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**Journeys towards Employment:
The Experiences of Young Adults
in the Maldives**

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Abstract

In a similar situation to most countries in the world, unemployment is rising in the Maldives and it is noticeable that more and more young adults are struggling to achieve gainful, productive employment. There are several difficulties and barriers faced by the young adults of today, before they even take their first crucial step into the labour market.

This research aims to identify these barriers faced by young adults in the employment process. To achieve this, the research conducted exploration in order to obtain an in-depth understanding into the experiences of urban young adults in the Maldives, who were in the process of finding and securing jobs.

The methodology used in the research process was qualitative in nature with the use of individual interviews and focus group discussions, in order to achieve a close, in-depth view into the employment experiences of these young adults. The researched explored and identified several barriers to urban youth unemployment. Amongst the barriers to employment, the most common themes identified were in relation to educational achievements and discrimination. This study also identified several changes emphasised as important by the young participants in the research. They believe these changes are necessary, to combat the barriers that they face and they will also enhance better employment opportunities in the future.

To Ishaq and Mamma

Whose strength and support have been my help and inspiration during those times away from home, in New Zealand, where I completed my journey – the completion of this thesis.

My son, I salute your strength and 'Mamma' (my mother), I acknowledge your support and inspiration.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Glossary and Abbreviations	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Significance of the Study	2
Why the research topic and why the topic area?	3
Background to the country of research – the Maldives	5
Operational definitions	7
<i>Youth/Young Adults</i>	7
<i>Employment/Unemployment/Underemployment/Overemployment</i>	8
Delimitations of the Research	10
An Outline of the Thesis	10
Chapter 2 Youth and Unemployment – A Review of Related Literature	12
Introduction	12
Unemployment and Young Adults	13
<i>General Overview</i>	13
Related Issues to Employment	16
<i>Theme 1: Unavailability of Jobs</i>	16
<i>Theme 2: Education, Training, Skills and Work Experience</i>	18
<i>Theme 3: Discrimination and Stereotyping</i>	20
<i>Theme 4: Physical and Psychological Issues</i>	23
<i>Theme 5: Negative Behaviours and Consequences</i>	27
<i>Possible Solutions to Overcome Barriers of Unemployment</i>	29
Summary	31
Chapter 3 Methodology	33
General perspective on Methodology	33
Research Setting – Male’, Capital of Maldives	34
Consultation Survey	35
The Participants	35
Piloting the Study	36
Instrumentation	37
Screening Questions	38
Individual Interviews	38
Focus Group Discussions	40
Observation and further clarification of data gathered	41
Ethical Consideration	41
Data collection procedure	43
Data Analysis	45
Personal reflections on the research process	47
Summary	48

Chapter 4 Analysis and Findings	49
Introduction	49
Research Findings	50
<i>General Findings from the Research</i>	50
<i>Source of Information on Jobs</i>	50
<i>Meaning of Employment and Unemployment for the Participants</i>	51
<i>Education, Training, Skills and Work Experience</i>	52
<i>Discrimination and Stereotyping</i>	55
<i>Physical Psychological Issues</i>	59
<i>Unavailability of Jobs</i>	62
<i>Negative Behaviours and Consequences</i>	64
<i>Attitudes of Young Adults</i>	64
<i>Multiple Jobs</i>	65
<i>An Entreaty: Participants' Voice</i>	65
Concluding Comments	70
Chapter 5 Discussions	71
Introduction	71
<i>General Findings</i>	72
<i>The 'magic sheet of paper' and the 'glittering letters of gold'</i>	72
<i>It's the 'people' you know or which 'nest' you belong to</i>	74
<i>Initial frustrations that ended in challenges</i>	77
<i>Attitudes: Different Shapes and colors</i>	78
<i>A Difference</i>	79
<i>Collaborated Effort: Everyone has a role and there is so much to do</i>	81
Concluding Remarks	85
Chapter 6 Conclusions	86
Introduction	86
Reflection on Objectives	86
Implications for practice	90
Recommendations for further research	91
Final Thoughts	92
Appendix 1 Interview Questions	93
Appendix 2 Consent Form – Individual Interviews	97
Appendix 3 Consent Form – Focus Group Discussions	98
Appendix 4 Information Sheet	99
References	101

Glossary and Abbreviations

ICSE-93	International Classifications of Statistics in Employment
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMCAP	Improving Capacities for Poverty/Social Policy Research
MENA	Middle East and North African
MNPD	Ministry of National Planning and Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NZ	New Zealand
NZAID	New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency
SEA	South East Asian
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
YEN	Youth Employment Network

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The journey of trying to get a job has been a ‘rough sea’ – a ‘rough journey for me”
-Participant Eleven-

Employment for an individual, old or young, male or female, is an important aspect of an individuals’ life once they reach working age. Particularly, it is more important for a young adult, who is in transition from being a child at school and moving into adulthood and the working world. These young adults should have the opportunity to start their new life with a certain stability (a decent and meaningful job) to occupy and encourage them to move on towards a prosperous adult life. The above quotation, *“Journey of trying to get a job has been a ‘rough sea’ – a ‘rough journey’ for me”*, is the voice of a young urban adult from the Maldives. Such a statement reflects how difficult it has become for some young adults to obtain a job and this has become a critical issue, due to its influence on the value of their lives. Young adults today, throughout the world are facing many difficulties finding employment, and Maldivian young adults are not immune from the effect of barriers to employment, which can be seen in most parts of the world.

As stated in the forward of ‘Global Employment Trends of Youth of 2006’, “Without the right foothold from which to start out right in the labour market, young people are less able to make choices that will improve their own job prospects and those of their future dependants. This, in turn perpetuates the cycle of insufficient education, low-productivity employment and working poverty from one generation to the next” (ILO, 2006). Thus, the issues that lead to youth unemployment need to be explored and addressed with the utmost urgency. We need to find ways and means to overcome youth unemployment, in order to help the youth of today as they are also the future generations of this world, upon whom the world’s future is dependent.

Three years ago, on International Youth Day, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General stated, “We must develop strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work that will allow them to become independent and

responsible global citizens” (YMCA, 2005). Governments, planners and strategists seem to be still struggling to achieve this goal, and for a small country, such as the Maldives, the increase in youth unemployment and the issues that surround it cannot be over emphasised. Addressing the topic and the issues is therefore critical both for the sake of the individuals involved and also for the prosperous development of the nation. This situation then brings us to the significance and the focus of this study.

Significance of the Study

This current study derives its significance from the hope of finding some answers to the difficulties experienced by several young adults going through the process of finding and securing employment in the Maldives. Some of these young adults are believed to have spent many months – indeed years – in the process of looking for and securing a job and at times they may never have reached the point of actually securing a decent job. This is such a critical issue for the reason that, whilst some young people at the point of actively searching for jobs become more focused and keep trying, others tend to opt out of the situation when they find the process too difficult, frustrating and psychologically taxing. The effect of this negative impact can go as far as these young people deviating to choose negative paths in life, which then hampers their prospects of a successful future adult life. This is detrimental for the nation and the ILO clearly states that youth need a good foothold to start off their adult life, in order that they can become independent individuals, valuable to themselves and future generations (ILO, 2006).

Several studies have investigated youth unemployment and certain barriers have been identified that stand in the way of the young adult getting a job (ILO, 2006; Adoric, 2004; Bessant 2002; ILO, 2001; Maxted, 2001; Dorrance and Hughes, 1996; Visaria, 1998). The issues and difficulties faced by a young person depend on individual factors, in addition to the different cultural and situational factors of the country in which the young adults are seeking employment. This study aims to explore and obtain an in-depth understanding into the employment experiences of young urban adults in the Maldives, in the hope of gaining knowledge about the several barriers faced by these young urban

adults during their employment seeking process. Therefore the research questions, for which the research aims to find answers, are the following:

- Are there any difficulties and barriers faced by young urban adults in the employment process?
- If so, what are these barriers and difficulties?
- What are the possible changes that the youth themselves perceive as necessary, in order to combat difficulties and overcome barriers to employment?

