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Quality of Parental Relationship and its Psychosocial Impact on Unemployment Tribal Youth: A Study in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya

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Abstract

In India, youth unemployment is a major issue, and educated youth, especially women, bear the brunt of it. The psychological effect of unemployment affects the family dynamics and has a significant impact on parent-youth relationships. The complex relationship between the unemployed youth and the family ties is examined in this study, with particular emphasis on the emotional attitudes of unemployed tribal youths. Examining both positive (affectionate support, communication, and understanding) and negative (rejection, criticism, and emotional distance) feelings, the study examines how unemployment influences emotional bonds, mutual respect, and overall family cohesion. The study, which uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, captures the lived experiences of tribal youth navigating the economic instability in their sociocultural environment, characterised by their tribal family configurations.

Keywords: *unemployment, parent-youth relationship, positive feelings and negative feelings, tribal youth, Meghalaya.*

Introduction

Youth unemployment is recognised as a major risk factor (Paul & Moser, 2009) as it creates serious societal problems in the long run. It has negative repercussions on mental health, causing psychological distress and altering the attitudes and behaviours of the youths. According to Baxter et al. (2012), unemployment in the family may follow an intergenerational course which can affect the well-being of both parents and youth. Mühlböck et al. (2022) have opined that long-term unemployment has major consequences for young people. It stops them from gaining job experience, resulting in negative impacts on their lifetime income and blocking

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their career options. Later in their life, it has scarring effects. Youths facing economic hardship due to unemployment often rely on their family for financial and emotional support. Parent-youth relationships can have a significant impact when any of the family members experience unemployment, potentially leading to increased stress and conflict within or outside the family.

Parental support significantly impacts youths' well-being, fostering positive outcomes across various aspects of their lives. Often intended to ease the hardships of youth unemployment, it can have paradoxical effects on young adults' sense of the goal of becoming self-efficacious and independent. Parental financial support, youth may benefit from other forms of support in job loss, networking and seeking help from community resources. Parents who demonstrate concern, approval and a willingness to help their youth are more likely to have youth who experience higher well-being and positive outcomes. The quality of parent-youth relationships is characterised by open communication, shared responsibility, shared experiences, mutual support and closeness. This relationship also plays a crucial role in youth development, impacting their self-esteem, creativity and overall well-being. Positive parenting plays a crucial role in supporting young adults during periods of unemployment, both during the transition to adulthood. When facing a job loss, positive parental support can buffer the negative effects of unemployment. Positive parenting focuses on building strong positive relationships with youth, developing empathy and understanding and creating a supportive environment.

Review of Literature

Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) conducted a study on "Parent-Child Relationship: Peculiarities and Outcome". According to the authors, the relationship between parents and their children can be regarded as the most important relationship an individual can experience. Poor parent-child relationships were reported to contribute to the development of internalising symptoms such as depression, low self-esteem, and body image difficulties in children. Sharma and Srivastav (2023) investigated the relationship between parent-child relationships and an individual's personal values and social maturity in young adults in India. The study revealed that challenges such as academic and career pressures, social norms, and technology use negatively impacted the development of personal values and social maturity among young adults. Frasquilho et al. (2016b) conducted a study on "Unemployment, Parental Distress and Youth Emotional Well-Being: The Moderation Roles of Parent–Youth Relationships and Financial Deprivation". The study found that as parental distress increases, so does the likelihood and severity of emotional difficulties in their children.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1990) stresses that early childhood attachments between parents and their children play a critical role in the later development and mental functioning of the youth. It further highlights that caring parent-youth relationships are crucial for youth development, influencing their social, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. Social learning theory is often described as the bridge between traditional learning theory and cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977).

Social learning theory agrees with the behaviourist theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Mediating processes occur between stimuli and responses, and behaviour is learnt from the environment through the process of observational learning. Bandura (1977) believe that youths are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behaviour and its consequences. Bandura expanded his theory to social cognitive theory (1986), which places emphasis on cognitive factors such as self-efficacy, self-regulation and the reciprocal relationship between behaviour, environment and personal factors.

