostering entrepreneurial skills and providing career guidance.*

Key Words: Paradigm-Shift, Globalization, Technological, Socio-Economic, Implications

Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of Pakistan's socio-economic dynamics, the pursuit of job security has remained a fundamental aspiration for the country's youth (Muzamil et al., 2021). This pursuit is deeply ingrained in the cultural and societal fabric, where stable employment not only signifies the realization of personal ambitions but also serves as a crucial pathway towards broader socio-economic stability and prosperity (Ullah et al., 2023). Job security, for students and young graduates, is not just a career objective; it embodies the hope for a better quality of life, financial security, and social well-being (Ali et al., 2023). However, the notion of job security in Pakistan is far from static; it is a concept in flux, continually adapting to the shifting forces that characterize the modern world (Khan & Wei, 2016). These forces, most notably globalization, technological advancements, and the intricate interplay of local economic conditions, have reshaped the very nature of job security (Siddique, 2011).

Globalization has woven Pakistan into the intricate fabric of the global economy, and this interconnection has created new opportunities for economic growth, trade, and cultural exchange. (Maqsood et al., 2019). According to Shah (2015), it has also exposed the country to increased competition and market fluctuations, significantly impacting the job market. Students now find themselves preparing for careers in a world where their potential employers may be located anywhere on the globe and where industries can be transformed by international events and trends (Choudhry et al., 2018). Technological advancements have ushered in a digital revolution, fundamentally altering the nature of work where

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

² Demonstrator, Department of Sociology, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Timergara Campus, KP, Pakistan.

³ PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

⁴ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Sociology, Lahore Leads University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁵ Lecturer, Department of Criminology, University of Malakand, Lower Dir, KP, Pakistan.

▪ **Corresponding Author:** Muhammad Ibrahim Khan (mibrahimkhanuom@gmail.com)

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automation, artificial intelligence, and the gig economy have blurred the lines between traditional job roles and created new ones (Siddiqi, 2022). Local economic conditions play a pivotal role in determining the availability and nature of job opportunities (Ali et al., 2017). Pakistan's economy is characterized by its diversity, with varying levels of development across regions (Aman, 2022). This regional economic heterogeneity introduces another layer of complexity to the pursuit of job security where students in different regions, such as the Lower Dir area under investigation, may face distinct challenges and opportunities based on the local economic landscape.

The Lower Dir region, situated in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, presents a unique microcosm in which to explore the intricate interplay of socio-economic factors that are reshaping the aspirations and experiences of students regarding job security. This study embarks on a rigorous investigation into the multi-faceted dynamics influencing the shifting paradigms of job security among students in this region. This study delves into the profound influence of socio-economic factors on students' career decisions and job security perceptions, particularly in Lower Dir, Pakistan. As the region grapples with a shifting job market, this research aims to illuminate these influences, offering insights applicable to the broader Pakistani context. By understanding and addressing the factors shaping students' aspirations, this study contributes to better equipping the next generation of Pakistan's workforce to navigate the evolving job landscape and uncertainties, thereby fostering the nation's future prosperity.

Justification

This research focused on investigating the socio-economic factors reshaping the concept of job security among students, which is well-justified for several compelling reasons. Lower Dir, within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, presents a distinct socio-economic context that differs significantly from other parts of Pakistan. Understanding the dynamics specific to this region is crucial because economic and social conditions vary across the country, and what holds true in one area may not apply elsewhere. Therefore, a targeted study in Lower Dir can offer insights that are directly relevant to this unique locale while serving as a microcosm of broader national trends. Such insights can inform policymakers at the national level about the evolving job market dynamics. Moreover, this research carries valuable policy implications, offering evidence-based recommendations to local and national authorities for the development of tailored programs that address the unique needs of Lower Dir, potentially leading to more effective policy decisions. Furthermore, as the study centers on students who represent the future workforce and leaders of Pakistan, it has the potential to empower them with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the changing job landscape, a crucial factor in the socio-economic development and stability of the nation.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to investigate socio-economic factors shifting paradigms of job security among students in Pakistan, specifically in the Lower Dir region

Literature

The notion of a paradigm shift in future job security represents a profound transformation in the fundamental understanding and pursuit of stable employment among students, and this shift embodies a departure from traditional job expectations triggered by a series of socio-economic factors reshaping the employment landscape (Nazeer, 2019). It signifies a monumental change in the perception of career security, influenced by global forces such as technological advancements, globalization, and intricate local economic conditions (Gul, 2010). This shift goes beyond mere alterations in job roles; it symbolizes a transition in the very nature of how students perceive, pursue, and anticipate their professional futures (Nyborg et al., 2019). It reflects a transition from the conventional confines of locally grounded, government-centric employment aspirations to a broader, more globally attuned approach (Hina et al., 2019). This paradigm shift suggests an embrace of evolving career structures, acknowledging the significance of international opportunities, technological innovation, and varied economic dynamics in shaping the job market, guiding students towards a more dynamic, flexible, and globally oriented understanding of job security (Khan et al., 2023).



