

Unemployment and its Role in Stimulating Addiction among Youth: A Field Study on Smoking, Drug, and Internet Addiction among Unemployed Youth

Admane Rokia¹

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Algiers –2 –Abou El Kacem Saadallah, rokia.admane@univ-alger2.dz

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the significant issue of youth unemployment in Tebessa and its potential to drive young people towards addiction, which is a serious problem in its own right. The study aims to identify the underlying factors that push unemployed youth towards negative behaviors, including addiction, specifically focusing on smoking, drugs, and internet use, which are the most prevalent forms of addiction in recent times.

The research is based on a field study conducted in Tebessa province on a sample of unemployed youth who smoke, as this is considered the first step that may lead them to drug use and excessive internet use. The study was applied to a sample of unemployed youth in Tebessa and its suburbs. The descriptive method was used, which was expressed through quantitative analysis. The social survey method was used, and a questionnaire was applied to a sample of 70 unemployed youth.

Keywords Youth, Unemployment, Motivation, Addiction.

1. Introduction :

Unemployment reflects an economic crisis that a country goes through during a period of economic imbalance. However, even during times of prosperity (economic balance), unemployment persists and cannot be completely solved. Its rate varies depending on the economic situation, ranging from low rates during prosperity to high rates during economic crises. This directly affects the socio-economic situation, negatively impacting families and individuals.

Youth are considered the building blocks of society and the real wealth of the family. They contribute to social and professional advancement through their professional success and cause anxiety if they fail to achieve economic stability by obtaining a job. This affects their social stability, as work is the key to their social and economic success. Its unavailability leads them into a cycle of unemployment that will reflect on their social and personal success.

Youth unemployment is a real dilemma facing the state, society, families, and even youth themselves. Unemployment increases the amount of free time that young people spend in their neighborhoods, which encourages them to engage in activities and behaviors that are not beneficial to them. These practices become habits over time and develop into addictions that they cannot get rid of.

Addiction in Algerian society is a recent phenomenon. The most common types of addiction that have become prevalent in society are smoking, drugs, and excessive internet use. Young people spend their time consuming them, which does not motivate them to look for work, develop their

skills, or find a place for themselves in society. This is what caught our attention and made us wonder: **how does unemployment stimulate addiction among young people?**

To answer this question, we relied on a field study in Tebessa Province on a sample of unemployed youth who smoke cigarettes, considering it the first step that will motivate them to turn to drug use, and perhaps excessive internet use. This study was applied to a sample of unemployed youth in Tebessa and its suburbs. We used the descriptive method, which we expressed through quantitative analysis. We relied on the social survey method with the sample, as well as the questionnaire tool that was applied to a sample of 70 unemployed youth.

The importance of this topic is highlighted by highlighting the role played by the free time that is caused by the unemployment that young people suffer from, which works to motivate them to spend it by taking the initiative to exploit it negatively. This is done by consuming smoking, drugs, and excessive use of the internet. These substances and mechanisms lead to addiction to them and the inability to get rid of their effect on them, which will affect their social life and professional future.

2. Definitions of Concepts:

2.1. Definition of Youth:

The « Petit Larousse » dictionary defines youth as a category that possesses "a set of physical characteristics" that are not available to other age groups, and it is also considered a "stage of development and growth for the state or characteristic of emerging or newly established things that have not yet reached their full potential or completeness"¹. Thus, youth here is a category that needs guidance and supervision until it reaches a stage of maturity that allows it to manage its own social and professional projects. If this category faces unemployment, it will be exposed to socio-psychological changes, most of which are negative. In this study, we will focus on the age group of 18 to 32 years for several reasons, including that 18 is the legal age for entering the world of work according to Algerian law, and also due to the delay in the social maturity of young people, which can be attributed to several social, psychological, and educational reasons.

2.2. Definition of Unemployment:

Unemployment can be defined as a state of inactivity experienced by individuals who are considered by others to be the socially active category (...). The unemployed are therefore the category that is ready to work but has not been able to find it. This definition includes individuals who have never had a job, as well as those who have voluntarily stopped working but want to reintegrate into the socially active category².

