



## **A STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN KENYA: A CASE OF GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA**

**Salah Abdirahman Farah<sup>1i</sup>,**

**Hussein Abdi Ali<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer Garissa Teachers College,

Part-time lecturer Umma University, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer Umma University, Kenya

### **Abstract:**

Unemployment is a major problem in Kenya. It has made many young university graduates demoralized. Unemployment rate has risen so high that in every 10 young people, close to 4 are jobless with requisite qualifications. Successive governments have done little to arrest the situation. This research was done to understand the causes of unemployment in Kenya and the solutions that can be put in place to mitigate the problem. The effects of unemployment and the relationship between creation of opportunities and the growth of economy. The research found out that unemployment in Kenya is very high. This shows lack of confidence they have the system in place. The main effects of unemployment are crime, corruption, nepotism and favourism, high dependency and drug abuse. Being a job creator rather than a job seeker is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya. The research also found out that aligning the education curriculum in line with the demand of the market is paramount and should be hastened. In conclusion, unemployment has caused a lot of problems in Kenya. The research recommended a raft of measures to reduce the issue of unemployment in the country. Encourage the youth to be job creators and not job seekers only. Universities should play an important role in this case. Universities should develop courses that are relevant and demand driven. Duplication of courses with fewer demands should be minimized as this will flood graduates with similar courses that are not needed at all. Technical education should be enhanced and proper mechanisms put in place to sponsor and encourage students to take up these courses. Strict regulations should be enacted to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism. Kenya needs a practical and proactive solution for this monster.

**Keywords:** unemployment, job creator, corruption, high dependency, course duplication

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [salahfa49@gmail.com](mailto:salahfa49@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Unemployment in Kenya has become a headache both for those in leadership and those seeking various opportunities. In as much as successive governments have tried to mitigate the already alarming situation, labour supply has been on the rise in relation to its demand. This has created a huge backlog. The major effects are felt by the youth who seek to get return for their investment in education. Though there are conflicting reports of Unemployment rate in Kenya, however, there is no doubt the rate is high if reports by various stakeholders is anything to go by.

Kenya recorded 39.1 percent unemployment rate according to recent report by United Nations; Human Development Index (HDI) 2017. It also shows that Kenya has the highest unemployment rate in East Africa.

Kenya has a long record of implementing employment policies. Over 40 years ago, for example, the 1970–74 Development Plan (Republic of Kenya, 1969) featured employment and unemployment as important policy matters. Recently, The Sector Plan for Labour, Youth and Human Resource Development Sector (2008–2012) looked into unemployment as a big issue. There has been considerable continuity, since 10 of the 17 policy areas have been a constant in the menu throughout the entire period.

The causes of unemployment could be many and could also be averted. Therefore, “*A research on the causes of unemployment among university graduates in Kenya: a case study of Garissa County*” was conducted to understand what are the real causes of these unemployment among the deserving youth.

The research was conducted in Garissa county of Kenya. The county has the face of Kenya as most communities are represented. It has various institutions of high learning including Garissa University, Umma University and raft of middle level colleges. A well prepared questionnaire was presented to the respondents which were kept confidential. 75 respondents were engaged. Gender, level of education, age, position in society and other pertinent factors were considered in distributing the questionnaires. This was done to create high reliability rate and give a clear picture of the research objectives.

## 2. Literature Review

Employment creation policies in Kenya have been seen as greater factor for economic growth and development (ILO, 1995; Republic of Kenya, 1964). The underlying parameter, in this case, has been that faster economic growth would lead to employment creation and that income generation through employment would lead to improvement in the standards of living and eradication of poverty. Unemployment on the other hand affects the economic growth of any country, including Kenya. This is because unemployment of the people especially the youth.

The term “unemployment” has been defined by different scholars in different ways.

According to Karl Pribam (1946), “unemployment” is when the supply of labor power is more than the number of available openings. In this regard, unemployment is realized when the market has excess supply of the required labor power. Karl says that to create market equilibrium, labor supply should match with the labor demand. If either of them is more, the market loses its equilibrium.

Madan’s (1965) defined “*unemployment is the absence of opportunities of jobs for people willing to and actively looking for a job*”. The definition is based on the supply-demand phenomenon. He argues that this grossly ignores the aspect of value in employment. In as much as market equilibrium is emphasized, the labour value should be emphasized on.

