

Youth Development in Pakistan: A Provincial Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The paper studies youth development in Pakistan from a provincial lens and examines policies and relevant measures of each province in this regard. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education are also evaluated and it is observed that literacy rate remains low due to lack of access and quality education. There is not enough spending from provincial governments on the education sector. There is also dearth of technical and vocational training institutes at the provincial level which hampers skill development among youth. Lack of funds and outdated training materials are the main reasons for low enrolment in such institutes. Unemployment rate among youth needs to be curtailed by providing them ample opportunities and capacity building. It is recommended that more vocational training institutes should be established along with increasing their budgetary allocations. Career counseling centres at district level are also required.

Keywords: Youth, skill development, start-ups, e-commerce, SDGs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) definition of ‘youth’ is a person or persons between the ages of 15-24 years. However, each country has its own national delineation. In India and Pakistan, the youth cohort is 15-29; while in Bangladesh it is 18-35. There are 1.2 billion youth in the world (PRB 2019). This massive number indicates the significance of youth and how investing in them can generate social and economic benefits for a country (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). They can play an active part in multiple ways ranging from involvement in economic activities to performing an active role in volunteer activities (ACFID 2012).

Youth development includes many factors such as education, health, employment and skills provision. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.4 calls for enhancing the number of youth and adults in decent jobs and focusing on entrepreneurship through relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills. The optimum time to invest in youth is at early stages in the form of training programmes, education reforms and early interventions (Heckman 1999). Investment in youth development is also essential to improve human capital as it complements trade and growth (Ranis 2004). Silva (1997) also concludes that appropriate human capital goes hand-in-hand with economic, trade and investment policies. Both are interlinked and their effect cannot be separated. The study also highlighted that returns on investment in human capital can only occur over the long run which is why planning should be done at the appropriate time. It is worth mentioning that value of human capital augments instead of depleting like other resources. Youth can alleviate the dangers of poverty through engagement in economic activities and here, the role of the government for provision of effective support is vital (Tirziu and Vrabie 2017), especially in primary education (Din et al. 2019).

The youth population of Pakistan is 61.9 million, nearly 28% of the total population. Considering the massive potential of this human resource, sustainable socioeconomic development can be achieved through harnessing the energies and talents of the country’s young people.

Barber (2013) pointed out that socioeconomic development of youth is restricted due to lack of opportunities in education, empowerment, engagement and development. Pakistan spends only 2.9% on education as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (UNESCO 2017) which is even lower than Afghanistan (4.0%) and Nepal (5.5%). The miniscule expenditure on youth programmes, including health and education, is the main reason behind their lower skill development in Pakistan (Khan et al. 2016). This is also why progress remains slow on SDG 8 which intends to ‘promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive

employment and decent work for all.’ A high unemployment rate indicates that there is still a lot to be done to provide skills and decent work opportunities for youth. This study aims to address the following key questions:

- What are the key aspects of youth policies and programmes of each province in Pakistan?
- How effective are these policies and programmes for youth development?
- What are the key issues impeding youth development across all the provinces of Pakistan?
- Are the budgetary allocations for youth specific programmes and skills development strategies sufficient to promote youth development?

No study has examined the provincial youth policies of Pakistan and this gap is addressed by the existing study by reviewing provincial youth policies and their role in youth development. Provincial efforts in this regard are analysed through their budgetary spending on youth development affairs. Skills development programmes and initiatives are also discussed. The study highlights the key issues faced by Pakistan’s young population, particularly in education and employment; and provides guidelines to policymakers for understanding youth problems in a real sense and bring forth changes in their strategies.

Section two presents the literature review on youth specific aspects, whereas section three discusses the methodology and data. Section four analyses youth-specific provincial policies. Sections five and six offer an overview of public programmes for youth and education and employment dynamics. The concluding sections offer policy recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies emphasise on education as a key factor in youth development. UNECA (2006) highlighted that government can create a knowledge-intensive society based upon provision of education and vocational and life skills to youth. Similarly, Pandit (2009) observed that industrial development and economic growth can be achieved through investing in education and training for youth. Developing countries are now more focused on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education for youth development (World Bank 2012; UNESCO 2012). Education is a significant factor in getting a decent job as Nazli (2004) observed that earnings increased with increase in attainment of education and experience.