An unemployed person is a young person who is capable of working and is looking for a job but has not found one, regardless of their educational level or professional training. The important thing is that they are part of the socially active category as unemployed because they are looking for work, which is the characteristic of the sample in our research.

2.3. Motivation:

This definition captures the pervasive impact of motives on human experience.

Moreover, it suggests that one may find clues to an individual's motive tendencies in a vast array of aspects of experience, none of which can be seen as uncharted by the individual's motivational constitution.

A second implication of McDonald's definition of motive is that an important source of the idiosyncratic unity, coherence, or internal lawfulness in personality is provided by motivation. Motivation has long been viewed as a force underlying pattern and meaning in human life. interest in motivation implies an interest in recurrent patterns.

Exploration in motivation can be seen as explorations in the spontaneous expressions of the individual as well as in thematic coherence. Motive impulses find expression through a variety of outlets and all of these outlets are potentially useful to research human motivation. Thus, a wide range of techniques is available to the researcher intent on depicting the motivational aspects of a person³.

Therefore, motivation is an important factor in influencing the life of an unemployed young person who spends his free time without work and without achieving his previously set goals. The motivation here is negative because unemployment will lead to negative behaviors and practices that are unrelated to social success.

2.4. Definition of Addiction:

a compulsive, chronic, physiological, or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behavior, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence: the state of being addicted
 « an addiction to prescription painkillers, drug addictions, gambling addiction »⁴.

Therefore, addiction is the inability of a person to control his desires and control himself, and therefore he seeks to satisfy them no matter the cost. The most important types of addiction that we will discuss are addiction to smoking addiction to drugs as substances consumed by young people, and addiction to the Internet as a behavior that is practiced daily and cannot be stopped. Both types of addiction negatively affect the individual's natural daily practices, as he gradually separates himself from the social environment to which he belongs.

3. Personal Characteristics of Unemployed Youth

This section will discuss the personal characteristics that will help us understand the reality of unemployed youth and their ability to overcome unemployment without being negatively motivated.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Percentage	Frequency	Age	
58,6	41	19-25	Probability
41,4	29	26-32	
100,0	70	Total	

it is clear to us from the table that more than half of the research sample is represented by the youth category from 19-25, where they represent the youth category in the first stage who do not have a complete view of life. They are young people who have either dropped out of school or completed their university studies, i.e. they have barely acquired theoretical knowledge for the profession they are looking to work in the future. This is followed by the percentage of young people in the age group 26-32, which is the category of young people who represent the second stage of youth, i.e. they have theoretical knowledge about the profession they want to work in and have spent a considerable amount of time looking for a job. Their experience with unemployment has been going on for a considerable period, which has caused these young people to suffer from psychological and social crises, which we will discuss later.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Percentage	Frequency	Gender	
84,3	59	Male	Probability
15,7	11	Female	
100,0	70	Total	

From the table, we can see that 85.3% of unemployed respondents who struggle with addiction are male, compared to only 14.7% of females. This low percentage reflects the nature of traditional Algerian society, which is patriarchal. Due to its values and culture, this society exerts more moral and behavioral control over females than males. As a result, the differences between genders are "A relationship that is socially constructed and acquired in the course of society"⁵. Addiction is a serious social problem that can bring shame to a girl's family. As a result, girls who are addicted to drugs or alcohol often hide their addiction from their families and communities. Only their close friends, who may also be involved in substance abuse, know about their addiction. In contrast to men, who are more likely to smoke openly, women are often discouraged from using drugs by social norms. As a result, women who use drugs may do so in secret to avoid judgment or disapproval.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Percentage	Frequencies	Educational Level	
47,1	33	Secondary	Probabilities
52,9	37	University	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that half of the sample are university graduates, so their unemployment is relatively recent. The Algerian society is experiencing high youth unemployment rates, especially in the inland areas where there are fewer economic projects compared to the coastal areas. The secondary level represents 47.1%, which represents young people who dropped out of school and turned to professional life, but were unable to find a job and are therefore suffering from unemployment and its consequences.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Area of Residence

Percentage	Frequency	Area of Residence	
68,6	48	urban	Probabilities
31,4	22	Semi-urban	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 68.6% of the respondents live in urban areas, where it is easier to come into contact with young people or their peers who teach them addiction, especially since they spend most of their time outside the home without any work to benefit them, which makes them turn to addiction. We find that a third of the sample of young people live in semi-urban areas, where social support is stronger than in urban areas.