It is anticipated that the findings will have commonalities to past findings relating to employment difficulties faced by world youth in general, and in addition the study will shed light on unique issues, that are part of the present research population and their society. It is hoped that the findings of this research can then be addressed and pave the way to overcome and improve the present day situation of our young adults: the young urban adults who are facing difficulties finding and securing employment in the Maldives.

Why the research interest and why the topic area?

The idea for research in the area of unemployment was inspired by my passion for working amongst people with special needs in the Maldives. By profession, I have spent my entire career working amongst people with special needs. After many years of working with these clients in a clinical setting, there came a point when I realised that I had to help these young people towards gainful employment, as part of their rehabilitation process. Whilst in the process of exploring the situation regarding these clients finding appropriate jobs with employers who are willing to give reasonable accommodation to young people with special needs, I realised that even normal young adults today are struggling to find work: a situation very different from the past

Furthermore, a few years after this period, I accidentally came across a situation where unemployment and young adults became a topic of concern for me. This was during the first few weeks after the 2004 tsunami. During those weeks I had the opportunity to

work with an enthusiastic, hard working group of young adults, who toiled passionately for many hours, without even much rest, as part of the relief team. Some of these young adults were well educated and most of them were reasonably educated. Moreover, they were reliable, dedicated and hard working. However, sadly, over the weeks, I discovered that many of them were in fact unemployed. Therefore, having worked with them and having witnessed the level of competency and productiveness in their work, I wanted to see them in jobs and to this end I even volunteered to help them find jobs, a process which they claimed was not easy. Initially, I found it hard to agree with them, as I personally had not experienced any difficulties finding a job, at any point in my life. However, I was soon to be proven wrong and I had to accept their point of view as a result of the obstacles I faced whilst trying to find a handful of jobs for these young people: this was not an easy task. I appeared to face several barriers and obstacles when trying to find jobs for these young people and these were related to certain biased attitudes, various types of discrimination, to name but a few.

Recently there has also been concern raised regarding youth unemployment in the Maldives. According to the '2005 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Country Report of the Maldives', after having reached MDG target 1, it has now been identified that youth unemployment is one amongst the remaining four key challenges and this is stated in the introduction of this report (MPND, 2005a).

"A fourth challenge is youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is substantial and has been increasing during the period 1997-2004. About 40 per cent of the young women and over 20 per cent of the young men are presently unemployed. Although the Maldives has already achieved the MDG target 1 there is no room for complacency. High and increasing youth unemployment coupled with increasing income inequalities between Male' and the atolls may lead to unfulfilled expectations, disillusion and increasing tension in the country".

Thus my interest was further drawn to the topic of this research: unemployment and young adults. Finding out about the difficulties which they are experiencing in the

process of finding and securing employment became once again my focus. My question is/was – ‘What are the difficulties and barriers that young adults are facing in the process of securing a job today, which I/we did not experience in previous years?’ If we can understand the difficulties they experience, then we can find ways to help these young adults to overcome these problems. I have therefore embraced these issues as an area which needs to be explored and addressed. The present young generation needs to be encouraged and helped to overcome the problems they face in finding something as basic in their lives as employment.

Background to the country of research – The Maldives

The Maldives is an island nation comprised of about 1,190 islands scattered across an area of 90,000 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean. These islands include 26 natural atolls, which for administrative purposes are divided into 20 atolls. Within these 1,190 islands, about 200 are inhabited. Similar to most developing countries, rapid urbanisation has also been a feature in the Maldives. The population of the Maldives is about 300,000 of which nearly 100,000 live in the capital, Male’.

All children between the ages of 6-15 years are entitled to compulsory education, irrespective of gender or social status and free education is available for all those within this age group. The average age for leaving secondary school is 16 years. According to the available data from the 2000 census, from a population of 56,780 young people, (aged between 15 -24 years) only 22,161 young adults were economically active, which leaves 33,946 as not economically active (MPND, 2005b:81). An estimation by the ‘Ministry of Planning and National Development, Maldives-Key Indicators 2005’, states that young adults between the ages of 15-24 years in the country totals 74,925 in the year 2005, of which 37,815 are males and 37,110 are females (MPND, 2005b:57-59). The number of children who left secondary school has also doubled over the past five years, from 3805 school leavers in the year 2001 to 7666 in the 2005.

Over the past few years, there has been a general feeling amongst society that more and more young adults are finding it difficult to secure employment. Looking back over the

past few decades, it can be seen that in the 1980s there was 100% formal sector public employment available for all secondary school leavers and this continued until the beginning of the 1990s. The previously enforced bond for three years, relating to secondary school leavers, which guaranteed a job has now been waived. The availability of jobs has also been believed to have decreased and the creation of new jobs has not been sufficient to fulfill the demand from present school leavers.

At the same time, although many jobs have been created by the private sector, there is still the general feeling that jobs are scarce and the demand for jobs has increased over the past few years. According to a consultation survey, undertaken prior to this research, the feeling that there are many difficulties to face in finding jobs was found to be mutual among parents, government officials and leading private businessmen. It has also been reported that, for any given job advertised, more than 50-100 young people will make an application. This means that only the most successful candidates will have any chance of securing the available jobs.

In addition to the above scenario, although there have been a number of new jobs created in the private sector, the number of migrant labour has also increased over the past one and half decades, from just 9,000 expatriates working in the country in 1990 to 38,000 by 2005 (MPND, 2005c). This means that many jobs are filled by expatriates. This was brought to light during the consultation survey, undertaken prior to the field work, which showed there are reasons why private businesses give preference to hiring expatriate labour, rather than Maldivian nationals. There was the sense of a significant degree of prejudice voiced, regarding the offering of jobs to young people today, some of which appear to be attitudinal in nature and they may not necessarily hold true for all given cases. However this can also be assumed as a factor that can contribute towards the difficulty of securing jobs for young nationals

Operational Definitions

Youth/Young Adults

According to Echebiri (2005:5), defining who is a 'youth' has been a confusing concept and this has been debated at length over the years amongst researchers. In an effort to standardise 'age', several well-known organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations, British Commonwealth Associations and International Labour Organisations have suggested specific age categories. There seems to be some variation in the age specification for youth or young adults, which varies between organisations. The following are some of the age categorisations offered by these organisations. The World Bank defines youth as the "Time in a person's life between childhood and adulthood. The term "youth" in general refers to those who are between the ages of 15 to 25" (World Bank, 2006). The Commonwealth defines youth as those young adults falling between 15 to 29 years of age, whereas the United Nations definition of youth is those falling between the ages of 15 to 24 years (Echebiri, 2005). The ILO also defines youth or young adults as those young people who fall between the ages of 15 to 24 years. (ILO, 2005:1).

Furthermore the categorisation of youth greatly differs between some countries. Different countries adopt their own choice of definition from various organisations. According to Maria, the age ranges differ to a great extent in South East Asian (SEA) States and she states that, "In Philippines, youth are legally defined as those who are 15 to 30 years old. In Thailand, youth are those who are 15 to 25 years old (UN 1997a). In Malaysia, the state's Youth Council defines youth as those from 15 to 40 years of age (UN 1997a)" (Maria, 2002:172). In Nigeria the age range of youth is taken as 15 to 36 years (NYAC, 1987; cited in Echebiri, 2005:5). Even within countries there seems to be a difference in age categorisation. A youth employment policy in Northern Italy targets people aged between 14 to 29 years whereas, in Southern Italy, the age is between 14 to 32 years (O'Higgins, 1997).

The age group specified for the purpose of this research was adopted according to the ILO definition of youth or young adults. This includes those falling between the ages of

15 to 24 years. Hence the participants were selected within this age group, although the starting age was chosen at 17 years of age. The reason for this is that in the Maldives, on average, children leave school at the age of 16 years and the research requires the young adults to have gone through a period of searching for employment and to have had experienced at least a few months of searching for a job.

Employment/Unemployment/Underemployment/Overemployment

According to the Learner's Dictionary, employment is defined as "the fact of having a paid job" (Learner's Dictionary, 2003:358). There also exists what is termed as 'informal employment'. Informal employment is an informal job in either the formal or informal sector or in general households (Husmanns, 2003:5). Also, Husmanns states that jobs are differentiated into two categories, formal or informal, which is dependent on the status-in-employment. "For status in employment, the following five ICSE-93 groups are used: own account workers; employers; contributing family workers; employees; and members of producers' cooperative" (2003:5). The use of such classification is considered to be useful for policy purposes.