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment is one of the biggest issues which the economy faces today and a hurdle to the growth and development of the economy. The unemployed youth generation lives on the support of their families, parents and closest relatives. Long-term unemployment makes young people frustrated and dissatisfied because they are forced to postpone indefinitely important functions typical not only of individuals but of society as well, such as getting married and obtaining the status of parenthood. The longer the time for employment, the higher the age for getting married, and the already concluded marriages start showing signs of falling apart.

The unemployed youth might be coping with a variety of issues at the time of unemployment. Lack of communication is the most significant issue during this period. Many parents find their youth moody, rude, and disagreeing, and youth often get upset by such behaviour and tend to become more rebellious.

Need and Justification of the Study

The emotional detachment between parents and the youth has become a growing concern in today's society, most specifically among the youth who are unemployed. With the increasing demands and distractions of modern life, many unemployed

youth find it challenging to establish and maintain strong emotional connections with their parents. This detachment has significant consequences for the well-being and development of the youth. Hence, it is crucial to address this issue and explore strategies to foster and nurture healthy parent-youth relationships, especially at the time of unemployment crisis.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-demographic characteristics of the unemployed youth.
2. To explore the quality of the parent-youth relationships of the unemployed tribal youth.

Research Methodology

A) For the purpose of the study, a survey method was adopted in order to explore the quality of parental relationships and their psychosocial impact on the unemployed tribal youths.

B) Universe and Sample

The universe of the study was the East Khasi Hills District, spread across eleven blocks in the state of Meghalaya. The unemployed youths who completed at least Class X from across eleven blocks of the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya and who registered themselves in the employment exchange constitute the population of the study. As of the data available for the year 2020, there were altogether 6133 unemployed youth who registered themselves in the employment exchange. For the purpose of sampling, a random sampling procedure was adopted by the investigator to draw the sample from the population. The sample comprises 613 unemployed youth (242 male and 371 female).

C) Research tool and data collection

The data was collected through a self-prepared interview schedule.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: The following section is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of data.

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of the Unemployed Youths.

Sl. No	Demographic profile of the unemployed youths				
1.	Sex of the respondents			N	Percentage (%)
	Male			242	39.48
	Female			371	60.52
	Total			613	100
2.	Age group (Years)	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage (%)
	18-25	200	66 (27.27)	134 (36.12)	(32.63)
	26-35	400	167 (69.01)	233 (62.80)	(65.25)
	36-45	13	9 (3.72)	04 (1.08)	(2.12)
	Total	613	242	371	100
3.	Residence	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage %
	Urban	165	63 (26.03)	102 (27.49)	(26.92)
	Rural	448	179 (73.97)	269 (72.51)	(73.08)
	Total	613	242	371	100
4.	Religion			N	Percentage (%)
	Seng Khasi			118	(19.25)
	Christian			415	(67.70)
	Hindu			48	(7.83)
	Muslim			29	Percentage (%)
	Sikhism			01	(0.16)
	Buddhism			02	(0.33)
	Total			613	100
5.	Category			N	Percentage (%)
	Schedule Tribe			563	91.84
	Schedule Caste			03	0.49
	General			36	5.87
	OBC			11	1.79
	Total			613	100
6.	Marital Status	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage %
	Single	328	126 (52.07)	202 (54.44)	53.51
	Married	279	115 (47.52)	164 (44.20)	45.51
	Separated	6	1 (0.41)	5 (1.35)	0.98
	Total	613	242	371	100
7.	Type of Family			N	Percentage (%)
	Nuclear family			424	69.17
	Joint family			189	30.83
			Total	613	100