4. The Reality of Smoking Among Unemployed Youth :

In this section, we will explore the motivations for smoking among unemployed youth, as well as the underlying reasons behind its consumption. This is particularly relevant in Algerian society, where smoking is considered harmful to health and is often discouraged by families. Some families even prohibit their children from smoking and punish them if they do. Therefore, it is essential to understand the age of consumption to assess the extent of family supervision and the role of unemployment in encouraging smoking.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents According to the Age at which they first started Smoking

Percentage	Frequency	Age	
1,4	1	12	Probabilities
27,1	19	20	
15,7	11	26	
4,3	3	30	
21,4	15	32	
15,7	11	29	
14,3	10	23	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that young people between the ages of 29 and 32 represent 41.4%, which is a high percentage. These are young people who have tried hard to find a job but have not been successful. This age represents the ideal age in traditional society for marriage and family formation, i.e., achieving the social stability that these young people have not been able to achieve due to unemployment. This has harmed their psychology and has made them look for an outlet, even if it is negative, to express their anger and forget their reality. In this case, unemployment has become a reason for entering the world of addiction to smoking.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents According to the Individuals Who Initiated Their Cigarette Consumption

Percentage	Frequency	Individuals	
17,1	12	Relatives	Probabilities

34,3	24	Friends	
47,1	33	Alone	
1,4	1	Father	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 47.1% of the respondents learned to smoke on their own, without any guidance from anyone. They simply watched others smoke and, over time, developed a desire to experiment due to social pressures. On the other hand, 34.3% of the respondents were influenced by their friends to smoke. This indicates that the respondents are influenced by their friends, especially since they spend a lot of time with them. The percentage of those who were influenced by their relatives is 17.1%, which is a percentage that applies more to the respondents who live in large families, where constant and continuous communication with them leads to being influenced by them.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to the reason for smoking

Percentage	Frequency	Reason for Smoking	
45,7	32	Boredom	Probabilities
32,9	23	Family problems	
21,4	15	Unemployment	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 32 of the respondents smoke because of boredom. Not having a job and staying for a long time without using their time in a way that benefits them and earns them money makes them try to find entertainment that distracts them and takes them out of their reality. They find their refuge in smoking. This boredom is caused by unemployment and not finding a stable job that benefits them.

On the other hand, 32.9% of the respondents identified family problems as the main reason for turning to smoking. These problems could have been avoided and overcome if they had a job that would help them overcome their family problems, which are often caused by economic reasons.

This is followed by 21.4% of the respondents who believe that not finding a job is the main reason for smoking, as it allows them to express all their frustrations and anger.

It can be said that all of these reasons are related to unemployment, which causes boredom, and family problems, and thus directly contributes to smoking.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents According to Attempts to Quit Smoking

Percentage	Frequency	Attempt to quit	
75,7	53	Yes	Probabilities
24,3	17	No	
100,0	70	Total	

it is evident from the table that 75.7% of the respondents have attempted to quit smoking due to the perceived harmful effects and lack of perceived benefits. In contrast, 24.3% of the respondents do not wish to quit smoking, citing addiction and the need to fill idle time due to unemployment as reasons.

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents According to the Reasons for Attempting or not Attempting to Quit Smoking

Percentage	Frequency	Reason	
75,7	53	Attempting to quit due to health concerns	Probabilities
24,3	17	Not attempting to quit despite the additional expenses	
100,0	70	Total	

As evidenced by the table, 75.7% of the respondents perceive smoking as detrimental to their health and consequently seek to quit. This is further amplified by the fact that smoking has not only failed to address their unemployment concerns but has also exacerbated their existing health problems. Conversely, 24.3% of the respondents acknowledge cigarettes as an additional financial burden, not only for themselves but also for their families. However, they have been unable to overcome their addiction and quit.