Unemployment is defined in the simplest way as "the fact that people who want jobs cannot get them" (Learner's Dictionary, 2003:1202). According to O'Higgins (1997), the most extensively used definition of unemployment is the ILO definition, which defines the unemployed as those people who are not engaged in any form of work for 'more than one hour during a short reference period'. Unemployment has also been identified in various forms (Echebiri, 2005:5). According to Onah (2001), urban youth unemployment "stands for the conglomerate of youth with diverse background, willing and able to work in urban areas. This results in pressures of supply of labour over the demand for labour, thus causing joblessness" (cited in Echebiri2005:5). Unemployment is also at times classified as voluntary or involuntary, but it is believed to be a concept that is difficult to classify this way and there are many ambiguities (Yuji, 2005:4-5). According to Yuji (2005:4), most cases of youth unemployment are considered to be voluntary but the unemployment cases of older workers are considered involuntary, in the sense that they may be laid off their jobs without having any control over the situation. The ILO (2001:3)

defines unemployment as “the proportion of persons who during a given period were (a) without work (b) currently available for work and (c) actively seeking work”.

‘Underemployment’ is differentiated from the word unemployment and it refers to a situation when a person is at least involved in some work, even though it is minimal (Wilkins, 2004:3). Underemployment is believed to be a difficult concept to define. According to the dictionary definition, a person is considered underemployed when “they have not got enough work to do, or their work does not make full use of their skills or abilities” (Learner’s Dictionary, 2003: 1198). Wilkins (2004:3) states that someone is recognized as underemployed when he/she is willing to work for more hours. Generally, in the case of females, underemployment is usually associated with part-time work, whereas for their male counterparts it is associated with full-time employment. In other words, this is a form of ‘underutilisation’. Wilkins also states that underemployment is not free from several negative effects, although this is not to such great extent as unemployment (Wilkins, 2004:4).

Laurie (1997) suggests that another concept, that can be related to underemployment, is ‘overemployment’. Thus, overemployment “refers to persons who are willing to work less time (with a corresponding reduction of pay), work in a job with less pay or perform lower skilled work than they are currently doing. Full-time workers who would like to work part time and persons who are compelled to work overtime against their wishes are examples of overemployed persons on the dimension of hours of work” (Laurie, 1997:36). Nevertheless, as stated by Laurie (1997:36), the above categories should not be confused with those workers who are, in other words, over worked through excessive hours and who would otherwise prefer to work less hours if their income remained the same.

The focus of this present research is to explore into experiences of young urban adults, who are in the process of gaining employment and therefore to obtain an in-depth understanding of the barriers that have led to their present unemployment. Hence, for the purpose of this research, the area of concern is that of unemployment. For this particular purpose, the ILO’s (2001:3) definition of unemployment has been adopted, which defines

unemployment as “the proportion of persons who during a given period were (a) without work (b) currently available for work and (c) actively seeking work”. Therefore an unemployed young person in this study is defined as someone who is or has looked for work and s/he has had a period of unemployment at some point in their life and has experienced difficulties in the process of finding a job.

Delimitations of the Research

In this study, I have excluded analysing the data in terms of any specific analysis of gender differences in barriers to employment. Although both genders were interviewed, I made no effort to balance female and male participants. A snowball sampling was undertaken and the only inclusion criteria used were that the participants were chosen from an urban setting and they were young adults between the ages of 17-24 years, who had experienced difficulties in the employment process. The methodology is discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

An Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter Two is an in-depth review of the literature relating to youth unemployment worldwide. After a general overview of youth unemployment, the larger part of this chapter is allocated to reviewing relevant past literature and developing an in-depth understanding of the barriers faced by young adults during the employment seeking process. This chapter also offers some solutions seen in past literature and it is suggested that such solutions can be used to overcome the barriers of youth unemployment today.

Chapter Three presents details of the methodology used for this research. This section will therefore include information relating to the choice of methodology, ethical considerations, including the difficult issue of undertaking research in a small community particularly in my own home setting, the instrumentation used and the process of the data collection procedure. This chapter also includes some personal experiences and reflections of the research process.

Chapter Four presents the complete data analysis and findings of this primary research, which is an attempt to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of young urban adults in the Maldives, in order to discover the difficulties faced by these young adults in the process of finding employment.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the research and connects it to the information in related past literature on the topic addressed in Chapter Two. This chapter discusses the similarities and differences between present and past research findings in the literature. The chapter also assembles a set of possible solutions, which have been derived from a compilation of the suggested solutions from past literature and suggestions made by the present research participants.

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter of this thesis, reflects on the primary objectives of the research. This is followed by the implications and recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts after the completion of this research.

CHAPTER 2: UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUNG ADULTS: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Unemployment has become a critical issue in most countries today and it is an area of great concern. It is notable that this issue has become a priority area in the world, due to the negative impact that unemployment has on the development and stability of nations. Moreover, the effects of unemployment are significant for all countries, irrespective of whether the country is developed or underdeveloped (ILO, 2001; Dorrance and Hughes, 1996). Furthermore, the youth of any given country, who are the future generation of that nation, are believed to be more at risk of unemployment than any other group of people in that country. Thus, at a national level for any nation, addressing the issues that lead to high levels of youth unemployment is a principal concern for governments.

Young adults, who are in transition from being a child at school and moving into the working world have to face many barriers in the employment process. Therefore, tackling the issue of increasing youth unemployment is crucial for the economy of the nation and also for the wellbeing of youth. There has been extensive research concentrated on youth unemployment by different countries, NGOs, and also by individuals who have concerns in this area. As a result, several studies and research have been undertaken on the topic. Such research has highlighted issues, barriers and themes as notable contributing factors to youth unemployment.

The aim of this chapter is to review the present existing literature on the topic of youth and unemployment and the issues of concern. Firstly, I will inform the reader about the topic with a general overview on 'youth and unemployment'. The remaining part of the chapter will concentrate on issues and themes that have been identified by previous research as barriers to youth employment. Finally, I will highlight some of the possible solutions that past research has identified as a means to overcome these barriers faced by young people in the process of finding employment.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUNG ADULTS

General Overview

Unemployment can impact differently on each individual because the reason/s for employment can be different from one individual to another and it can also be an inherent difference from person to person. For one young adult, it may be a means for survival in life. For another young person, who is not financially dependent on a job for survival, since they belong to and are supported by their family, being employed has entirely different connotations. However in both these cases employment should have a meaning for that given individual and hence should fulfill the needs of that young person. If the reason for employment for any young adult is monetary, then the job should offer a reasonable salary. For another young adult, it may be that they desire job satisfaction and for someone else a job will enable them to develop and move forward in their career. Thus the importance of employment for young adults is significant in different ways.

Today, the world is concerned with the rise of youth unemployment and hence this issue is consistently being addressed as a major challenge. Productive and gainful employment is one way of ensuring 'poverty eradication, sustainable development and lasting peace' within a nation (ILO, 2001:1) Hence, employment is a crucial area that needs to be urgently addressed, not just for the betterment of a nation but also for those individuals' basic lives. The second 'Global Employment Trends for the Youth', which was released in late 2006, states:

"Young women and men are among the world's greatest assets. They bring energy, talent and creativity to economies and create the foundations for future development. But today's youth also represent a group with serious vulnerabilities in the world of work. In recent years slowing global employment growth and increasing unemployment, underemployment and disillusionment have hit young people the hardest. As a result, today's youth are faced with a growing deficit of decent work opportunities and high levels of economic and social uncertainty" (ILO, 2006:1).

According to the ILO, there are over one billion youth in the world today of which 85% live in the developing countries. Moreover, from this group nearly 55% percent are working or actively searching for jobs. As stated by the ILO, "...young people encounter so many difficulties in finding and maintaining a decent job" (ILO, 2001:1). Although the issue is challenging and difficult, youth unemployment still needs to be an area that is investigated and researched and solutions need to be developed, since "... young people have a great deal to offer their societies, and that providing them with productive and decent jobs will be one of the most important contributions the current generations can make for the future" (ILO, 2001, p.7).