Fairchild (1978) in his research acknowledges the importance of the value in employment. He says unemployment is enforced and involuntary separation from remunerative work on the part of the normal working force during normal time, at normal wages and under normal conditions.

Beveridge (1931) supported the findings of Fairchild. He stated that when “*unemployment is like a headache or a high temperature*” which he says is unpleasant. This is philosophical claim that makes unemployment felt. The heat, he says, is felt economically through exhaustion of the country’s economy.

S.A Farah, Hussein A. Ali, (2018) on their research “*A study on the perception of business students on the future job market*” observes that employers’ quality perception on university graduates in Kenya today is low. A research done in Garissa, Kenya and published on *international journal of scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)* finds that one major factor of unemployment in Kenya is the lack creation of opportunities that can absorb the high number of graduates. Tribalism, nepotism and favourism were also major factors that have locked many deserving young Kenyans seeking jobs. The study concludes that the government should step in to avert the problem.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Sampling

Sampling, which is an important aspect of data collection, is a statistical practice concerned with the selection of subset of individual observation from a given universe with the view of drawing conclusions. In this study a sample of 75 respondents were interviewed.

### 2.2 Sources of Data Collection

- **Primary sources:** Primary data was collected by administering structured and relevant questionnaire to the sample population.
- **Secondary sources:** Secondary was studied from relevant information available at the company in the form of past records, company website and booklets, newspapers, articles and journals.

### 2.3 Tools and Techniques for data Collection

The information was obtained through observation, administering of the structured questionnaire and interviews with the selected sample population. Data available in various reports, articles, books, periodicals was also be used.

### 2.4 Plan of Analysis

The data collected was analyzed and interpreted by using various statistical tools. It was tabulated against the number of respondents and percentages favoring them. Bar and pie charts was used to present and interpretation was deduced. Wrong inferences like incomplete and dishonest answers were eliminated.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

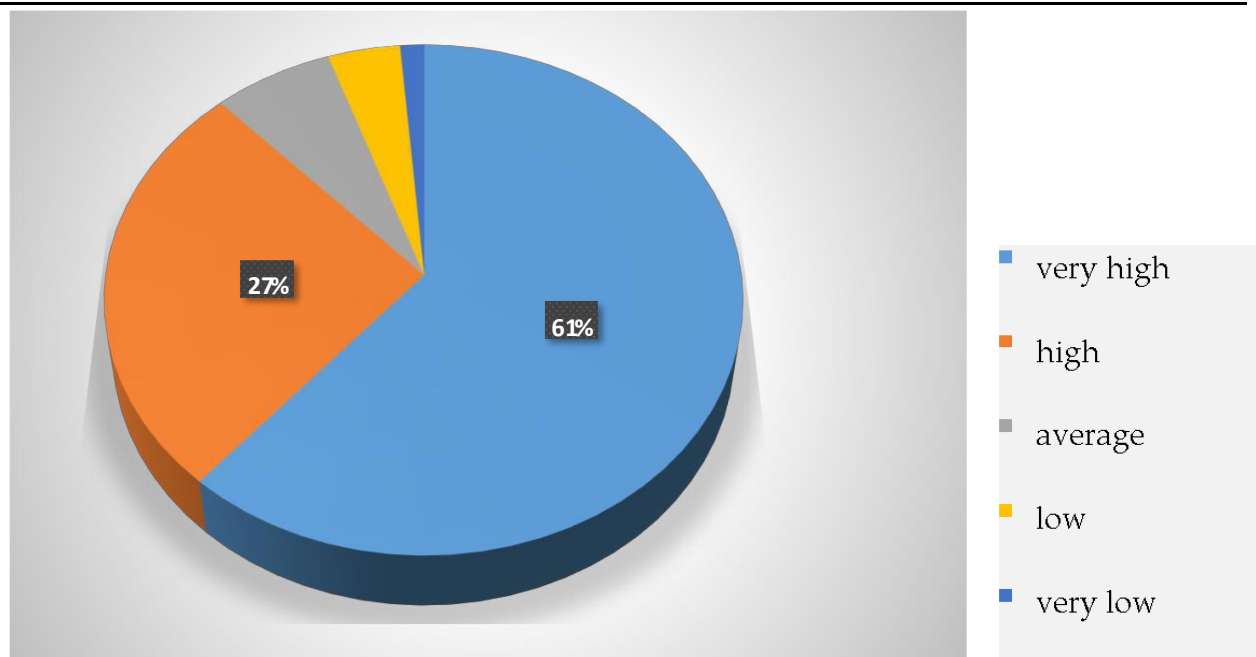
### A. How do you rate the unemployment level in Kenya?