8.	**Type of Residence**			**N**	**Percentage (%)**
	Own house			447	72.92
	Rented house			153	24.96
	Government Quarter			13	2.12
			Total	**613**	**100**
9.	**Numbers of Family Members**	**N**	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	1-2	106	26 (10.74)	80 (21.56)	17.29
	3-4	214	79 (32.64)	135 (36.39)	34.91
	5-6	189	88(36.36)	101(27.22)	30.83
	7-8	70	32(13.22)	38 (10.24)	11.42
	9 and more	34	17 (7.02)	17 (4.58)	5.55
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**
10.	**Migration Status**	N	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	Rural to Urban	65	26 (10.74)	39 (10.51)	10.60
	Urban	100	37(15.29)	63 (16.98)	16.31
	Rural	448	179 (73.97)	269 (72.51)	73.08
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**
11.	**Income Groups**			**N**	**Percentage (%)**
	LIG			396	64.6
	MIG			171	27.9
	UIG			46	7.5
	Total			**613**	**100**
12.	**Educational Qualification**	**N**	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	Secondary	91	42 (17.36)	49 (13.21)	14.85
	Higher Secondary	169	93 (38.43)	76 (20.49)	27.57
	Graduate	184	61 (25.21)	123 (33.15)	30.02
	Postgraduate	162	45 (58.60)	117 (31.54)	26.43
	Other (Diploma, certificate and allied courses)	7	1 (0.41)	6 (1.62)	1.14
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**

Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of the unemployed youths. The data was collected from 613 unemployed youths spread over 11 blocks in the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. The data show that 39.48 per cent of the unemployed respondents were male and 60.52 per cent were female. The data reveal that 27.27 per cent of males and 36.12 per cent of females were in the age group of 18 to 25 years, followed by 69.01 per cent of males and 62.80 per cent of females in the age group of 26 to 35 years and 3.72 per cent of males and 1.08 per cent of females in the age group of 36 to 45 years. As far as their residential status was concerned, 26.03 per cent of males and 27.49 per cent of females resided in urban areas, and on the other hand, 73.97 per cent of males and 72.51 per cent of females resided in rural areas. Out of 613 unemployed youth, 19.25 per cent belong to Seng Khasi, and

67.70 per cent are Christians, 7.83 per cent are Hindus, 4.73 per cent are Muslims, 0.16 per cent are Sikhs, and 0.33 per cent belongs to Buddhism.

With respect to the category of the unemployed youths, it was revealed that 91.84 per cent belong to the Schedule Tribe, followed by 0.49 per cent Schedule Caste, 1.79 per cent from OBC and 5.87 per cent from the General category. As regards their marital status, 52.07 per cent of males and 54.44 per cent of females are single, 47.52 per cent of males and 44.20 per cent of females are married, and 0.41 per cent of males and 1.35 per cent of females are separated. With reference to family status, 69.17 per cent belong to the nuclear family and 30.83 per cent to a joint family. With respect to the resident status of the unemployed youths, 72.92 per cent have their own house, 24.96 per cent are in a rented house and 2.12 percent from the Government Quarter. With respect to the number of siblings, 10.74 per cent were male and 21.56 per cent were female and had 1 to 2 members; 32.64 per cent were male and 36.39 per cent were female and had 3 to 4 members; 36.36 per cent were male and 27.22 per cent were female and had 5 to 6 members; 13.22 per cent were male and 10.24 per cent were female and had 7 to 8 members; and 7.02 per cent were male and 4.58 per cent were female and had 9 or more members in their family. With respect to their migration status, 10.74 per cent of the unemployed youths are male and 10.51 per cent female who have migrated from rural areas to urban areas. Further, the data reveal that 64.60 per cent belong to the lower income group, 27.90 per cent to the Middle Income Group, and 7.50 per cent are in the upper income group. As regards the educational status of the unemployed youths, 17.36 per cent male and 13.21 per cent female have dropped out of only secondary education; 38.43 per cent male and 20.49 per cent female have dropped out of only higher secondary education; 25.21 per cent male and 33.15 per cent female have dropped out of only graduation; 18.60 per cent male and 31.54 per cent female have passed postgraduate education; and 0.41 per cent male and 1.62 per cent female belong to other categories.

