



The Mental Health State of Unemployed Graduates in Zimbabwe.

Tanaka John Marindire

Counsellor (Buddie) Friendship Bench, Harare, Zimbabwe

Email: Marincejohn7@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is one of the countries that has many graduates (at a tertiary level) that are unemployed. According to Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) (2018) 25 228 students graduated in 2018 and yet the unemployment keeps on increasing. The lack of employment through formal sector is one of the major factors that are negatively affecting graduates with mental health challenges mainly depression. The lack of employment among the graduates is leading them into despair and leading others to take recreational drugs which are harmful to their wellbeing. According to Ndlovu (2023) in Zimbabwe mental health of graduates is highly affected as people expect them to go to work and provide for the family, one can allude that the pressure that comes from people might lead unemployed graduates to have depression and other mental challenges. Unemployment of graduates is impacting heavily on their mental health as most people have expectations and ambitions when they finish studies. COVID-19 took a toll on unemployed graduates and other graduates who had jobs and did not manage to resume after the pandemic. According to "Despair for unemployed Graduates as Job Opportunities Remain Scarce" (2022) Zimbabwe's working age population was estimated around at 8 957 612 with 3 0335 419 being employed formally and informally.

Maclean (2013) being a graduate in a country that is facing hardships economically has been evidenced to have worse health impacts in comparison to school dropouts in a country that is flourishing in terms of their economy. Unemployed graduates in Zimbabwe have been affected negatively in regards of the mental health state as there have become pessimistic when it comes to many things in their livelihood including job seeking and also being innovative. The rate of graduates that are unemployed can lead to dropouts of students of are still in tertiary institutions as they will be able to see that people who have already graduated are not able to acquire their desired occupations, there might be sought other avenues most likely the informal sector.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the magnitude of how unemployed graduates are affected regarding their mental health and how are they coping with their situation.

2. Method

Sileyew (2019) defines research methodology as a way by which researchers need to conduct their research. During this research, descriptive phenomenological research design was used to explore mental health status of graduates who are unemployed and how they are handling their situation and how they have been handling it. I used this research design as it helps the researcher to get in-depth information through interviews.

3. Population

A research population is considered a number of people or objects that are needed for a research to be conducted. The target population of the study was people who have graduated at a tertiary level of education who are unemployed who reside in Harare and Chitungwiza. There was no specific age limit and no gender specifics.

This research used 24 participants, according to Creswell (2013) the sample size for phenomenological design requires at least a minimum of 3 participants and a maximum of 25.

4. Research Tools

4.1 Questionnaire (General Health Questionnaire -12)

For this research General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ-12) is put into use to conduct this research. GHQ-12 is used as a tool to screen for psychological wellbeing, it is used in order to determine the mental health state of unemployed graduates who reside in Harare and Chitungwiza. This research will be using the Likert method to determine the mental health state of unemployed graduates in Zimbabwe, participants scoring high being at risk of being affected by being unemployed to a greater extent and those who score less being less affected. Likert (1932) a Likert scale is used as an approach to scale response in a survey research.

4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are going to be used to conduct this research, they are a perfect fit as they will be used to give the participants room to speak out how they are feeling and experiencing. Harvey (2012) semi-structured interviewers in-tells that the interviewer should have a checklist of questions and topic area. The interviews will be just focusing on how they are feeling and what they anticipated after graduating and to further probe on GHQ-12.

5. Ethical Considerations

Shah, Thornton, Turrin and Hipskind (2020) informed consent is when health care providers educate participants about the dangers and benefits that may occur during a research or experiment. Informed Consent was one of the key ethical consideration that will be in play when varying out the research of the mental health state of unemployed graduates.

Confidentiality as one of the ethical considerations is to be put into practice, as it ensures the participant that what the participant said or did will not be disclosed to anyone without their consent or being aware.

Anonymity was one of the ethical considerations that need to be adhered to during the experiment. Kaiser (2009) anonymity falls under confidentiality as it plays the duty of protecting the participant

identity, and this is very important when carrying out a research as participants will their minds freely.

One of the most important ethical considerations would be definitely be considered that is the right to withdrawal. Any participant should be free to withdraw from the research whenever they feel deem to for whatever they may state.

6. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The research was carried out by 24 participants which consist of 12 males and 12 females who reside in Chitungwiza and Harare. There were no age specifications as anyone who had graduated from a tertiary institution that is recognised and is unemployed would take part in the research if they were willing. The research was carried out in a space of 7 months. People were from different backgrounds and different densities. This research tried to research participants from different densities that is low, middle and high. Participants were named in an alphabetic manner to make sure that anonymity was being regarded at its highest degree so there were participants A to X.