Technological advancements and globalization have significantly redefined the landscape of future job security, while the rapid and pervasive integration of technology into various industries has catalyzed a shift in the nature of work, fundamentally altering job expectations and opportunities (Abdullah et al., 2023). Automation, artificial intelligence, and the rise of the gig economy have blurred traditional job roles while creating new avenues for employment, and the revolution in technology has altered the skills and competencies needed to secure stable jobs, posing both challenges and opportunities for students (Khan et al., 2023). Globalization, on the other hand, has interconnected economies and markets, exposing the workforce to broader opportunities while intensifying competition where students prepare for careers in an environment where employers can be situated anywhere globally and where industry trends are influenced by international events (Abbasi, 2014).

Due to socio-economic conditions, there's a discernible paradigm shift among individuals, particularly students, from the conventional pursuit of government jobs to seeking opportunities in foreign employment, and this shift is driven by a convergence of factors influenced by the evolving socio-economic landscape (Khan et al., 2023). The allure of foreign jobs often stems from a perception of enhanced financial prospects, broader career opportunities, and exposure to diverse work environments where socio-economic conditions, including job availability, economic stability, and regional growth, have steered a redirection in preferences, prompting individuals, previously inclined towards secure government positions, to explore prospects outside their native country (Hussain, 2017). The changing global economy, advancements in communication, and the ease of connecting with international job markets have played a pivotal role in this transition (De Nardi, 2017). Due to prevailing socio-economic conditions, there's a noticeable paradigm shift towards engaging in online work, and this transition is primarily influenced by the evolving economic landscape, advancements in technology, and changing work dynamics (Abdullah et al., 2023). Factors such as remote work feasibility, the proliferation of digital platforms, and the flexibility offered by online employment opportunities have significantly contributed to this shift. Students and professionals alike are increasingly drawn to online work due to its potential for increased autonomy, diversified job opportunities, and the ability to overcome geographical constraints (Qazi et al., 2018). Socio-economic factors, including economic stability, job availability, and technological accessibility, are steering this paradigm shift, highlighting a notable transformation in the way individuals perceive and pursue work in an increasingly digitized world (Petty et al., 2012).

Methodology of the Study

The fundamental essence of research methodology encompasses a diverse array of methods, tools, and techniques employed to address research queries, and the subsequent section comprises these integral elements. The following methodology is used during the study process.

Theoretical Framework

Thomas Kuhn's concept of a paradigm shift serves as an intriguing theoretical framework for exploring "A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan: Insights from Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan." Kuhn's theory elucidates the transformative transition from one established way of thinking to a new and innovative perspective (Kuhn, 2012). Applied here, it allows an examination of the substantial changes in students' perceptions and expectations regarding job security. This framework permits an insightful exploration of the evolving job landscape and the altering views among students in Pakistan, particularly within the context of Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as they adapt to or challenge established notions of career stability and security.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study delves into the examination of socio-economic factors that influence the evolving paradigms of job security among students in Pakistan, particularly within the distinctive context of the Lower Dir region. This framework aims to explore the intricate interplay between socio-economic variables and the shifting perceptions, attitudes, and aspirations of students regarding job security. It seeks to uncover how economic conditions, social structures, educational opportunities, and cultural dynamics shape students' outlooks toward securing future employment in a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape.

Universe of the Study

The study universe for "A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan: Insights from Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan" encompasses students within the Lower Dir region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This research focuses on understanding the changing perspectives and concerns of students regarding future job security within this specific area. The insights gathered aim to reflect the evolving attitudes, aspirations, and apprehensions of students as they navigate the shifting landscape of employment prospects within Pakistan.

Potential Respondents

The potential respondents for this included recent graduate students from educational institutions within the Lower Dir area in 2022. These individuals might encompass diverse academic disciplines, reflecting a broad spectrum of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives regarding job security and career prospects.

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

Sampling holds significant importance in research endeavors, encompassing the process of selecting units from a population and playing a vital role in drawing conclusions that can be generalized to the larger population (Etikan & Bala, 2017). As per the records of the Higher Education Departments in Dir Lower, there are a total of 3,426 students who graduated in 2022 in Lower Dir from different study disciplines. The study takes into consideration these students as potential respondents, as mentioned earlier. The determination of the sample size from this population of 3,426 students was carried out using the sample size table provided by Sekaran (2003), resulting in a sample size of 327 from the total population of 3,426. The respondents were randomly selected through the application of the simple random sampling procedure (Fuller, 2009).