Youth employment is another factor which is critical in youth development and in this regard Fordham and Schwab (2012) pointed out that government can eradicate youth

unemployment with effective policies in areas like natural resources which, in turn, can absorb youth labour force. This can be done through service delivery programmes on training and monitoring of environmental services, skill enhancement and awareness campaigns by the government. Investment by the government in education and employment programmes can also promote skills development among youth (SCG 2012).

According to the Planning Commission of Pakistan (2009), career counseling can play an effective part in developing skills among youth for which family, educational institutes and society should play an active role. The performance of the Information Technology (IT) sector of Pakistan, especially a mushrooming start-ups culture, is an indicator of its youth potential (Javed 2019). Akhtar and Shahnaz (2006) are of the view that role of the private sector is also vital for reducing youth unemployment. Apart from that, labour market reforms are also required that include re-evaluating wage rates and youth underemployment (Hou 2011). Arif and Chaudhry (2008) also note that the government has not paid enough attention to the economic well-being of rural youth and females. This is the case even now and should be immediately addressed.

2.1. South Asia and Youth

The South Asian region is blessed with a vibrant youth population. However, to tap into their potential, regional governments need to devise active policies and the private sector also has to play its part (The Economist 2013).

Pieters (2013) suggested that quality enhancement for employment should be targeted instead of focusing on the number of employed. This will help in improving skills among youth which will ultimately make it possible for them to earn a sustainable living. It is equally important to incorporate females in the process so that their health and welfare can be ensured. The increase in urbanisation can be beneficial for youth in a sense that they can attain more skill development through training opportunities (Powell 2012) which may be unavailable to them in rural areas. This points to the need of policies for rural areas so that youth from deprived regions can also get similar benefits and prospects as their urban counterparts (Dorji and Kinga 2005). Mitra and Verick (2013) found that rural youth in India are deprived of employment opportunities and stressed the need for policies to improve their job prospects. Rajan (2013) pointed out that there is lack of an effective migration policy for India's rural population due to which problems arise when they decide to work in areas other than their native towns. Dev and Venkatanarayana (2011) found that lack of vocational training resulted in youth unemployment in India; while Sinha (2013) looked at the country's vocational

training programmes initiated at the regional level which are helping in addressing the youth unemployment crisis.

The Bangladesh Bank (2008) examined how youth unemployment rate has increased due to surge of young people entering the labour market each year. In order to cope up with the challenge, microcredit, targeted employment strategies and integration with global markets can increase youth employment prospects. Bangladesh has its own Ministry of Youth and Sports (Rahman 2004) which plays an active role in the country's youth development programmes.

In the context of Pakistan, there is hardly any study which evaluates the youth policies of each province and the major provincial initiatives taken for youth development. This study bridges this gap.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The study conducts descriptive analysis of youth-specific policies of each province of Pakistan to highlight their major features. In the first phase, empirical literature related to youth development was consulted in which both global and South Asian specific studies were included. The literature related to aspects including basic education, technical and vocational education, youth employment was cited. Then, a comprehensive desk review was carried out in order to extract data regarding youth development indicators. Data related to education, literacy rate and employment rates was taken from the Economic Survey of Pakistan, Annual Development Plan, Pakistan Education Statistics and Labour Force Survey. Overview of provincial skills development programmes and initiatives was developed. The focus in this regard was on the strategies regarding employment provision and technical education. Related components of SDG 4 were used to examine the existing state related to these indicators in each province.

4. YOUTH POLICIES OF PAKISTAN

A youth policy presents the overall strategy and implementation plan of the government for the young population of the country. The key aspects of Pakistan's federal youth policy and provincial youth policy are discussed in this section.