**Table 1**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very high	46	61
High	20	27
Average	5	7
Low	3	4
Very low	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Analysis

When respondents were asked about “how do you rate unemployment level in Kenya?” 61% of them of them rated to be very high, 27% said the rate is high. Cumulatively, close to 90% of all the respondents rated the level of unemployment to be either high or very high. Only 1% rated the level of unemployment to be very low while 4% said its low.



**Graph 1**

### Interpretation

Unemployment in Kenya is very high according to the research. 9 out of 10 Kenyans rate unemployment to be an alarming state. This shows the lack of confidence they have in the system in place. Very few Kenyans, about 5%, say that unemployment is low. Relatively this is insignificant. To improve and bring confidence among Kenyans, strong systems should be put in place by the government and other stakeholders to create employment opportunities.

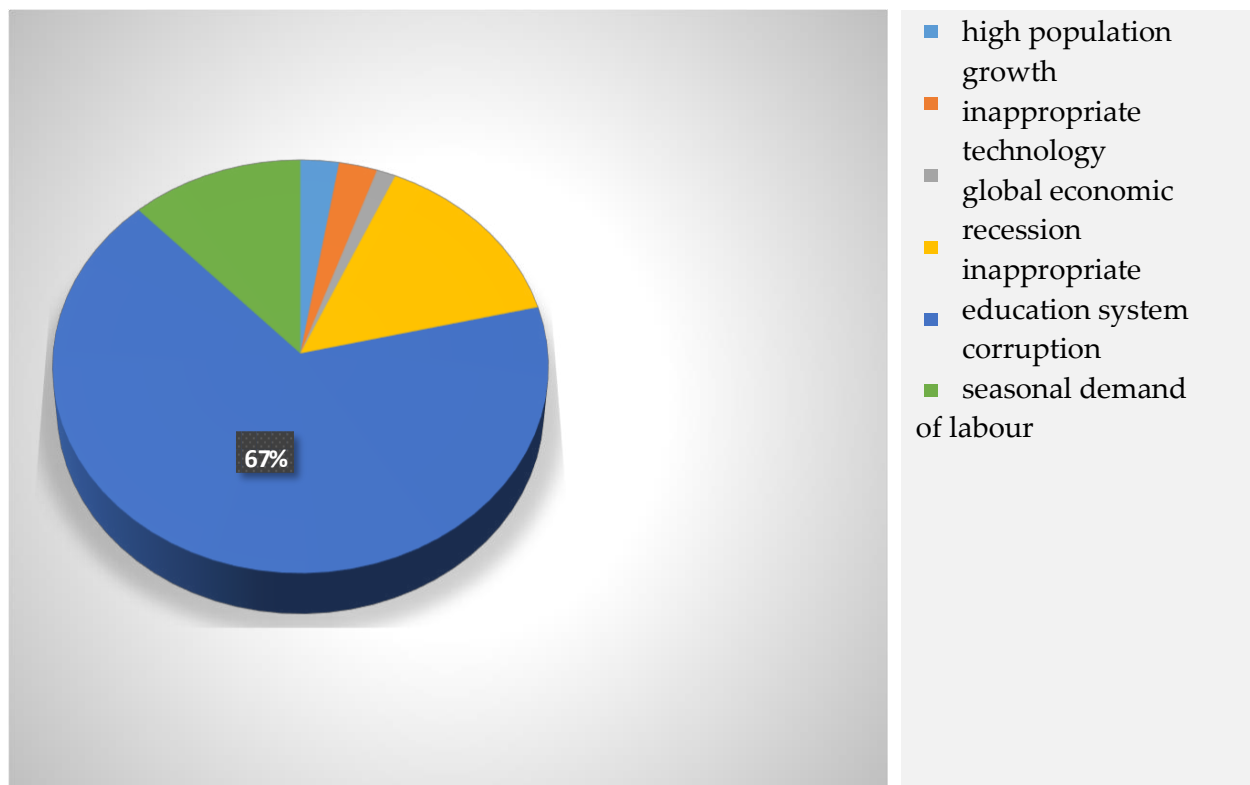
### B. In your opinion what leads to unemployment in Kenya?