Methods of Data Collection

The current study gathered data through structured face-to-face interviews utilizing a Likert scale-based interview schedule. This designed schedule comprehensively covers multiple facets of all the variables under examination. The structured interviews aimed to ensure a detailed exploration of diverse aspects pertaining to the variables, allowing for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the study's focus.

Data Analysis

The gathered data has been encoded and input into SPSS (20) software for analysis. This includes both univariate and bivariate analyses. For univariate analysis, the examination primarily focuses on demographic, independent, and dependent variables—these involve single variables. The process involves determining frequency distribution and percentages, calculated according to the formula provided by Chaudry and Kamal (1996).

Percentage of data class = $f/n \times 100$

f stands for frequency, and N stands for the number of observations.

This method will be employed to gauge the correlation between independent and dependent variables. A T-test, also known as the Student Test, has been utilized to examine the relationship between these variables. This statistical procedure is employed to calculate and understand the association between the two variables.

Where,

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{s^2 \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

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$$s^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} (x_i - \bar{x}_1)^2 + \sum_{j=1}^{n_2} (x_j - \bar{x}_2)^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}$$



x_1 represents the mean of the first set of values, while x_2 signifies the mean of the second set of values. S_1 refers to the standard deviation of the first set of values, and S_2 indicates the standard deviation of the second set. n_1 denotes the total number of values in the first set, and n_2 represents the total number of values in the second set. The formula for standard deviation is articulated as follows:

Where,

x signifies the given values,

\bar{x} represents the mean,

n indicates the total number of values.

Analysis and Discussion

Frequency and Percentage for Future Job Security Among Students

The tabulated data presents a comprehensive insight into students' perspectives on job security concerning socio-economic factors. Notably, a considerable proportion perceive a link between their educational background and future job security, with 49.5% regularly acknowledging this influence and only 9.8% dismissing it. A strong consensus emerges regarding the substantial impact of socio-economic conditions on job security, with approximately 69.4% affirming this influence and merely 6.4% negating it. Concerning job opportunities, while perceptions differ, a significant 41.9% consistently observe these conditions affecting job opportunities, contrasting with 17.1% who don't. Additionally, the statistics reveal varying degrees of anticipated shifts in job types due to socio-economic conditions, with notable inclinations towards transitions from government jobs to business, foreign employment, and online work. The mean values, ranging from 2.07 to 2.81, indicate a moderate to strong consensus among students regarding paradigm shifts in job security due to socio-economic conditions. These statistics underscore the prevalent belief among students in Pakistan, especially in the Lower Dir region, emphasizing the impactful role of socio-economic conditions in shaping their perceptions and envisioning potential changes in job domains. As a similar observation was noted in the study of Yousaf (2020), socio-economic conditions exert a profound influence on students' perceptions of job security, significantly shaping their career expectations and prospects. Obaid (2015) also stated that the complex interplay between economic factors, social structures, and regional opportunities intricately molds how students view their future employability and financial stability. The finding of the study is also similar to Akins, H. (2020). These conditions provide the lens through which students gauge their career paths, impacting their choices, aspirations, and anticipations regarding job security and the prevailing economic landscape, including factors like income levels, access to resources, and economic opportunities, which significantly define the perceived security of employment among students, thereby affecting their educational choices and professional trajectories. Zaman (2011) states that socio-economic conditions have instigated a substantial paradigm shift, notably steering students away from traditional government job aspirations towards opportunities in the foreign job market. Khan (2021), the shift to foreign job prospects mirrors a broader trend driven by globalization, technological advances, and emerging opportunities. Factors like international connections, changing industry demands, and the allure of global market exposure significantly influence students' decisions to seek employment beyond the familiar boundaries of domestic government positions.

Table 1

Frequency and percentage of future job security among students

A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan					
S. No	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Mean
1	Your educational background significantly impacts your future job security.	32 (9.8 %)	133 (40.7 %)	162 (49.5 %)	2.39
2	Socio-economic conditions significantly influence the perception of job security among students	21 (6.4 %)	79 (24.2 %)	227 (69.4 %)	2.63
3	You perceive the socio-economic conditions of your region affecting job opportunities	56 (17.1%)	134 (41 %)	137 (41.9 %)	2.24