4.1. National Youth Policy, 2008

The age group of 15-29 is considered as 'youth' in Pakistan's 'National Youth Policy' (GoP 2008). The policy highlights the importance of national integration of young people through different platforms, including youth conferences. It states that target-oriented programmes will be initiated under skills development which will bridge the

gap between demand in national and international job market and labour supply. Skills development will also be promoted by providing vocational education, and for that purpose, syllabus of vocational institutes will be made according to the latest requirements of the agriculture and industrial sector. The policy intends to develop counseling offices to promote entrepreneurship among youth. Microfinance will be given to youth in this regard so that self-employment can be increased. The coordination of NGOs and civil society is considered vital to provide education and training to youth residing in deprived regions (Ibid.).

4.2. Punjab Youth Policy, 2012

The ‘Punjab Youth Policy, 2012’ aims to deliver a feasible environment and equal prospects to every young individual to help them grow in their lives. The key focus in the policy is on work for economic empowerment of youth; investment in skills training; encouraging entrepreneurship; reducing the gender gaps; and increasing sports culture among youth. The policy intends to promote economic empowerment of youth through vocational training and cash programmes. Job banks will also be established in this regard to generate jobs for youth and address unemployment. Youth venture capital fund, and incubator offices are the initiatives through which entrepreneurship will be promoted in the province. Expansion of microfinance facilities and internships will also help to foster self-employment prospects for youth. Health and education programmes will also be initiated to cater to basic needs of youth (GoPunjab 2012a).

4.3. Sindh Youth Policy, 2018

The ‘Sindh Youth Policy 2018’ hopes to develop equal opportunities for youth so that they can nurture their skills. The employment and livelihood prospects will be generated by promoting entrepreneurship skills. For the purpose, the policy will focus on establishing a Youth Venture Capital Fund; annual innovation competition among youth; establishing incubation centres at universities; training of entrepreneurs; and promotion of programmes of Sindh Small Industries Cooperation. Apart from that skill development programmes, sectoral initiatives, local craft-based enterprises will be encouraged. For the social empowerment of youth, education and health programmes, youth volunteerism and political empowerment are the also the main focus (GoS 2018).

4.4. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Policy, 2016

The ‘Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Policy 2016’ aims to provide equitable prospects to youth for growth. The policy also intends to provide quality education and health and engage youth in decision-making processes. The strategies adopted in this regard will

be based on creating job opportunities for youth in different sectors and developing awareness. The mapping of sectors will also be done according to skills and market demand. Technical training will be promoted through which youth can enhance their skills. Curriculum of vocational institutes will also be updated to make it in line with modern requirements. Internships, job placements and on-campus jobs will also be provided to youth to bring down the unemployment rate. For boosting entrepreneurship, incubator offices will be established in universities where young people can learn methods to implement their business ideas. Training to youth will also be provided in this regard so that they can develop their business. Financial resources will be given to youth to mitigate funding woes (GoKhyber Pakhtunkhwa 2016).

4.5. Balochistan Youth Policy, 2015

The ‘Balochistan Youth Policy 2015’ intends to promote youth empowerment by mobilising youth for their rights and responsibilities and developing their capacity with the aid of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). The medium-term focus of the policy is on involving youth in the national development process; whereas long-term, the attention would be provision of quality facilities including health, education, employment and gender equality. Employment prospects for youth from rural and tribal areas will also be developed. The policy aims at skills development through technical and vocational education. For this purpose, curriculum of these institutes would be updated according to market requirements. Loans will also be provided to students in this regard to promote the self-employment. The role of educational institutes in developing entrepreneurship and management skills is also vital for youth development (GoB 2015).

5. KEY FINDINGS OF PROVINCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES & INITIATIVES

Public expenditures are significant in promoting economic growth and human capital (Asghar et al. 2011; Wahab et al. 2013). Governments devise different strategies to make effective use of expenditures. The provision of quality education and initiatives of employment programmes are significant in this regard.

The province of Punjab prepared a ‘Growth Strategy 2018’ aiming to deliver quality employment by promoting skills among youth. The strategy is to provide effective training to youth along with promoting education through enrolment campaigns (GoPunjab 2015).

The ‘Vision 2025’ by Government of Sindh (2015) intends to provide better health and education facilities to children.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is keen to increase the net enrolment rate in the province at primary level and focusing on providing basic facilities at schools in this regard.