Affectionate positive feelings of parents' youth relationships are crucial for building a strong and healthy parent-youth relationship. Physical affection effectively facilitates positive experience between parents and unemployed youth in the family, thus promoting healthy emotional development and fostering a sense of security, happiness and confidence. Active reasoning, giving and receiving affectionate positive feelings, is associated with better perception, reduction of stress, and a variety of psychological well-being, with greater self-esteem. The affectionate positive feeling of parents emphasises the value of having positive social-emotions, warm and kindness, cognitive growth and limiting the expression of negative thoughts.

Table 1.2: Differences in Self-perception of Male and Female Unemployed Youth in Accomplishing Affectionate Positive Feelings of their Parents.

Sl. No	Affectionate Positive Feelings	Male		Female		χ^2 Value	Significan **/ Not Significan *
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)		
1.	My parents feel that I am jolly	145 (59.92)	97 (40.08)	285 (76.82)	86 (23.18)	19.98	**
2.	My parents are sensitive	210 (86.78)	32 (13.22)	319 (85.98)	52 (14.02)	0.08	*
3.	My parents behave with me in the nicest ways.	147 (60.74)	95 (39.26)	309 (83.29)	62 (16.71)	39.07	**
4.	My parents never let me down	191 (78.93)	51 (21.07)	355 (95.69)	16 (4.31)	42.27	**
5.	My parents appreciate my fun	87 (35.95)	155 (64.05)	282 (76.01)	89 (23.99)	98.09	**
6.	My parents provide me with good support	188 (77.69)	54 (22.31)	358 (96.50)	13 (3.50)	39.04	**
7.	My parents are very kind-hearted	184 (76.03)	58 (23.97)	335 (90.30)	36 (9.70)	22.95	**
8.	My parents love me very much	179 (73.97)	63 (26.03)	337 (90.84)	34 (9.16)	31.29	**
9.	My parents pay attention to me	187 (77.27)	55 (22.73)	328 (88.41)	43 (11.59)	13.53	**
10.	My parents like to help me	172 (71.07)	70 (28.93)	351 (94.61)	20 (5.39)	64.76	**
11.	My parents understand my situation/trouble	196 (80.99)	46 (19.01)	357 (96.23)	14 (3.77)	38.50	**
12.	My parents listen to what I have to say	97 (40.08)	145 (59.92)	288 (77.63)	83 (22.37)	88.38	**

d_f= 1 at .05 level of significance, χ^2_t =3.84

Table 1.2 shows differences in Self-perception of unemployed male and female youth in accomplishing affectionate positive feelings of their parents. To study the gender difference, 12 items as reflected in the table were analysed using a $\chi 2$ test with d_f = 1 at .05 level of significance. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths on affectionate positive feelings shown by the parents, such as expressing their feeling that I am jolly, behaving with me in the nicest ways, never letting me down, appreciating my

fun, providing me support at times, being kind-hearted, showering their love, paying their attention, helping me, understanding my situation/trouble and listening to me. However, no significant difference was observed in the sensitivity of parents towards the issues confronted by the male and female unemployed youth.

The percentage analysis reveal that the prominent affectionate positive feelings of their parents for the unemployed females are 'Providing good support (96.50 per cent), understanding the situation (96.23 per cent), never allowing to be down (95.69 per cent), helping as required (94.61 per cent), showing their love (90.84 per cent), being kind-hearted (90.30 per cent), paying attention to them (88.41 per cent), sensitive to my needs (85.98 per cent), consistently demonstrating their kindness, politeness and empathy (83.29 per cent), listening to me (77.63 per cent), appreciating my jolliness (76.82 per cent) and appreciating my fun (76.01 per cent), whereas the prominent affectionate positive feelings of their parents for the male unemployed youths are "sensitiveness (86.78 per cent), understanding the situation (80.99 per cent), never allowing to be down (78.93 per cent), Providing support (77.69 per cent), paying attention (77.27 per cent), being kind-hearted (76.03 per cent), showering love (73.97 per cent), helping as required (71.07 per cent), good behaviour (60.74 per cent) and appreciating my jolliness (59.92 per cent)."