Youth employment has been a major focus in the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs). Consequently, developing and implementing ways in which to help youth, on their path to gainful employment, has been agreed amongst the ministers and heads of delegations in a high-level segment of the substantive 2006 session of the 'Economic and Social Council'. One of the main aims was to identify and assess barriers that are becoming the cause of increasing difficulties for young adults seeking gainful employment. The ILO states that there is growing evidence that young people face several difficulties in the process of entering the labor market. (ILO, 2006:1).

Protecting the well-being of youth and reducing youth unemployment are major concerns for any society, for its growth and also for its social and economic stability. Youth unemployment does not just affect the individual but it also affects the wider circle of that person, which includes their family and significant others (Maria, 2002:172). Barry Marley, the director of an Australian research programme 'Taking Children Seriously' states that 'most other Australians are also affected through knowing a jobless young person, or through sharing in the social and economic cost of youth unemployment' (cited in Dorrance and Hughes, 1996:xiii). Thus, this can be assumed to hold true in general for any given individual, society or a nation.

Also, according to Echeberi (2005), youth unemployment has been found to have a relationship with an increase in social and economic problems within a country.

Accordingly, in other words, youth unemployment can be seen as detrimental to a nation, the young people themselves, their communities and their cultures (ILO, 2001). The impact of unemployment can be multiple, from negative consequences at both personal and national level, such as a decrease in personal health and well-being, to political instability, respectively. Several negative urban issues and inescapable poverty are a result of unemployment in many countries. According to the 1996, ILO's 'Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements' report, the rise in urban poverty is directly related to unemployment. Therefore it also creates several poverty related problems, such as high levels of crime, ill health and certain negatives behaviours amongst young people.

The problems associated with youth unemployment are not just common to the developing world. It is also a common occurrence around the world. Due to multiple factors relating to the topic of unemployment, youth unemployment is found to be a complex problem and there are no quick easy solutions (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996). Consequently, it is indeed a major challenge for the world (ILO, 2001). To ensure success in decreasing youth unemployment, the problem has to be tackled with a collaborated effort by many significant people: given that this can be the government, the society or the individuals themselves. The most crucial element here is that the effort has to be a mutual within that given community (Maria, 2002:200).

A 2004 roundtable, held by the UN and the UN-HABITAT in Nairobi, addressed the challenges of urban youth employment. According to the briefing notes from this roundtable, the unemployment of young adults is raised as a common concern, since youth unemployment raises concern over social as well as economic issues in the developing as well as the developed world (UN, 2004a). Specifically, urban youth unemployment has become an issue of great concern all over the world. Sustained unemployment of youth is a serious problem of concern, due to the high levels of negative consequences, such as severe social exclusion and high levels of poverty. The outcomes and recommendations of the roundtable addressed several possible ways to mitigate the issues of urban youth unemployment in the African cities (UN, 2004b). It is notable that practical solutions were agreed as a useful way to deal with the difficulties of

youth unemployment. In addition, policy intervention changes were also considered as an important strategy to enhance the means of overcoming the difficulties of urban youth employment. Finally, it was also decided to deal with the issue as a united effort between the youth, the government and the multilateral institutes.

Research shows that the longer an individual is unemployed the greater is the impact on that individual for future successful employment (White and McRae, 1989:179). Thus, it is critical that young people be helped to overcome and challenge the issues of unemployment. The 'Youth Employment Network' (YEN) aims to develop strategies to overcome the global challenges faced by the world's youth. The ILO states that understanding the causes of youth unemployment and those obstacles that come between the young adults and productive employment has been identified as one of the most important steps to the challenge of youth unemployment (ILO, 2001). Realistically, in order to tackle the difficulties of youth unemployment, an in-depth understanding of the different issues, faced by youth in any given society, needs to be identified before these issues can be successfully addressed. Thus, causal factors of youth unemployment have been and still are an area which continues to be researched in several parts of the world. This is not without an adequate reason. Employment is so important to an individual's life, not just because it's a job bringing financial security but also for its value in other ways, such as defining ones' place in the society.

RELATED ISSUES TO UNEMPLOYMENT

Theme 1: Unavailability of Jobs

The most crucial influencing factor identified, which relates to youth employment, is the national employment situation in any given nation. It is estimated that, for every one percent increase in adult unemployment, there is a possibility of nearly two percent increase in youth unemployment. It is important to note that youth unemployment is reported to be higher than overall unemployment in almost all countries (ILO, 2001:4). Young adults are reported to be two to three times more vulnerable to unemployment than adults (UN, 2004a).

Unavailability of jobs can be the result of several factors within a nation. Factors include population growth, urbanisation and globalisation, migration of labour from rural to urban areas or from nation to nation. Visaria (1998:44) states that factors contributing to the high rates of unemployment include the high rate of population growth and that of labour force growth. Furthermore, urban youth unemployment has increased, due to rural-urban migration. At the same time, since the economic market has changed over the years, the world job market is also becoming more and more globalised and this contributes to high rates of unemployment within certain countries. The globalisation of world markets has opened doors for labour across countries, which then affects youth employment (ILO, 2001).

According to Maria (2002:172), an increase in population growth, together with an increase in the youth population in South East Asian (SEA) countries, have led to an increase in youth unemployment in SEA countries. This situation has been reported as having a profound impact on not just young people but also on the lives of significant others of these young people such as their friends and their families. Young adults' within a family who do not have a job add pressure on the earners within that family. This family pressure in turn adds pressure on the community to create more and more jobs, in order to accommodate the growing population of unemployed young people. If this creation of jobs does not take place, then the result is increased youth unemployment, which then leaves an increasing number of young people jobless. Maria (2002:173) states that migration of young people from rural to urban areas is a phenomenon found in the SEA region and it is notable that the majority of these young people are females. In these cases, female youth are also made vulnerable to underemployment and exploitation (Maria, 2002:188).

Development brings about several new meanings to the working world, with innumerable changes to the type and ways of doing certain jobs. New technological changes have brought about several positive and productive changes to the working world. However, these changes have produced advantages in addition to disadvantages and their impact on

youth employment has been reported. . According to the ILO “new technologies and globalization of markets are making human labor more and more productive. But as the productivity rises, so does the opportunity cost of leaving millions of young people unemployed” (ILO, 2001:3).

Slow growth in the economy can also be one of the factors that can lead to youth unemployment (Visaria, 1998:34). Kabbani, and Kothari, (2005) investigated factors that contribute to high rates of unemployment amongst MENA (Middle East and North African) youth. Labour supply pressure has been identified amongst contributing factors towards the unemployment of youth in the MENA region. Unemployed youth and the globalisation of labour have been identified as an issue that has to be dealt with in a positive way. According to Lehmann (2005:2), there is a huge challenge in tackling an issue that is seen as a ‘demographic burden’ and turning it into an advantage as a ‘demographic gift’. In this way, new jobs can be created to draw in the flow of young people into the labour market. In this case, the pool of unemployed young people is seen as an advantage rather than a problem and their existence should be embraced as an opportunity to expand the nation’s economy, thus creating ‘a win-win situation’ for both the individual and additional growth for the nation.

Theme 2: Education, Training, Skills and Work Experience

Educational qualifications or the type of education received has a great influence on securing a job. A survey undertaken in Sri Lanka by ‘Improving Capacities for Poverty/Social policy Research (IMCAP)’, which looked into the challenges of youth unemployment, has identified the level of an individual’s education as one of the factors that contributes towards becoming employed or not (ILO, 2004). According to Spruijt & de Geode (1996:107), “level of education, specialization of education and the certificate achieved” are amongst the most important factors to labour market entry. Nevertheless, its effects are mixed in different parts of the world, depending on the level of education in a particular country. In most developed countries the early and less qualified school leavers face more difficulties in becoming employed. On the contrary, the opposite is true for some developing countries, such as Indonesia and Thailand, where the more educated

find themselves less employed than the less educated. It can be assumed that in some countries, such as Indonesia, the less educated easily accept the low quality, low paying jobs, which then results in less unemployment for this group of young people (ILO, 2001).