A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan					
S. No	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Mean
4	Socio-economic conditions significantly influence governmental jobs in Pakistan	21 (6.4 %)	192 (58.7 %)	114 (34.9 %)	2.28
5	Due to socio-economic conditions, a paradigm shift from government jobs to business	41 (12.5 %)	161 (49.2 %)	125 (38.2 %)	2.25
6	Due to Socio-economic conditions, a paradigm shift from government jobs to foreign job	28 (8.6 %)	91 (27.8 %)	208 (63.6 %)	2.55
7	Due to socio-economic conditions, there has been a paradigm shift toward online work.	48 (14.7%)	170 (52 %)	109 (33.3 %)	2.81
8	Due to socio-economic conditions, there is a paradigm shift in students' permanent jobs.	41 (12.5%)	220 (67.3 %)	66 (20.2 %)	2.07

Relationship Between Socio-Economic Conditions and Future Job Security Among Students

The table presents results from t-tests examining the connection between socio-economic conditions and students' perceptions of future job security. Each statement shows significant statistical significance ($p < .001$) when compared to a relationship absence (test value = 0). Regarding educational background impact, a substantial t-value of 39.556 and a mean difference of 1.492 indicate a robust relationship, with the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference spanning from 1.42 to 1.57. The influence of socio-economic conditions, reflected in a t-value of 43.669 and a mean difference of 1.697, depicts a notably strong relationship. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference lies between 1.62 and 1.77. Examining the impact on job opportunities, a t-value of 44.762 and a mean difference of 1.648 reveal a robust relationship, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.58 to 1.72. Each statement assessing paradigm shifts in job types due to socio-economic conditions exhibits high t-values, indicating significant relationships. The mean differences for shifts from government jobs to business, foreign jobs, online work, and students' permanent jobs are notably distinct, ranging from 1.853 to 2.661. The 95% confidence intervals further reinforce the substantial impact, not crossing 0. Overall, these t-test outcomes confirm a strong, statistically significant relationship between socio-economic conditions and students' perceptions of future job security. This underlines substantial influences on educational backgrounds, job perceptions, and anticipated shifts in job domains due to socio-economic conditions among students.

Table 2

Relationship between socio-economic conditions and future job security among students

Statements	Test Value = 0					
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Your educational background significantly impacts your future job security.	39.556	326	.000	1.492	1.42	1.57
Socio-economic conditions significantly influence the perception of job security among students	43.669	326	.000	1.697	1.62	1.77
You perceive the socio-economic conditions of your region affecting job opportunities	44.762	326	.000	1.648	1.58	1.72



Statements	Test Value = 0				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
	Socio-economic conditions significantly influence governmental jobs in Pakistan	77.160	326	.000	2.067	2.01
Due to Socio-economic conditions, a paradigm shift from government jobs to business	49.913	326	.000	1.853	1.78	1.93
Due to Socio-economic conditions, a paradigm shift from government jobs to foreign job	75.232	326	.000	2.661	2.59	2.73
Due to socio-economic conditions, there has been a paradigm shift toward online work.	42.885	326	.000	2.116	2.02	2.21
Due to socio-economic conditions, a paradigm shift in students' permanent job	57.072	326	.000	2.015	1.95	2.08

Conclusion

The research investigating "A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan: Insights from Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" elucidates substantial insights into students' perspectives on job security in light of socio-economic factors. Findings unveil a strong correlation between socio-economic conditions and students' perceptions of future job security. Notably, the majority of students acknowledge the significant impact of these conditions on their job prospects, educational background, and anticipated shifts in job types. Statistically significant t-test results affirm the robust relationship between socio-economic factors and students' perceptions, portraying the influence on their educational paths and professional aspirations. The conclusion drawn from this research underscores a critical need for addressing socio-economic determinants in shaping students' perceptions of job security. Understanding the substantial impact of these factors allows for more informed policy-making and educational interventions aimed at enhancing job prospects for students, particularly in the Lower Dir region. Future endeavors could focus on creating educational and economic frameworks that prepare students for evolving job markets, considering the potential shifts from traditional employment to diverse sectors. This study underscores the necessity of proactive measures to align educational systems and policy interventions with the changing landscape of job security, catering to the needs and expectations of students amid socio-economic transitions.

Recommendations

Absolutely, the research on "A Paradigm Shift in Future Job Security Among Students in Pakistan: Insights from Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" highlights critical recommendations for practical implementation: Policy Interventions: It's crucial to focus on policy measures that reform education and economics to adapt to the changing job landscape. This could involve aligning educational curricula with industry demands, fostering entrepreneurial skills, and providing career guidance to aid students in navigating the evolving job market. Local Economic Development: Engaging local industries and businesses to understand skill requirements and establishing opportunities for practical training or internships would better equip students for upcoming job demands in their local area. Mentorship and Career Guidance: The implementation of mentorship programs and career counseling services within educational institutions can offer students insights into diverse career paths and equip them with the necessary skills for the changing job market.

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