The common affectionate positive feelings of their parents shown by both male and female unemployed youths are 'appreciating my jolliness, behaving with me in the nicest ways, never letting me down, appreciating my fun, providing me support at times, being kind-hearted, showering their love, paying their attention, helping me and understanding my situation.

Disapproval of negative feelings: Unfriendly and disapproving parental attitudes towards youths can negatively impact their development, leading to low self-esteem, poor emotional regulation and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. The psychological impact of consistent parental unfriendliness and disapproval can contribute to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and even substance abuse by the youths as a way to cope with negative emotions.

Table 1.3: Differences in Youths' Self-Perception with respect to Disapproval of Negative Feelings of the Parents.

Sl. No	Disapproval of negative feeling	Male		Female		χ^2 Value	Significant **/ Not Significant *
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)		
1.	My parents feel that I am a bit too fussy	82 (33.88)	160 (66.12)	91 (24.53)	280 (75.47)	6.33	**
2.	My parents nags at me	117 (48.35)	125 (51.65)	131 (35.31)	240 (64.69)	10.34	**
3.	My parents feel that I am short-tempered	102 (42.15)	140 (57.85)	158 (42.59)	213 (47.51)	0.01	*
4.	My parents feel that I complain too much	169 (69.83)	73 (30.17)	276 (74.39)	95 (25.61)	1.53	*
5.	My parents get annoyed without good reason	81 (33.47)	161 (66.53)	54 (14.56)	317 (85.44)	30.52	**
6.	Lack of empathy	117 (48.35)	125 (51.65)	145 (39.08)	226 (60.92)	5.14	**
7.	My Parents grumble too much	74 (30.58)	168 (69.42)	51 (13.75)	320 (86.25)	25.56	**
8.	My parents are not very patient	86 (35.54)	156 (64.46)	73 (19.68)	298 (80.32)	19.18	**
9.	My parents get too angry	65 (26.86)	177 (73.14)	49 (13.21)	322 (86.79)	18.03	**
10.	My parents frown at me	118 (48.76)	124 (51.24)	97 (26.15)	274 (73.85)	32.89	**
11.	My parents tease me	61 (25.21)	181 (74.79)	59 (15.90)	312 (84.10)	8.05	**
12.	My parents tell me off	197 (81.40)	45 (18.60)	196 (52.83)	175 (47.17)	51.98	**
13.	My parents are too busy to have time for me	86 (35.54)	156 (64.46)	79 (21.29)	292 (78.71)	15.10	**

d_f= 1 at .05 level of significance, χ^2_t =3.84

Table 1.3 shows the self-perception differences in accomplishing unfriendliness and disapproval of negative feelings adopted by the unemployed youths. To study the gender difference, 13 items as reflected in the table were analysed using a χ^2 test with d_f = 1 at .05 level of significance. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths on disapproval of negative feeling by the parents in the variables like fussiness, nagging, short-tempered, complaining too much, reflecting their annoyances, grumbling, being impatient, being angry, teasing, frowning, writing me off and being too busy to have time for me, whereas no significant difference was observed on labelling me as short-tempered and complaining in nature.

The percentage analysis reveals that the prominent disapproval of negative feelings of their parents shown towards the unemployed females were 'perceiving the complaints as excessively negative (74.39 per cent) and the feeling of my parents that I am totally off', whereas the prominent disapproval of negative feelings of their parents towards the male unemployed youths are 'the feeling of my parents that I am totally off (81.40 per cent) and perceiving the complaints as excessively negative (69.83 per cent)'. The common disapproval and negative feelings shown by both male and female unemployed youths are that they perceive their complaints as excessively negative and the feeling of my parents that I am totally off.

Main findings

1. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths in affectionate positive feelings shown by the parents on all the above parameters, except the sensitivity of parents to the issues confronted by the unemployed youths.

2. The study revealed that there exist significant differences in the disapproval of negative feelings of their parents between male and female unemployed youth in the domains of fussiness, nagging, annoyances, grumbling, impatience, anger, teasing, frowning, writing me off and being too busy to have time for the youth, whereas no significant difference was found in the short temperance and complaining of the parents.