Maria (2002:190) states that the educational training received has a direct impact on young people in securing a job, but this also has a mixed effect. When educational qualifications appear to guarantee a job, it has also been found that this may not have such a positive effect in some societies. This mismatch occurs, for example, when the educational training has little bearing on producing employable youth required for the manpower needs of the country (UN, 1997, cited in Maria, 2002:190). Thus, the result is underemployment and/or youth having to accept jobs that are low paying or jobs below their educational achievements.

It is reported that Philippine youth have been found to migrate from rural to urban areas looking for jobs and they have been exposed to high rates of unemployment, even though they have completed tertiary education. Hence, emigration overseas in search of well paid employment is also a common response to the suffering of more educated youth. On the contrary, the lesser educated youth suffer less with unemployment, since there are more lower paid jobs available demanding less educational requirements but this also means less pay (Maria, 2002:191). Similar findings, such as the type and level of qualification a young adult has achieved at the time of school leaving, has been reported as a dependent factor for labour market entry in Britain. It is also generally believed that high qualifications and training will guarantee future job opportunities. Therefore, education and training was identified as a means of ensuring future employment for those young adults facing unemployment (Hodkinson, et al 1996:7-12). Appropriate education and the development of skills has also been identified as factors to help face the challenges and find solutions for reducing youth unemployment (Lehmann, 2005:4).

High unemployment rates for young people are also believed to be associated with an education system that has not been able to produce employable people (ILO, 2001:5). According to Marcus (2004), a study undertaken by 'Childhood Poverty Research Centre

(CHIP)', securing a job can be difficult for young adults, due to their level of education and skills and there being a gap between the young person's knowledge and their skills and what is expected by the employers. Thus, the ILO (2001:24-26) has identified the provision of on-the-job training as an important step to help and prepare the young in for process of finding employment.

Apart from training, work experience has been found to be an issue that comes in the way of youth in finding a job. Research shows that employers prefer experienced, older people over young adults who are fresh out of the school (Visaria, 1998). However, on the other hand, not having the opportunity to be employed leads to not being able to gain the necessary experience which then leads to increased difficulty in securing a job (ILO, 2001). In agricultural countries, such as India, urban youth are further disadvantage, unlike their rural peers. Indian rural youth have an advantage, since they have a better chance of being employed in their family or neighbours' businesses, such as agriculturally related jobs, which ensures some degree of work experience (Visaria, 1998). This issue is further made more difficult when young people are unemployed for a period of time in the early years of their adult life, since the more they are excluded from having a job at the beginning, the more they lose precious time when they could be receiving training or gaining the experience needed to find a job, as mentioned above.

Theme 3: Discrimination and Stereotyping

According to the ILO (2001), young adults, both male and female, face discrimination in the job market on the basis of their sex and gender. Many young women have to face several forms of discrimination (Lehmann, 2005). Interestingly, there is a variation between countries relating to discrimination and the rate of unemployment of young women. Whereas in some countries, it seems that young women are more likely to be unemployed, this is not the case in all countries. For example, in countries such as Latin America, India and Indonesia there is no significant difference in unemployment between young men or women on the basis of their gender (ILO, 2001). However on the other hand, although there seems to be no discrimination between men and women on some aspects of employment, gender stereotyping plays a vital role in being a barrier for the

employability of young women, when they want to choose a career that may empower and give them an opportunity of higher earnings and status. In this case, it is particularly more common in the developing countries, where young women are forced to choose low-skilled and low-paid jobs (ILO, 2001).

A young person's difficulty remaining employed can also be at times related to them having to tolerate sexual or power related harassment. In some cases if such harassment is not tolerated then the next choice is to lose the job. Although females are more vulnerable to gender or power related harassment, young male adults also face similar problems. 'Sexual harassment is inextricably linked with power' (ILO, 2001, p.41). Sometimes young male adults can also be intimidated by fear of losing the job on which they are financially dependant. Therefore, they find themselves in a position with no real choice, except to tolerate the harassment if the alternative option is to lose their jobs (ILO, 2001). It is clear that most young people cannot and even should not tolerate such power harassment for long or even short periods.

Discrimination in the working world is something that occurs in many forms and it affects the young as well as the aged in the employment world. Barry Marley suggests, that even though youth unemployment is much higher than adult unemployment there are several related causes (cited in Dorrance and Hughes, 1996: xiii). The aging population in the world is discriminated against in the working world, based on chronological age, rather than on the abilities of the person (Harper, 2006:265). In a similar way, young adults also have to face certain stereotypical experiences in the process of finding employment. This can be either due to age, sex or ethnicity. Inequality and discrimination on the basis of sex, gender or ethnicity are only a few obstacles amongst many that youth have to face when finding employment (ILO, 2001).

To make things even more difficult, markets also have a tendency to attract the interest of powerful people for the wrong reasons. Such factors show the level of discrimination in the market, which can also have an effect on the employment of people who do not fall into a specified certain social category. Ranson (1994) states that "markets inevitably

favour the interests of the most powerful groups in the society, so that they appeal to a political party which represents existing middle- and upper-class value positions” (cited in Hodkinson et al, 1996:138). Thus, influential people have a greater chance of better achievements in the working world, than the ordinary average person.

Issues related to discrimination, in one way or another, revolve around the social background to which one belongs. Family background has been identified as an influencing factor relating to job prospectus (Maxted, 2001:3., Allat, 2005: 38-41) and it was reported that there is a positive link between a young adult having a better chance to get a job if their parents are also employed (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996:15). Also, to some extent, a career path is influenced by the individual’s social background. Hodkinson et al (1996:7) state that “in Britain, possibly to greater extent than elsewhere in the world, these differences are partly class related”. Lloyd (1999:19) reports that securing jobs through family and friends was a usual story heard during a study conducted amongst young men, particularly when they are at the point of leaving school. Not having the appropriate family support or some form of networking becomes a barrier that comes between the young adult and positive employment. It can be assumed here that this possibility is based on the fact that working parents have access to a network and connections to places where their children can be employed. According to White and McRae (1989: viii), easy accessibility to knowledge about job availability, in the process of a job search, can be helped by the support the young person receives, not just from a jobcentre, but through family and friends. Similarly, parents and family have been able to give the necessary support, which helps these young job seekers with the social relations, crucial to helping them towards successful employment (Maria, 2002:192).

In addition, certain forms of stereotyping are also known to influence people’s attitudes and as a consequence they can have an unpleasant impact on decisions taken about whether to offer a job to someone or not. However, according to Harper, it is not just the attitudes of others that is important to overcome these problems, the attitudes of the given individual themselves is also crucial, in order to decrease the discrimination and further enhance better opportunities towards employment (HAI, 2001, cited in Harper, 2006:270).

Theme 4: Physical and Psychological Issues

Unemployment can lead to a decrease in motivation which in turn leads to a further decrease in self esteem and a decrease in self confidence. Long-term unemployment is reported to become a barrier to future employment, since people tend to be reluctant to apply for jobs, due to loss of confidence and self esteem. This has been reported by Manchin & Manning (1998) who state that when people have been unemployed for long periods of time, they then tend to remove themselves from competing for work.

According to the ILO (2001), an experience of unemployment, early in the young adults' life, can have serious implications for their future employability, as a result of certain negative attitudes that are associated with unemployment and which then continue to be carried over, even to the latter part of their life. Youth unemployment is also believed to cause certain deviant behaviors and thus results in social exclusion, together with alienating youth from the entering the workforce. Thus, policy makers are trying to assess the impact of unemployment on young adults' alienation from the workforce, side by side with minimising the negative behaviours of youth (Visaria, 1998).

Good physical and mental health and motivation is important for being able to find work. For anyone to be able to find employment and be able to work productively then good or relatively good health is important. However, for individuals living in poverty and those coming from low socio-economic background, this can be a significant issue. At the same time, research also shows that good health, motivation and confidence is important for success in finding and securing a job. Adoric (2004:191) states that the less confident an individual is with their life experiences and the way things happen to them, which they see as being unfair, the longer the individual could be unemployed. Although this can hold true for many job seekers it does not mean, according to Adoric (2004:191), that everyone will stop seeking employment. On the contrary, there seems to be evidence that this may be the opposite for some individuals. Nonetheless, on a general basis, this has serious implications for future employment, since repeated failure to find a job may lead to a reduced job search and greater difficulties securing a job in the long run.