**Table 2**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High population growth rate	2	3
Use of inappropriate technology	2	3
Global economic recession	1	1
Inappropriate education system	11	14
Corruption	50	67
Seasonal demand of labor	9	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Analysis

More than two-thirds of the respondents said that corruption is the major cause of unemployment in Kenya. Another 14 percent say inappropriate education system is the major reason for unemployment while 12 percent put the blame on seasonal demand of labor. Use of inappropriate technology and high population growth tied at 3 percent.



**Graph 2**

### Interpretation

Corruption is the major cause of unemployment in Kenya. Corruption has become a cancer in the body of Kenya. It has neutralized and reformatted It has denied young and deserving Kenyans opportunities. If this is solved, Kenyans will regain trust on the systems and structures in place. The education system is also to blame on the woes of young Kenyans. It should respond to the market needs so that university graduates stay relevant and hence get placements.

### C. What do you think could be the main effect of unemployment in Kenya?

**Table 3**

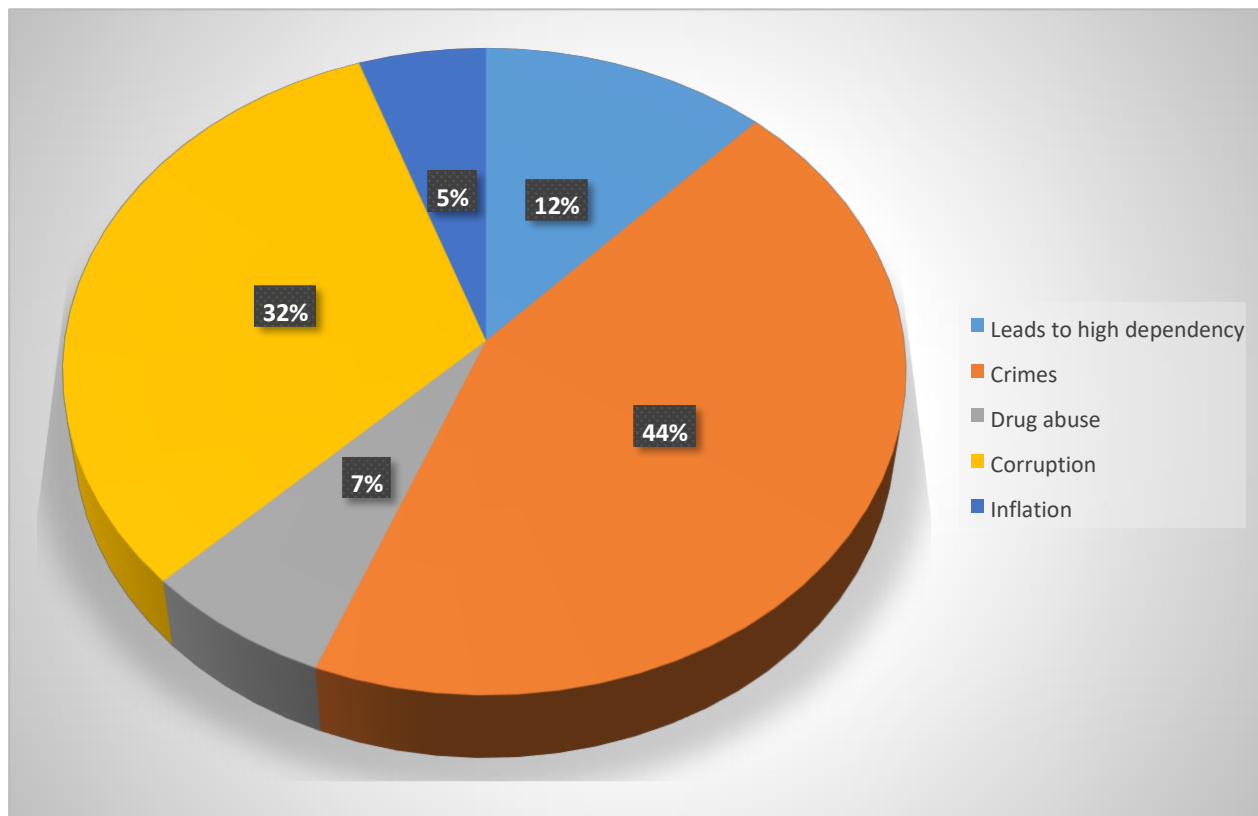
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Leads to high dependency	9	12
Crimes	33	44
Drug abuse	5	7
Corruption, nepotism and favourism	24	32
Inflation	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Analysis

When the above question was posed to the respondents, 44 percent of them said the main effect of unemployment is crime, while corruption, nepotism and favourism

attracted 32 percent of the respondents. 12 percent said it will lead to high dependency, drug abuse and inflation had 7 percent and 5 percent of the respondents.