In 2013, the Government of Balochistan developed a ‘Balochistan Education Sector Plan’ through which education is to be provided to out- of-school children (GoB 2013).

The key initiatives of provincial governments are discussed below:

5.1. Punjab

The Government of Punjab initiated the ‘Punjab Youth Internship Program (PYIP)’ in 2012 for unemployed youth in order to provide them an opportunity to get experience from working in government-related offices (GoPunjab 2012b). This is an opportunity for youth to employ their education in the practical field. The students are placed in government/ private offices according to their educational qualification for three months. During this time period, they get PKR 10,000 as stipend (Ibid.).

Another employment related initiative is ‘e-Rozgaar’ centres in all districts by the Punjab Information Technology Board and Youth Affairs Department. It is aimed at providing training to budding freelancers and improving their professional capabilities. The Punjab Skill Development Fund (PSDF) aims to provide skills training to poor and vulnerable youth in order to equip them for employment and livelihood opportunities. The main programmes under PSDF include Industrial Training Programmes; Formal Training Programmes; Community-Based Programmes and Women-Focused Programmes. All these provide a useful platform to youth for attaining formal training in many sectors and thousands of youth have already benefited from them.

The Skilled Labour Market Information System (SLMIS) system is implemented by TEVTA Punjab in Pakistan and this is the very first initiative of its type. The programme has three parts: online information system; online/offline placement system to assist graduates of TEVTA and related institutes; and skill mapping of all the districts of Punjab. The information system presents basic information regarding the labour market of Punjab. It also provides market tendency, data of job seekers and opportunities for related persons in industry and skill training prospects.

5.2. Sindh

The ‘Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program (BBSYDP)’ was started by Government of Sindh in 2008 and has provided training to almost 292,000 youth and enables them to get desired employment. 389 trades and 89 possible sectors of employment are covered under this programme. The key objective is to eradicate

poverty and resolve unemployment among youth through provision of basic skills. The strategy is designed to enhance the socioeconomic situation of the province's young population and help the industry to attain benefit from this human resource (GoS n.d.).

Through the 'Sindh Skills Development Project (SSDP)', the provincial government plans to provide vocational training to youth in order to equip them for better and decent employment prospects.

5.3. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The 'Youth Employment Program' was launched in 2016 by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government which aims to enrich the digital skills of youth and provide them employment in the province. The programme targets unemployed and underemployed youth through provision of necessary skills in order to enable them to avail online opportunities and integrate them internationally through freelancing. Phase 1 which ended in 2016 empowered 2132 youth in the region with appropriate digital skills. Phase 2 started in 2017 and is focused on promoting skills development to empower 40,000 youth in ten digital skills across seven districts (GoKhyber Pakhtunkhwa n.d.).

5.4. Federal Government

The 'Prime Minister's Youth Programme' (GoP 2013) intends to enhance the socioeconomic development of youth in order to minimise the youth unemployment. The programme specifically targets youth and deprived groups of society and provides them an opportunity to increase their employment prospects. Youth Business Loan Scheme; Interest Free Loans Scheme; Youth Training Scheme; Skills Development Programme; and Fee Reimbursement Scheme are included under this programme. Recently, the government launched 'Kamyab Jawan' (Successful Youth) programme under which Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme; Hunarmand Pakistan Program; Green Youth Movement; Startup Pakistan Program; National Internship Program and Jawan Markaz are included.

6. KEY ISSUES IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The section overviews the major issues impeding youth development in Pakistan which include academic education, technical education, budgetary allocations for education and employment. Education and employment are the two most primary needs of youth and key issues in the provision of these two aspects are examined through different indicators.

Education develops human capital and provides better earnings prospects and job mobility (Schultz 1982). Article 37 of the Constitution of Pakistan aims to 'remove

illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period.’ However, literacy rate in the country remains low due to which human capital is not developed as per market requirements. The major causes of low literacy rate include poor planning and implementation; lack of financial resources and educational facilities (Hussain, Salfi and Khan 2011). Those who remain illiterate are then engaged in low-skilled jobs and earn marginal income (Kapur 2018).