According to Visaria (1998), youth unemployment is an area that needs serious attention from policy makers and there is a need to address the negative impact of unemployment, such as young people's frustration at having to face barriers when seeking work for the first time in their lives. The subjective well-being of a given individual is crucial for individual happiness and mental well-being, in addition to the well being of the society to which that individual belongs. Studies have shown that unemployment can lessen the levels of subjective well-being, decrease self esteem and form social exclusion (Warr, 1979, cited in UN, 2003). Machin & Manning (1998) also report that unemployment can have a negative effect on personal well-being and self-esteem. Again it has been reported that "high levels of youth unemployment are always a source of concern because of the profound impact unemployment has on young people's lives" (UN, 2003, p.64).

Young adults coming out of school need to make an appropriate transition from school to the working world and for some this is not an easy process for several reasons. "Finding a worthwhile and satisfying job is one of the main developmental tasks of late adolescence and young adulthood" (Adoric, 2004:189). According to Dalbert (2004:176), early unemployment impacts on the young in their development in later life, for example, causing a negative effect on future career development and/or impaired health, in addition to issues related to psychological health. Forming an occupational identity is crucial for young adults. Repeated failure, which results in frustration, anger, anxiety, etc., can become road blocks between young adults and the working world. Furthermore, these negative psychological issues can come in the way of a young adult developing her/his occupational identity (Adoric, 2004:191).

The "Unemployed are very likely to become depressed, and the longer the period of unemployment the greater is the psychological distress" (Hafner, 1990, cited in Dalbert, 2004, p175). Also, according to Adebayo (1999) and Egbuna (2001), the psychological issues related to youth unemployment, including frustration and mental ill health, such as depression, can also even lead to criminal behavior (cited in Echebiri, 2005). Some depression and devastation in a person's life can be associated with the negative consequences of long-term unemployment (Feather, 1996:112). Repeated failure and

continued unemployment can also lead to young people themselves creating certain barriers for further employment. It has been reported that young people alienate themselves from the broader community life styles, often changing their appearance, manners and behaviour in a way that does not fit the norms of the society. Dorrance and Hughes (1996:17) state "... they are meant to show alienation from Australian society. Under these aggressive costumes and manners are many unhappy children who are often in poor physical and mental health. They are seeking support that they rarely find. ... A job can change their lives".

Negativity towards the world and alienation from the so called norms can stem from how youth begin to feel towards the world, when they repeatedly fail to find employment. Unemployment, for some people, means an inability to get away from the experiences of poverty and for others it is an inability to follow their life goals and dreams. Machin and Manning (1999) state in the abstract of their paper "... the experience of long-term unemployment is a horrid one for those unfortunate enough to experience it" and hence the world can be seen as a really unfair place from a youth point of view. . A study undertaken by Dalbert (2004) states that unfairness seems to be the core issue for those unemployed and furthermore for young adults, who go through long-term unemployment, the most significant psychological impact is finding that they are losing faith in their belief of the world being a fair place. Hence, for some, becoming a victim of unemployment is finding themselves suffering for something in which they had no part. When repeated failure occurs, it is not easy for young people and therefore they are then faced with feelings such as anger and anxiety (Adoric, 2004:189).

At the same time, short-term unemployment may not have such a profound impact on individuals. Even in the case of long-term unemployment, some individuals may be able to cope in better ways than others do, depending on the level they perceived the unfairness. Some may be able to cope and adapt to being unemployed for a certain period of time (Dalbert, 2004). However, in general, short-term unemployment has been found to have a less profound impact on young people but long-term unemployment can be more difficult for the individual and these findings has been supported by other

researchers. Long-term unemployment has been reported to have a calamitous effect, both on the individual's physical as well as mental well-being and also individuals with prior health problems have a greater chance for being in long-term unemployment (Manchin & Manning, 1998). Similar findings have been reported by Maxted (2001:3) showing that non participation in work during a young adults' life, eventually becomes a barrier to engaging in work in latter part of life. When individuals face difficulty securing jobs, and particularly if there is a great need for young people to be in gainfully employed, then when they are under pressure they may take a job that is below their educational or skill level. According to O'Brien and Feather (1990), those young people, who take jobs that are below the level of their qualifications, may also have similar health related problems in the same manner as unemployed young people (cited in Dalbert, 2004).

In today's world, employment arrangements are rather complicated. A study undertaken by Creed and Reynolds (2001) compared the difference in the level of psychological distress of young adults, aged between 16 and 26 years, who were unemployed with no access or irregular access to paid work, with that of their peers, who had had regular part-time jobs or access to casual work. This study indicated that those young adults, who had regularity in accessing either part-time or casual work, had a lesser degree of psychological distress and deprivations compared to that of their peers, who did not have regularity and structure in their working lives, whether it was part-time or casual work (cited in Dalbert, 2004). Therefore the results of this study showed that those young adults, who had no regularity in accessing work, either as part-time or casual, felt that their days were difficult and had no structure. It also revealed and highlighted the fact that young people are not just at a loss financially when unemployed but they also feel an important lack of structure to their lives (Johada, 1982, cited in Dalbert, 2004).

Unemployed young people also face problems, such as weaning themselves off from dependency on their parents, both economically and psychologically. This can in turn hinder their growth towards finding a normal socially acceptable, personally fulfilling life, such as being independent, starting their own family or reaching other goals to which they aspire. According to Sallay (2004:215-216), in Hungary, although the new market

economy was good for young people, there was still concern raised by youth regarding their future, which included wanting and finding a well-paid permanent job, in order to establish their own careers and also to be financially independent from their families.

Theme 5: Negative Behaviours and Consequences

The consequences of unemployment in the early years of a young person's life can have serious implications for their future employment, due to the fact that some young people tend to choose certain negative paths in life as a way of coping and therefore there needs to be great concern relating to the implications of youth unemployment. According to Raffe (1987:218), the long-term effects of youth unemployment can result in "the social, psychological and vocational development of individuals" and its "more short-term effects on crime, delinquency and social disorder". The ILO (2001:7) also states "unemployment in early life may permanently impair young people's future employability, as patterns of behaviour and attitudes established at an early stage tend to persist later in life. Their exclusion from gaining work experience and lack of access to continuing training also increases their difficulties to find jobs. In addition to depriving them of incomes and undermine social cohesion. Communities with high levels of youth unemployment are at greater risk of crime, drug abuse and vandalism".

Unwanted negative consequences, such as young people getting into unhealthy life styles starting to do drugs or excessive drinking, have been reported by researchers. According to Kieselbach (1995, cited in Dalbert, 2004), unemployment, which results in lack of time structure, has been associated with an increase in smoking and excessive drinking. Juvenile delinquency is reported as an issue close to youth unemployment, particularly within the urban setting. In the Philippines, juvenile delinquency is reported to be high amongst urban youth, who are out of school, living on the streets and not in jobs or working in inappropriate odd jobs (Maria, 2002:195). These children tend to choose options such as theft or using drugs. It has also been reported that boys and girls differ in the way they react to long-term unemployment and the suffering that comes with it. Whereas boys tend choose drastic options, such as suicide as the only means to remove themselves from the suffering of unemployment, girls on the other hand choose options

such as prostitution. Also a recognisable number of girls choose to have a child as a way to escape the suffering, since having a child is a way to give and receive love (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996:18). These kinds of behaviours and such unhealthy choices themselves then become barriers for young people seeking future employment, due to the inability to be productive employees. Having said this, some past studies also suggest that, at time, young women to be less affected by unemployment possibly because “women have a status - a domestic one – that is not provided by employment and could possibly fulfill at least some of these functions” (Wallace, 1987:71).