**D. What do you think could be the main effect of unemployment in Kenya?**



**Graph 3**

**Interpretation**

According to this research, high levels of unemployment among the youth leads to crimes. This is because it makes many of our youth idle. These crimes could include petty or even hardcore crimes. As corruption begets corruption, high level of unemployment leads to corruption. This can kill the fabric of any society. Cumulatively, crimes and corruption (76%) are the two major results of unemployment in Kenya today.

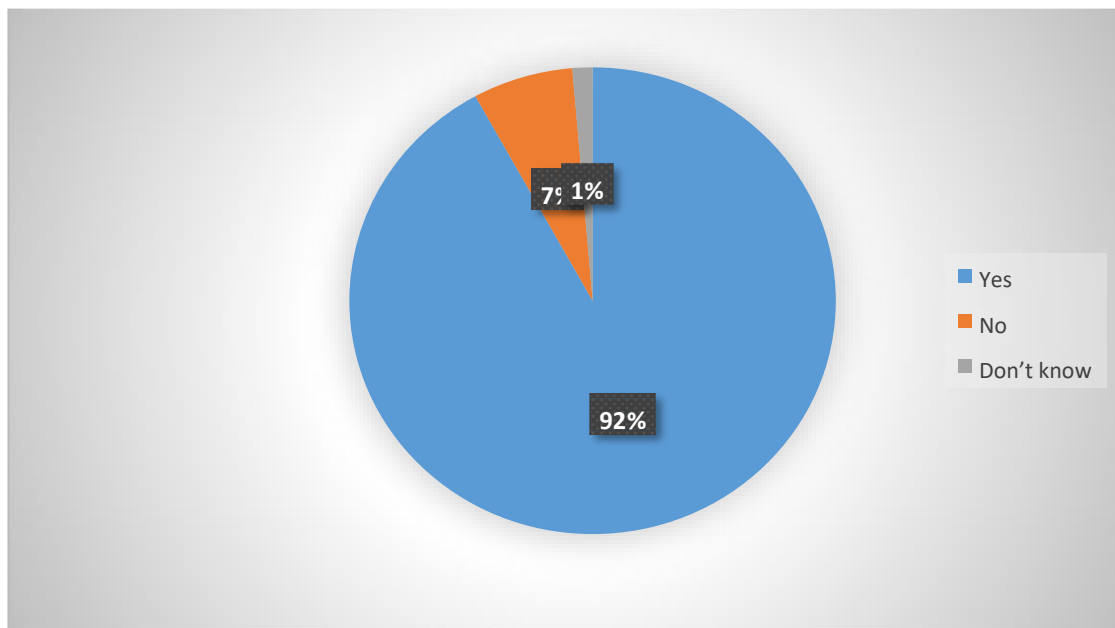
**E. Does economic growth of a country leads to availability of job opportunities?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	69	92
No	5	7
Don't know	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Analysis

When “Does economic growth of a country leads to availability of job opportunities?” was posed to the respondents, 92 percent of the respondents were affirmative, 7 percent of them said it won’t have any effect while a meagre 1 percent did not know about it.

### 5. Does economic growth of a country leads to availability of job opportunities?



**Graph 5**

### Interpretation

Economic growth of a country leads to job opportunities. Low unemployment rate is a strong indicator of a growing economy. When the economy expands, the youth will benefit out of job opportunities and the result is improved standards of living.