5. The Reality of Drug Use Among Unemployed Youth

Drugs pose a serious threat to Algerian families, constantly looming as a source of worry in their homes. Parents are understandably anxious and constantly warn their children about the dangers of drug use. This raises a crucial question: how much does unemployment influence drug use among young people, even when they've been exposed to awareness campaigns during their upbringing?

Table 10: Distribution of Respondents According to Drug Use

Percentage	Frequency	Drug Use	
48,6	34	Yes	Probabilities
51,4	36	No	
100,0	70	Total	

The study reveals that 51.4% of the respondents currently abstain from drug use. This suggests a general fear of addiction among young people, leading them to quit after initial experimentation. Furthermore, 75.7% of the respondents regret smoking after becoming hooked, reinforcing this trend.

However, the same table shows that 48.6% of the respondents have become addicted to both drugs and cigarettes. This plunges them into a vicious cycle due to their free time spent in external environments. Instead of positively motivating themselves to acquire professional and social skills, they fall prey to the negative influence of drug use.

Table 11: Distribution of Respondents According to Age of First Drug Use

Percentage	Frequency	Age	
28,6	20	25	Probabilities
1,4	1	30	
1,4	1	32	
18,6	13	22	
34,3	24	19	
15,7	11	21	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that most young people, at 72.83%, first experimented with drugs at a young age, around 19, 21, and 22. This reflects a lack of awareness about the dangers and recklessness. However, 20 respondents had their first experience at 30 or 32 and were able to quit before becoming addicted, thanks to their understanding of the harm and consequences.

Table 12: Distribution of Respondents by Reason for Drug Use

Percentage	Frequency	Reasons	
62,9	44	Boredom	Probabilities
21,4	15	Family problems	
15,7	11	Unemployment	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 62.9% of respondents turn to drugs because of free time. This highlights how unstructured leisure time, if not used for developing social skills and professional qualifications by families, can lead individuals down negative paths beyond their control. Coming in second with 21.4%, respondents use drugs to escape family problems they can't overcome due to joblessness and the lack of social success a job can bring. Finally, respondents cite unemployment itself as a direct reason for drug use, seeing it as a way to numb the sting of failure and social challenges.

Table 13: Distribution of Respondents by Individuals Who Introduced Them to Smoking

Percentage	Frequency	Individuals	
60,0	42	Friends	Probabilities
18,6	13	Family	

21,4	15	The street	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 60% of respondents learned about drugs from friends. This makes sense, as friends are who we spend our free time with and naturally influence our behaviors and actions. Young people often choose friends similar to themselves as a source of comfort and escape from their problems. Coming in second at 21.4% is learning from the streets, especially for young men who spend their free time outside the home seeking new experiences to forget their reality. Worryingly, 18.6% learned from family members, specifically fathers or brothers who act as role models for young people in terms of values, habits, and behaviors. Instead of guiding them towards positive habits, unfortunately, they're exposed to negative influences.

6. Excessive Internet Use Among Unemployed Youth

While the Internet has become indispensable in various aspects of life (social, educational, professional), its accessibility varies across regions. Areas like Tebessa face limited internet connectivity. This study aims to understand the extent of internet use among unemployed youth and whether it has negatively impacted them.

Table 14: Distribution of Respondents by Frequency of Internet Use

Percentage	Frequency	Usage	
91,4	64	Yes	Probabilities
8,6	6	No	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that a whopping 91.4% of respondents use the internet regularly, highlighting how it has become their go-to way to spend free time. This stands in stark contrast to the 8.6% who rarely use it, suggesting a lack of interest or that it doesn't offer enough appeal as a leisure activity.