A young person trying to secure a job can be trapped between the consequences and negative impacts of unemployment. Thus, the result is that the young adults find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of unemployment and associated negative behaviours. Political and economic instability can be caused by, in some cases, an increase of unhappy youth in that society. Such issues have been identified by a study undertaken in India, where, to some extent, youth unemployment has been found responsible for tensions within the country. “The unemployed youth have partly been responsible for the tensions leading to the “sons-of-the soil” movements in the different parts of the country and perhaps also the unrest in several of the border states of the country” (Visaria, 1998:34). Hence, once again, the economic and political instability within a nation can hinder the economic progress of the nation, thus paving the way to further unemployment in society and the ultimate sufferers of unemployment are once again the youth of society. This is not just a feature common to the developing countries but it is also a factor seen amongst developed countries. In general, high rates of unemployment and in particularly high rates of youth unemployment have been found to be a serious social and economic problem in advanced countries such as Australia (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996:1-2)

On the other hand, negatives issues linked to youth and unemployment have been reported by the UN. Under-Secretary-General, Jose Antonio Ocampo, who states in the forward to the ‘United Nations World Youth Report’ (2005:iv) that it is not uncommon for policy makers to be too involved with the negative stereotypes of young people and

concentrate on the negatives issues, such drug abuse, delinquency and violence. As a result, the majority of young adults, who are not involved in such behaviours are to some extent ignored and what needs to be done for them, in order to ensure a prosperous future, such as investments in education, health and creation of jobs for the young, does not occur. Thus, as a result, the possibility of youth having to face more barriers in the process of employment is increased.

One of the ways that humans react to the frustration of failure can be a negative reaction to the world or people around them. The young are not immune to these frustrations since they are young and vulnerable so it is very possible that they will have a negative reaction to failures, relating to the finding and securing of employment. This type of reaction can backfire and become itself a barrier to future employment. According to Maria (2002:192), when young people lose faith in having a prosperous future in their society, they are in a position to act against that society in negative ways, such as, for example 'joining radical armed movements'. However, having stated this, it is important to note that not all people choose negative paths to deal with life's difficulties and similarly, not all youth use these negative paths as a means to deal with unemployment. Some young people use positive, alternative ways, such as findings ways of networking and overcoming those issues that become barriers and they can recognise the important differences between educational and vocational qualifications to ensure securing a job (Maria, 2002:193). Whereas some may choose to further their academic education, others choose to take vocational training as they feel it is more important to be suitably employable in the future.

Possible Solutions to Overcome Barriers of Unemployment

To overcome the issue of unemployment amongst young people, a holistic approach was found to be necessary (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996; ILO, 2001; Maria, 2002). The focus needs to be on economic growth, by educating and training youth, in order to increase their employability and motivate these young people towards entrepreneurship and also to increase equality. It is particularly important to overcome the barrier of the discrimination of young women in job market with better vocational guidance on

addressing equality issues, which can improve the situation of these young women. The removal of this discriminatory barrier then becomes a responsibility of government, employers and organisations, who all need to work towards the same goal (ILO, 2001).

The ILO (2001) employers' guide was mainly aimed towards the ways that youth unemployment can be challenged. According to this guide, it recognises the importance of the first few years of a young adults' life being a critical point in life, towards learning and shaping future successful employment. Hence, there is a role for the employers and significant others, such as educational institutes and vocational guidance centres to recognise the issues of youth unemployment and take the necessary measures to bring down the barriers to youth unemployment.

Youth entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the ways of tackling youth unemployment. Many of the world's leading successful companies agree on the value of contributing to and supporting youth entrepreneurship. Thus, this is seen as an important foundation that can pave the way towards future development. The advantages are many because it not only allows the person to be employed but also young entrepreneurs are found to be employing people of their own age. In this way they are giving a helping hand to those in the same boat as they were, before they became entrepreneurs themselves. Therefore, the benefits are multiple (ILO, 2001). At the same time, entrepreneurship has its own share of difficulties. According to White and Kenyon (2001), young entrepreneurs can also be faced with certain obstacles, such as securing adequate finance, being able to cope with regulations, hiring and managing suitable staff, finding and developing beneficial networks and dealing with the difficulties which arise when maintaining and expanding a business (cited ILO, 2001).

Another possible solution is recognising the role of education and training as a crucial component for successful employability. The more appropriate the training, the better youth will be able to challenge and adapt to changing needs in the labour market. This also includes education targeted to the needs of the nation. In addition, it is important to recognise and consider vocational training, which should be in tune with the changing

needs of industry, such as adapting to changes in technology and ensuring that young people learn about these changes and are consequently more employable (ILO, 2001: 21). It has also been identified that in order to help young people to be more productive and get the most out of their jobs, employers also need to offer them on-the-job training (ILO, 2001: 24).

As stated previously, long-term unemployment also leads to anger, frustration, and anxiety and it can lead to mental and psychological problems. This hinders a young person's ability to find positive ways of dealing with the world and hence they find themselves in very difficult situations. When this happens, psychological help needs to be available, in order to help them deal with these negative issues (Adoric, 2004:189). It is crucial for young adults to developing a positive attitude towards the world and find productive ways to deal with the obstacles they face in today's world, the world of youth unemployment with its barriers. Thus, it is critical that young adults receive support in the form of guidance or counselling so they can find positive ways, to challenge 'their world': the world of youth unemployment.

Summary

The review of related literature on the topic of youth and unemployment has made it quite clear that there is need for great concern relating to youth unemployment, irrespective of the level of economic development within the nation. The implications for youth unemployment are serious and a significant matter for all countries to consider, albeit for the whole world. Youth unemployment does not just affect unemployed youth, but these effects are spread through to their families and significant other people in society, in addition to the implications for the whole communities' progress and well-being. Many countries, NGOs and individuals have researched the area of youth unemployment. In the process of previous research, several barriers and contributing factors have been identified, in the hope that ways will be found to overcome the difficulties that contribute youth unemployment.

Many issues and themes have been identified as barriers to youth unemployment. Amongst them are the increase in youth population growth, scarcity of jobs within countries, issues related to urbanisation and globalisation and also several other issues related to academic qualification, skills, training and work experience. There was also a significant amount of literature relating to issues of discrimination and stereotyping. In addition, psychological issues, such as anger, frustration, decrease in confidence etc., created by discrimination and long-term unemployment, were also identified as barriers to youth unemployment. Last but not least, there were also some issues identified relating to youth unemployment, which are connected to negative behaviours, such as crime, drugs, vandalism, political and economic instability, etc., and these in turn also contribute towards an increase in youth unemployment.

When reviewing the related literature, I found several suggestions concerning strategies which could help in this unfortunate situation: the growing youth unemployment in many countries. The main concept behind possible ways and means to overcome barriers was to take a holistic approach in addressing the issue. Included in this approach was appropriate education, relevant to the country's economy, in addition to a decrease in the emphasis given to just academic qualifications, by the consideration of other important educational factors, such as appropriate skills training. The importance of support services were also recognised, both in the guidance of young people towards employment and psychological support services, together with the opening up of avenues and the guidance of young people along these avenues towards entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 3: METHODODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research process within the research conducted. Firstly, I will offer the reader the present research methodology and discuss the key considerations of the whole data collection process. I will then give a background to the research setting. This chapter will also cover the methods used in the data analysis during the research process.

A General Perspective on Methodology

The research methodology is based on the fact that the main concern of the study is to explore the life histories and experiences of young people, in order to understand and identify the difficulties these young people face in the process of seeking employment. According to Berg (2001:225), case studies can draw out rich and in-depth information, when researching into experiences and social issues of peoples lives. The method selected for this purpose was a case study approach, using qualitative methods.

Qualitative research is believed to have the ability to explore people's experiences of life in our social world and allow us to use methods that go into a deeper understanding of the complexities of peoples' life experiences (Berg, 2007:8., Mason, 2002:1., Brockington & Sullivan, 2003:57). The issues around unemployment can be related to personal, social and political factors for a given individual and hence the sensitiveness of such issues can be difficult for young people to discuss. . Therefore, the research method was selected in consideration of these factors. According to Laws, Harper & Marcus (2003:278), choosing an appropriate method in research is a key factor in development research, particularly when researching difficult issues or subjects, since cultural diversity is such that, for some cultures, talking about income and money can be even a more difficult issue than talking about a subject such as sex. Mason (2002:1) states:

"Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings,

experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the way that social processes, institutions, discourse or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate."