From the tools that were used to research mental health state of unemployed graduates, it indicated that most participants were affected in a negative way and all participants indicated that all were observing that there were having signs of being depressed through the same answer they all gave on question 9 as they all scored 3.

The table indicates the score each participant got from the GHQ-12 and the density each one resides in.

Participants ID	Residence		
	Low Score	Middle Score	high Score
A	.	.	30
B	.	.	34
C	.	.	28
D	.	.	31
E	.	.	32
F	.	.	27
G	.	.	31
H	.	.	25
I	.	30	.
J	.	24	.
K	.	30	.
L	.	31	.
M	.	20	.
N	.	29	.
O	.	30	.
P	.	27	.
Q	22	.	.
R	20	.	.
S	27	.	.

T	25	.	.
U	31	.	.
V	22	.	.
W	20	.	.
X	23	.	.

Table 1

From the table above none of the participants scored below 20, the participants who reside in the high densities scored higher compared to the other densities. All participants scored 3 on question 9, the question asks if one has been happy or unhappy for the past weeks and most of them would go to stress out being unemployed was causing the mentioned feelings. From the questions that were asked from the semi-structured interviews it indicated that participants in high densities were really affected compared to those who reside in the other two densities, 6 out of the 8 indicated that their guardians struggled for them to complete their educational certificates so that they would be bread winners, some even went to indicate that they were embarrassed by just waking up and doing nothing whilst other people are looking up to them.

Participant **B** went on to say that *“going to school is just a waste of resources, it will be wise if parents begin to give their children that school fees money so that they can start businesses”*.

Participant **E** indicated that many unemployed graduates like him are taking recreational drugs like cannabis and crystal methamphetamine to escape reality and responsibilities that wait for them and they cannot do anything to change their work status. Participant **E** indicated most of his started to engage into recreational drugs as a result of lack of productive work to do. One can note recreational can a temporary diversion of reality which will cause long term mental health challenges.

COVID-19 pandemic is also observed as one of the key factors that led some graduates to be unemployed. Participant **P** indicated that she was going to work before the pandemic and she was getting money that would cater for her and the amount she was earning allowed her to have savings, then the pandemic came and she was unemployed, the organization she was working for has not open since.

When participant **U** was approached, she stated her mental health status was in good shape but the results that she produced through the use of GHQ-12 and some responses she gave when the researcher was further probing were contrary to her initial assumption. After the results were clearly explained to her, she stated that she does not know much about mental health and she had misconception about the subject as she stated *“when I hear the term mental health, I think about crazy people”*. The researcher gave the participant more information about mental health and the institutions that specialize on the subject.

7. Conclusion

Unemployed graduate's mental health should not be taken for granted, as this research was able show that they might be at risk of having serious mental health challenges such as, severe depression as some might be carrying a burden that they cannot lift without with assistance or the intervening of mental health experts.

8. Limitations

The research took a long period of time because it was conducted by one individual. Resource, money specifically was a challenge, that is why the research had only 24 participants.

9. Recommendations

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of Zimbabwe should make it a priority that students must be taught about mental health, so that they can be able to seek help if they are in need and also know how to deal with some minor mental health challenges on their own.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles Sage.
- Despair for unemployed Graduates as Job Opportunities Remain Scarce. (2022). Retrieved from www.263chat.com/despair-for-unemployed-graduates-as-job-opportunities-remain-sacre.
- Harvey,L.(2012).*Researching the real world*. <https://www.researchinternational.com/methodology>.
- Kaiser, K. (2009). *Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research*. Qualitative health Research.National Center for Biotechnology Information.
- Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of Attitudes.

Maclean, J.C. (2013). *The health effects of leaving school in a bad economy*, Journal of Health Economy.

Ndlovu, C.C. (2023). Mental Health of unemployed graduates in Zimbabwe a cause for concern, www.thisisafrika.me/politics-and-society/mental-health-of-unemployed-graduates-in-Zimbabwe-a-cause-for-concern/?amp=1

Shah, P., Thorton, I., Turrin, D., and Hipskind, J. E. (2020). *Informed Consent*. StatPearls publishing.

Shah, P., Thorton, I., Turrin, D., and Hipskind, J. E. (2020). *Informed Consent*. StatPearls publishing.

Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. (2018). Higher Education Statistics, www.zimche.ac.zw.