Table 15: Distribution of Respondents by Social Media Account Ownership

Percentage	Frequency	Account Ownership	
98,6	69	Yes	Probabilities
1,4	1	No	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that 98.6% of the respondents have social media accounts. This indicates that most respondents have enough time to use the internet in their free time, especially since they are unemployed. They are looking for ways to entertain themselves and pass the time, or as they say, "kill time..." The meaning of this phrase is dangerous because the young person in this situation is

looking for ways to make their days pass quickly because they are bored and have no purpose in life. They have ruined their lives with the chemicals they are addicted to, and they no longer have much hope of getting a job due to the widespread problem of unemployment in society.

Table 16: Distribution of Respondents by Perceived Benefits of Internet Use

Percentage	Frequency	Benefits	
52,9	37	Using it for university-related information	Probabilities
34,3	24	Education	
12,9	9	Reading about everything new	
100,0	70	Total	

The table shows that over half (52.9%) of respondents use the Internet to gain knowledge. They see it as a way to acquire the theoretical and scientific skills that will boost their future job prospects. Following this, 34.3% (mostly those with a secondary school education) use it for self-education. Finally, 12.9% use the Internet to stay informed about current trends, particularly those related to the job market and its demands.

Table 17: Distribution of Respondents by Social Media Group

Percentage	Frequency	Social Media Group	
45,7	32	People you know in real life	Probabilities
54,3	38	Virtual people	
100,0	70	Total	

The study shows that all respondents have online social groups. Interestingly, over half (54.3%) prefer to interact with strangers online, people they've never met before. Research suggests that most of these online personas are anonymous, often sending unethical messages that can even lead to scams. This raises concerns about the potential dangers these young people face, as they risk adopting negative habits and behaviors that could push them toward delinquency. On the other hand, almost half (45.7%) prefer to connect with people they know in real life, using these platforms for entertainment, chatting, and catching up.

Table 18: Distribution of Respondents According to the Number of Hours they Spend on the internet.

Percentage	Frequency	Hours	
24,3	17	3 hours	Probabilities
10,0	7	2hours	
65,7	46	5 hours	
100,0	70	Total	

The study reveals that 65.7% of respondents spend five or more hours using the Internet. This level of consumption appears excessive and verges on addiction, especially considering they are unemployed and not using the internet for work, but rather for leisure and entertainment. The remaining users spend three hours (24.3%) and two hours (10%) on the internet, which is not considered excessive and does not reach the threshold of addiction.

7. Conclusion :

Unemployment is a significant social issue due to the excessive leisure time faced by young people without work, especially after dropping out of school or finishing their studies without guidance from family or institutions that could help them navigate the job market, which they may be unfamiliar with.

Unemployment makes young people vulnerable to negative practices and behaviors, particularly in inland regions with fewer employment opportunities, an area the government has recently started focusing on as a solution to unemployment. The lack of effective solutions in this context has led young people to turn to addictive behaviors such as smoking and drugs, and more recently, with the arrival of the internet in these areas, to internet addiction.

However, widespread internet addiction is not observed due to limited internet access in these regions, making unemployment in this case a potential benefit in terms of reducing the types of addiction young people may be susceptible to.

This study highlights that unemployed young people are significantly influenced by their social environment, especially friends and the streets. After leaving school, they lack a positive environment to develop their skills and turn to the streets and their friends, where they acquire negative practices and behaviors. Positive behaviors could be obtained from educational and training institutions provided by the government, both for finding employment or creating businesses through various mechanisms available to young people. However, these initiatives have not yet motivated young people to take action, leading the government to recently integrate its development policies into schools and universities to educate young people about their importance and prevent them from entering the cycle of unemployment and its negative consequences.

¹Youth. (1991). In *Petit Larousse Illustré* (p. 545). Larousse.

² Martin Roques, *Exiting Unemployment Has an Effect on the Reorganization of the System*, Mardaga, rue Saint-Vincent, 1995, p. 14.

³ Charles. P. Smith, John. W. Akinson, *Motivation, and Personality: Handbook Of Thematic Content Analyses*, Cambridges, New York, 2004, P73.

⁴ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Addiction. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction>

⁵Boudon, R., & al. (1999). *Dictionnaire de sociologie (Dictionary of sociology)*. Larousse. France.

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