### F. What is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya?

**Table 5**

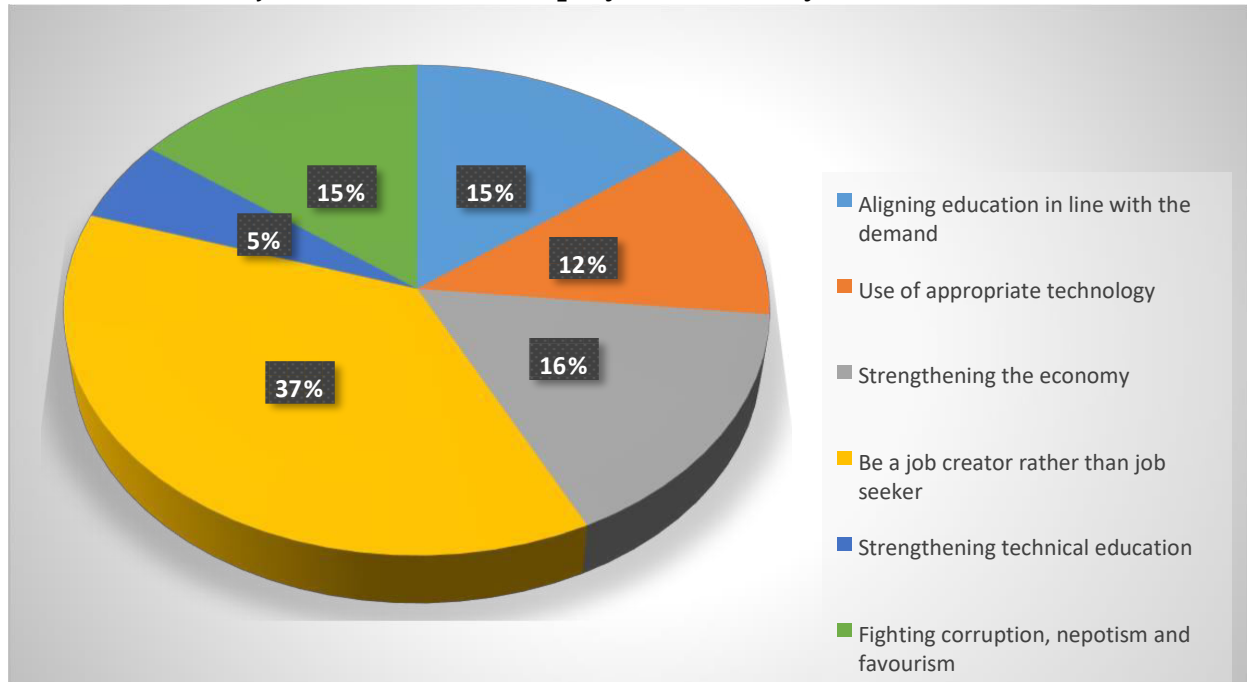
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Aligning the education system in line with the demand of the market	11	15
Use of appropriate technology	9	12
Strengthening the economy	12	16
Be a job creator rather than a job seeker	28	37
Strengthening a technical education	4	5
Fighting corruption, nepotism and favourism	11	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>



## Analysis

Being a job creator rather than a job seeker is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya. Aligning the education in line with the demand of the market, strengthening the economy attracted 15 percent and 16 percent respondents, while 15 percent and 12 percent said we have to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism and use of proper and relevant technology.

## 5. What is the major solution of unemployment in Kenya?



Graph 5

## Interpretation

The best and most effective way to solve the perennial unemployment is self-employment. Many of our youths seek white color jobs. This has become a nightmare for many. Fighting Corruption, nepotism, tribalism and favourism should also be enhanced in order for the deserving people to get employment without looking at their ethnic background. The government should also reconstruct the current education system to make sure it answers the call of the market. Static education has ruined lives of many graduates in Kenya.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

### 4.1 Conclusion

Unemployment in Africa in general and Kenya in particular has become a thorn in a flesh. University graduates have become demoralized due to high unemployment levels. They are investing heavily in education yet securing gainful employment has become an uphill task. The government and other stakeholders are supposed to put

practical solution on the table. Institutions of higher learning should work out a flexible and more marketable courses so that graduates are absorbed in to the dynamic market. Causes of unemployment including corruption, nepotism and favourism should be discouraged and proper mechanisms put in place. Knee-jerk reactions won't help in solving a problem of such magnitude. If lasting solution is not found on these issues, the problem of unemployment in Kenya will never be won.

#### **4.2 Recommendation**

Unemployment has caused a lot of problems in Kenya, including young people committing suicide. The research found out that the issue of unemployment can be at least solved or at worst reduced if the following recommendations are followed.