Discussion of the results

The data revealed that female unemployed youth are encouraged to engage in social activities and social gatherings, allowed to spend more time in and around the home, supported at difficult times, provided with safety supervisions, supported towards furtherance of their education, provided with family support, and are rewarded for their positive behaviours than the male youths, whereas the male youths' feelings about loss of household income were more prominent than the female unemployed youth's.

The positive behaviours and affection between parents and the female unemployed youth, with respect to mutual respect, open communication, trust and a supportive environment, were more forthcoming, whereas it was less forthcoming for the male unemployed youth. This is mainly attributed to the matrilineal structure of the society. The affectionate positive feelings by the parents for female unemployed youths were reflected more prominently in the variables like being jolly, being nice and having fun with them; providing adequate mental support and being kind-hearted;

showing their love and attention; helping at times of need; understanding and listening to them; and not letting them down than for the male unemployed youths. The findings are supported by Connolly (2024), who found that positive parenting emphasises the value of the development of positive emotions, and Neff (2011), who stated that youth build mutual supportive relationships, warmth and affection with their parents when supported at the time of crisis by the parents. Further, Frasquilho et al. (2016a) corroborate the study with their research findings, which show that a good family environment acts as a protector against the effect of unemployment on youth well-being.

The disapproval of negative feelings was explicit in parent-youth relationships for both male and female unemployed youth. The parents were worried about their demandingness, persistent complaining nature, annoyances, feeling that they spoil others from having fun, accompanied by irritability and grumbling. The parents perceive them as excessively negative, expressing their dissatisfaction with their upsetting behaviour, which irritates them often. At times, the parents get annoyed over the youth without any good reason, which makes them overwhelmed or stressed. The findings are in alignment with the study conducted by Margolin et al. (1996). They found that families experiencing high levels of distress appear to prolong conflict and tension over time, thereby maintaining these negative patterns. Further, Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) state that poor parent-child relationships contribute to the development of internalising symptoms among the youth, and they develop depression, low self-esteem, and image difficulties. And it is also possible that youths with these symptoms may engage less with their parents.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Unemployment is related to a reduction in income. Risky behaviours such as substance abuse and online interactions are often more frequent among unemployed youths and tend to increase with their age, particularly during the unemployment period. Parents' involvement during this phase influences the youth's career success and identity formation, leading to their life satisfaction and good mental health. Therefore, parental and family support may be one of the viable strategies to address the social and psychological consequences of unemployment. Parental education, family cohesion, family income and educational outcome should be considered when providing psychological and social support for youth who struggle with unemployment. At the time of unemployment, the youth need opportunities to explore, take risks and learn from both successes and failures to develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills and thrive in their everyday life. Developing a strong sense of identity for personal values, affiliations and goals, and a capacity for self-direction are crucial

for personal growth and overall well-being. Parents need to provide a range of support, including resources, training and ongoing assistance, and ensure strong relationships with youths.

Conclusion

Intensive parenting emphasises parental roles as both vigilant guardians and supportive confidence, aiming to cultivate youth in self-governance, including academics, social development and emotional health. Poor parent-youth communication significantly impacts youth's well-being, affecting their self-esteem and leading to various psychological and behavioural problems. Lack of open and supportive communication can damage a youth's sense of self-worth, contributing to issues like low self-esteem, depression and behavioural problems. Parent-youth communication styles characterised by openness, positivity, affection, and satisfaction foster a positive self-evaluation in youths, contributing to their overall self-esteem and reducing the risk of engaging in unsocial activities. Positive parenting during adolescence is significantly linked to better career outcomes for young adults, including increased career satisfaction, autonomy, commitment and income. Positive parenting can indirectly lead to better career outcomes by influencing educational achievements. Parenting styles characterised by warmth, responsiveness, parental acceptance, encouragement, open communication, affection, involvement and emotional support are associated with higher self-esteem in youths.

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