Table 1: Literacy Rate 2017-18 (10 Years and Above)

Province	Male %	Female %	Total %
Punjab	72.2	57.4	64.7
Sindh	72.8	49.9	62.2
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	73.3	38.5	55.3
Balochistan	73.0	33.5	55.5

Source: GoP 2019a.

Table 1 indicates that Punjab has the highest literacy rate among the provinces. The literacy rate for females is highest in Punjab, while for males, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the highest literacy rate. Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate for females which is due to a number of factors, including cultural issues and law and order situation which affected female enrolment in educational institutes (Kazmi et al. 2017). Due to higher drop out ratio in Sindh, the literacy rate has been almost stagnant over the last few years (Khosro et al. 2019). Overall, issues such as access to education, quality of education, budgetary constraints, adult literacy and tertiary education are major impediments in increasing literacy rate in Pakistan (UNESCO 2018). The target for SDG 4.1 is to ensure that 100% boys and girls complete primary and secondary education. However, to achieve this target, extensive efforts are required as all the provinces are behind on this target.

Every province is responsible for allocating a budget for youth development, but it is observed that the spending on youth programmes is not enough keeping in mind the needs for growth (Ahmed and Javed 2017).

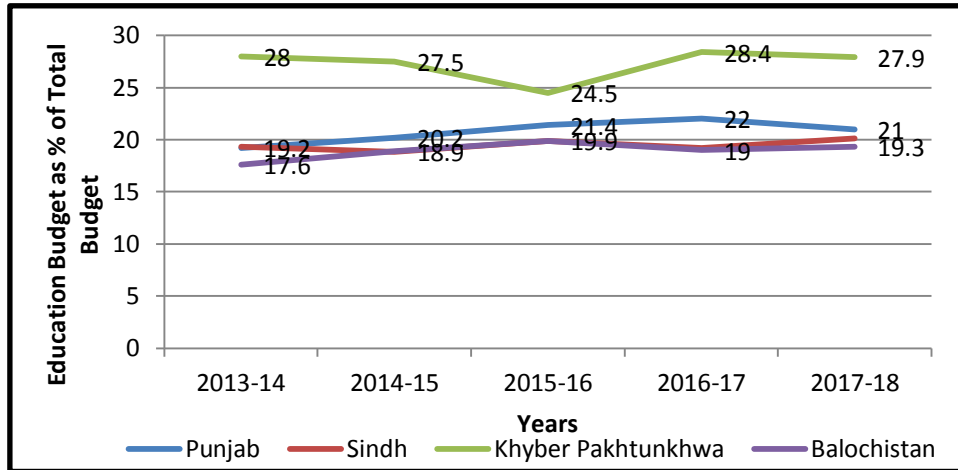
Table 2: Budget Allocations for 2017-18 (PKR Million)

Province	Education	Information, Science & Technology	Labour & HR Department	Sports & Youth Affairs
Punjab	74,104	3,500	650	8,507
Sindh	24,033	1,380	120	2,100
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	20,320	790	85	1,825
Balochistan	9,164	1,723	135	1,879

Source: GoP 2019b.

Table 2 indicates the budget allocations from every province in education, information science & technology, labour and human resource department and sports & youth affairs. All these sectors are significant for youth development. Punjab has the highest budget allocations, but the situation is different if one looks at the allocations as a percentage of the total budget. The share of recurrent budget which is allocated for salary expenditures is more than the non-salary budget of all provinces. Hence, the up gradation of infrastructure in educational institutes is an issue. There is lack of teachers, while the quality of existing teachers is not very satisfactory. Both these elements are vital in promoting education. SDG goal 4.c specifies the need to increase qualified teachers through teacher training. However, for this purpose, the government has to implement a vigorous strategy which requires more budget allocation than the existing ones.

Figure 1: Education Budget (% of Total Provincial Budget)



Source: GoP 2019b.