1. Encourage the youth to be job creators and not job seekers only. Universities should play an important role in this case.
2. Universities should develop courses that are relevant and demand driven. Duplication of courses with less demands should be minimized as this will flood graduates with similar courses that are not needed at all.
3. Technical education should be enhanced and proper mechanisms put in place to sponsor and encourage students to take up these courses.
4. Patriotism, ethics and citizenship should be encouraged. Strict regulations should be enacted to fight corruption, nepotism and favourism.

#### **References**

1. Barasa, Fred Simiyu, and Eleanor SM Kaabwe. "Fallacies in policy and strategies of skills training for the informal sector: evidence from the Jua Kali sector in Kenya." *Journal of education and work* 14.3 (2001): 329-353.
2. Kinyanjui, Mary Njeri. *Women and the informal economy in urban Africa: From the margins to the centre*. Zed Books Ltd., 2014.
3. Bertola, G, Boeri, T and Cazes, S (2000). "Employment Protection in Industrialised Countries: The Case for New Indicators", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 139, No.1, pp. 57-72.
4. Card, D (1992a). "Using Regional Variation in Wages to Measure the Effect of the
5. Federal Minimum Wage", *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, Vol. 46, pp 22-37.
6. Khan, A (2001). "Employment Policies for Poverty Reduction", *Recovery and Reconstruction Department*, Geneva
7. Republic of Kenya (1999). *National Poverty Eradication Plan*. Government Printer: Nairobi.
8. World Bank (2008). *Kenya: Accelerating and Sustaining Inclusive Growth*. Washington DC: World Bank. Accessed: <http://s3.marsgroupkenya.org/media/documents/2011/02/13feaeaf037e1ce>

[809051509d67c9039.pdf](#)

9. Government of Kenya (2008). *Sessional Paper No. 7 of 2005 on Employment Policy and Strategy for Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
10. Government of Kenya (1965). *Sessional Paper No. 1 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
11. International Labour Organization (ILO) (1972). *Employment, Incomes and Equality. A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya*. Geneva: ILO.  
Accessed: [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1972/72B09\\_608\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1972/72B09_608_engl.pdf)
12. Johanson, Richard and Arvil V. Adams (2004). *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Regional and Sectoral Studies*, World Bank, Washington, DC.  
Accessed: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/Skills\\_Development\\_Africa.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/Skills_Development_Africa.pdf)
13. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2008). *Labour Force Analytical Report – Based on the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (2005/2006)*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
14. Ryan, T.C.I. (2002). *Policy Timeline and Time Series Data for Kenya: An Analytical Data Compendium*. Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) Special Report No. 3. Nairobi: KIPPRA.
15. Accessed: <http://www.worldcat.org/title/policy-timeline-and-time-series-data-for-kenya-an-analytical-data-compendium/oclc/123376839>
16. Zepeda, E. and D. Alarcon (2012, forthcoming). "Cash Transfers and Poverty Reduction Employment Guarantee Schemes and Conditional Cash Transfers", in Ashok Pankag (ed.) *Cash Transfers and Public Works*, New Delhi.
17. Zepeda, E., L. Ndirangu, F. Leigh, and J. Omollo (2012, forthcoming). *Kenya's Youth Unemployment: the transition from child to adult in a rapidly changing country*. Semboja, H.H.H. (2005). "A Concept Paper on Promoting Opportunities for Youth Employment in East Africa". Paper prepared for the ILO regional office and presented at the EAC Meeting of Labour Commissioners, Nairobi, Kenya, December
18. Omolo, O.J. (2011). "Labour and Employment Inequalities in the Context of the East African Regional Integration Process" in *Society for International Development, East African Integration: Dynamics of Equity in Trade, Education, Media and Labour*, Nairobi: Ascent Limited.
19. Omolo, O.J. (2010). "The Dynamics and Trends of Employment in Kenya", IEA Research Paper Series, No. 1/2010, Nairobi: Institute of Economic Affairs.
20. Omolo, O.J. (2002). "An Overview of Incomes and Wage Policy in Kenya: Effectiveness and Constraints to Productivity Enhancement". A paper presented during a Productivity Policy and Legal Framework Workshop, Mombasa.

Salah Abdirahman Farah, Hussein Abdi Ali  
A STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN KENYA:  
A CASE OF GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA

---

+

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).