It is evident from Figure 1 that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has higher percentage of spending on education as compared to other provinces. Balochistan's allocations for education are the lowest as compared to other provinces which is why the region shows poor performance in this sector. In Punjab, a higher proportion of the education budget is being spent on current expenditure due to which development spending is lower (Dawn 2020). Budgetary allocations are going more towards boys' education as compared to girls' education in all the provinces (Tabassum et al. 2019). This explains the gender disparity which should be addressed to increase facilities in girls' educational institutes. It can be observed that the budgetary allocations in all provinces have remained the same over the years and no considerable increase is observed. With the rise in youth population and their share in total population, increase in education budget is required. Also, SDG 4.a which is about building and upgrading education facilities can only be achieved by allocating sufficient budget for the said purpose. Silliman (2004) also expressed the same views that decrease in funding is detrimental for youth development.

Table 3: Number of Educational Institutes (2016-17)

Province	Primary	Middle	High	Higher Sec.	Inter-college	Degree College	Universities
Punjab	59,515	32,903	18,699	1,826	541	638	60
Sindh	42,430	6,006	5,392	657	154	242	54
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	24,200	4,973	4,036	1,192	153	291	35
Balochistan	12,312	1,575	1,091	88	95	138	8

Source: GoP 2017.

Table 3 indicates that Punjab has the highest number of educational institutes at every level. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the second highest number of secondary institutes, while the number of educational institutes in Balochistan is lower as compared to other provinces. However, considering that the share of Punjab's population in total population of Pakistan is more than 50%, there is need for more educational institutes. However, more educational institutes are needed in other regions also.

Over the years, the need for a skilled labour force based on effective education and training system has increased (Srivastava and Khare 2012). Technical and vocational institutes in this regard play a key role in boosting skills among youth which are not only helpful in obtaining jobs, but also provide additional earnings as compared to unskilled workers (Nazli 2004).

Table 4: Number of Technical and Vocational Institutes (2016-17)

Province	Technical	Enrolment	Vocational	Enrolment
Punjab	666	52,371	1,170	131,041
Sindh	196	38,758	424	26,104
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	36	4,819	650	47,780
Balochistan	12	1,715	137	10,076

Source: GoP 2017.

Punjab has the highest number of technical and vocational institutes (Table 4), while the enrolment rate in Punjab is also higher as compared with other provinces. However, these numbers are lower considering the massive youth population and demand within the country. One of the reasons of higher unemployment rate within the provinces is also associated with lack of institutions. SDG 4.3 intends to provide quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including at university level. However, all the provinces are quite behind on this target. Lack of funding is the major constraint faced by technical institutes due to which outdated facilities exist (Raza and Khalid 2017).

Furthermore, there is also lack of facilities including transport, hostels and buildings due to which students often faced difficulties (Shah 2009). Curriculum and examination system in the institutes are outdated, whereas there is no liaison between technical institutes and the industry. As a result, mismatch, in demand and supply, occur which give rise to youth unemployment.

Table 5: Labour Force Participation Rates 2017-18

Province	15-19			20-24			25-29		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Punjab	48.43	21.33	35.11	85.77	29.58	55.36	96.10	31.85	60.78
Sindh	49.97	8.09	32.02	84.77	14.25	51.71	96.21	16.06	55.41
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	41.38	6.84	24.80	79.31	14.87	43.21	95.67	14.94	48.32
Balochistan	46.23	9.08	32.03	85.48	11.65	52.09	96.21	9.83	47.35

Source: GoP 2018.

Punjab has the highest labour force participation rates for all age groups (Table 5). Sindh has the highest labour force participation rate for males belonging to age group of 15-19; while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the highest rate for males belonging to age group 25-29. It is also observed that the participation rate increases as the age group changes which indicates that at older age, participation rate is higher in every province. However, one key aspect in this regard is that at early stages, young people need career counseling so that their participation rate can be increased.

Table 6: Unemployment Rates 2017-18

Province	15-19			20-24			25-29		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Punjab	14.48	6.11	11.98	10.41	13.50	11.30	3.19	13.41	6.14
Sindh	8.57	2.47	7.91	10.81	22.51	12.32	3.97	20.35	6.39
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	7.72	10.41	8.08	10.79	14.73	11.55	7.96	12.01	8.69
Balochistan	7.16	33.17	9.98	8.07	36.70	10.96	3.80	18.62	5.54

Source: GoP 2018.

Punjab has higher unemployment rate for age group 15-19 years; whereas Balochistan has highest unemployment rate for age group 20-24 years, and for age group 25-29 years, Sindh has the highest rate (Table 6). Female unemployment rate is highest in Punjab for the 15-19 years age group.

The reasons for unemployment include job mismatch as youth find it difficult to secure a job relevant to their field of study (Farooq 2011). The trend is more common for women, which is one of the reasons for higher female unemployment rate. The lack of planning is also contributing towards job mismatch (Hassan and Noreen 2013) as the policies do not incorporate existing and future market demands. It is also a fact that due to low economic growth enough jobs are not available and labour supply is more than the demand (Robalino and Cho 2012). There is also lack of career counseling centres and institutes which can offer compatible training skills for youth (Qayyum 2007). Lack of skills and experience; structural mismatch; region and province-wise discrimination in the provision of employment prospects and divergence in rural and urban areas are other factors behind youth unemployment in Pakistan (Ashraf et al. 2013).

7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Extensive efforts are required to achieve the SDG targets related to education. For better results, it is required that provinces should provide ample opportunities of education and training to youth at early stages. Focus should be on increasing literacy rate and provision of quality education which is possible by increasing the development expenditures on education. Special internship programmes can be initiated by the provincial governments so that students can have an opportunity to gain practical experience along with their education. Provinces should also allocate more budgets towards development expenditures instead of recurrent expenses. The number of technical and vocational institutes should also be increased, whereas more budget should be allocated for these institutes to improve basic infrastructure and increasing enrolment levels. In this regard, it must be ensured that the courses and training programmes offered should be according to industry requirements. Furthermore, provision of technical and vocational skills should also consider rapid changes and requirements of the modern world as with the introduction of technology in every field of life, new skill sets are required to progress in any professional field.

Employment provision to youth can also be ensured through skills development programmes. Such initiatives based on skills provision to youth through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are essential (UNESCO 2013). Enrolment in Technical and Vocational Training Authority in Punjab has increased which is a positive development, while the organisation is also focusing on provision of Microsoft IT certification to equip students with IT skills (Javed 2020). Such efforts should also be made in other provinces.

Establishing small-scale industries can also reduce youth unemployment and ensure provision of employment to those who possess skills. The rise of start-up culture in Pakistan is very encouraging where more and more youth are getting involved (Daily Times 2018a), and it will help to curtail the unemployment rate. E-commerce is another aspect which is penetrating Pakistan and can help to address unemployment challenges (Daily Times 2018b). However, the trend is only visible in urban areas which need to be expanded towards rural areas to offer opportunities to wider public.

Career counseling can provide guidance to youth according to their aptitude for which counseling centres at district level can be established. Effective human resource planning and Labour Market Information Systems can be developed (Mazhar and Gill 2014) as these practices are already been enforced in the developed countries to tackle unemployment. Government should implement sound macroeconomic policies in order to enhance economic growth and job opportunities for youth.

8. CONCLUSION

The population has increased in Pakistan with rapid pace and with it, the youth population has also increased which is vital for economic growth and requires effective planning. At early stages, youth require better education and training facilities so that skill development can be ensured. This will also help them when they enter the workforce. The massive youth population requires better health and education facilities in order to prosper in the economic field.

The youth-specific policies by provinces are still not implemented effectively due to which Pakistan is lagging behind other South Asian countries. As far as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education sector are concerned, lack of educational quality and access to education are major hurdles in improving literacy rates. Higher dropouts, lack of teachers particularly of qualified teachers are other major reasons for low literacy rates. There is lack of technical and vocational institutes in the country and the provinces are not paying attention to rectify the situation. These technical institutes are also not provided with sufficient funding, due to which, there is lack of modern educational facilities such as machines and material in technical institutes. Low economic growth and job mismatch are also causing higher unemployment rate among youth, while there is also lack of effective policies which incorporate existing and future market demand.

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