Thus, considering all these factors, the design of the research is based on a case study approach, using qualitative research methods. This approach allowed me to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and life events of the participants in the research and the difficulties or barriers that they have faced and are still facing in the employment process.

Research Setting – Male’ Capital of the Maldives

The study took place in Male’ the capital of the Maldives. This setting was chosen to fulfill part of the research question. The capital of the Maldives, Male’, was selected since it is the only truly urbanised area of the country. The research was aimed towards gaining an insight into *experiences of the urban young adults* in the process of finding employment.

As can be gathered from the introduction, the Maldives has a population of about 300,000 people of which nearly 100,000 people live in the capital Male’, which happens to be a land space of just 5km in circumference. All government offices and the focus point of all public and private industries are in Male’. On average, most job opportunities are available in the capital Male’. Until very recently, higher school education was also only possible in the capital city, Male’. Therefore most young people from the other atolls come to Male’ as a means of achieving a higher education and then they move on to find work and settle in Male’. Male’, being the capital city, has fast growing industries and indeed the whole island is going through a boom of high rise buildings with a great deal of construction work happening within the city. Increased job opportunities seem to be available in Male’ and these are mainly related to these growing industries and the building and construction work.

Consultation Survey

A consultation survey was conducted five months prior to undertaking the fieldwork. The purpose of this survey was twofold. Firstly, it was necessary to obtain some understanding of the general feeling of unemployment in the Maldives, since there was very little statistical or other data available on youth unemployment. Secondly, the consultation survey was also conducted to identify the best possible subject group to be interviewed. Initially, it was thought that both employers, together with the prospective employees (the young urban adults, who were or have been looking for jobs) would be the target population for the research. However, after setting up the consultation survey, it was concluded that the foremost group to be interviewed should be the young urban adults themselves, since they were the true stakeholders, who had actually experienced the difficulties and therefore they were 'qualified' to answer the research question.

The Participants

In the participant selection process, a few considerations were taken into account. In qualitative research, it is not easy to identify or to get access to the appropriate subjects needed for the research. It is not always possible to obtain a list of participants that fit into the frame of the research question and at the same time it may not be possible to obtain even a random sample for such research (David & Sutton, 2004:80). Thus, identifying the subjects was part of the process. Non-probability sampling was considered to be the most ideal in qualitative research: in other words, a sample which is appropriate and related to the area being researched (Laws, et al. 2003:358). According to Berg (2007:44), the most useful way of capturing participants needed for some studies, particularly if the study involves research into a sensitive area, is the use of a 'snowball' sample. In this respect a snowball sample was chosen to be the most appropriate way to acquire access to the participants in this study.

Other than the issues of concern mentioned above, there were three main factors that were considered in identifying the participants for the research. Firstly, they were to be from an urban setting. Secondly, they needed to be from a specified age group, that is, they needed to fall into the age group named youth or young adults. This age group was

specified following the definition of youth or young adults, as set by the UN and the ILO's specification of youth or young people. According to the ILO, youth or young people fall between the ages of 15-24 years (ILO, 2005:1). Thirdly, they also had to be young adults who had experienced difficulty in finding and securing employment.

Consequently, young adults were chosen from Male'. The age group of the participants was 17-24 years. For this research, the age 17 years was considered the earliest age because, generally in the Maldives, the age of secondary school completion is 16 years and the participants were to be those young adults who had spent sometime looking for a job and they would have experienced some difficulties securing a job. Hence, one year was considered as a suitable time period during which they may have gone through some difficulties in seeking a job. The participants, who took part in the research, were 21 young adults from Male', male and female. The age of the participants was between 17 and 23 years. The mean age of the participants was 20.28 years.

Piloting the Study

Conducting a pilot study is one of the most appropriate ways to test some of the crucial factors of the research that is to be conducted. The pilot study also needs to be piloted as closely as possible to the real research which will be conducted later and as such the choice of pilot participants are also ideally selected from the target population (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:30).

Firstly, the questions compiled were discussed with fellow research colleagues in addition to the research supervisors. Following this, the tentatively formalised research questions for the interviews were piloted on a few young people drawn from the target population. In this process, two key aspects were considered. Firstly, the appropriateness of the research questions in order to draw out the necessary data. Secondly, an assessment of the appropriateness of the interview setting together with checks on the recording mechanisms to be used, such as tape recorders for the data collection.

Regarding the appropriateness of the research questions, two factors were made clear. The planned semi-structured questions had the ability to draw out the needed data but at the same time it was realised that the questions and the manner of interviewing would be best implemented in a conversational manner with less structure but nonetheless having boundaries to keep the questions within the framework of the topic and the themes, in such a way that the required data could be collected without the interview drifting too far from the topic and the issues of concern. This type of interviewing, conducted in conversational style discussions, which are thematic and topic centered represent some of the features of qualitative interviewing (Mason, 2002:62). This type of interviewing also has a great strength in capturing certain sensitive issues for the participants.

Qualitative research is generally conducted in natural rather than artificial settings (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003:57). For this purpose, the most appropriate place, within the natural context of the participants, was identified in the pilot phase of the research. This was a neutral and natural setting for both the researcher and the participants and it allowed the participants to feel at ease in the knowledge that their privacy was protected in the venue for the interview and the setting was a neutral setting.

Instrumentation

Two main methods were used in the primary data collection: in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, some observations were undertaken to add meaning to and further clarification of certain issues raised in the interviews, in addition to the triangulation of the research findings. Triangulation is an important issue to be considered and in social research one way to achieve this is by using different informants and/or using different methods (Berg, 2001:5., Laws, et al. 2003:281)

According to Laws, et al. (2003:274), when peoples are asked questions, the depth and the truthfulness of the answer can be dependant upon the setting in which the questions are asked. Some people may be able to answer certain questions sincerely if they feel safe and without being surrounded by other people. For others, the opposite may hold true, that is, others may be able to more clearly say what they truly feel when they are placed

with a group where they may get moral support from others (Berg, 2007:144., Laws, et al. 2003:274). Thus, for the above reasons, both individual interviews and focus groups discussions were used as the primary methods for data collection to enhance its strength.

The above factors were found to be true during the research, that is, some participants found it easier in the one to one setting, particularly when they voiced certain personal details, such as family related issues, educational grades, personal weaknesses, etc. Whereas, when discussing some common issues, such as discrimination, general job entry requirements, etc, they were found to be well voiced and agreed upon or even very well debated, when needed, within the group discussions. It was found that the moral support from the focus group had a positive influence when discussing certain issues. Therefore, it was seen that one to one interviewing and focus group discussions were complementary to each other.

Screening question

Two screening questions were used to identify the participant as a person who was suitable to be part of the research project. The first was in relation to age of the potential participant and the second was in relation to the young adult having experienced difficulties securing or not securing a job.

Individual interviews

Interviews with individuals were used, since this method can fulfill the need to acquire the most appropriate data sought by the research, which in this case was the gathering of information on the experiences of the young urban adults in the Maldives, who were in the process of seeking employment. The research also needed to ascertain the difficulties these young adults faced trying to secure a job. Individual interviews are said to be most appropriate in social research, when the area of research involves gathering information, based on peoples' experiences and feelings and/or information based on privileged, personal and sensitive issues (Descombe, 1998:110).

For the interviews, semi structured interview questions were compiled, that cover a range of themes, related to the objectives of the research. Whilst formulating the questions, the review of related literature was a most useful guide to help in compiling of the most appropriate questions. Hence, Yin's (1994:9) statement, "... such a literature review is therefore a means to an end, and not –as most students think –an end in itself. Budding investigators think that the purpose of a literature review is to determine the answers about what is known on the topic; in contrast, experienced investigators review previous research to develop sharper and more insightful *questions* about the topic" was found to be very useful. The questions formed were open ended with the use of 'how' and 'why' questions. Differentiating and choosing the type of research questions is very important in research and Yin (1994:7) states, that using 'how' and 'why' questions is advantageous in case studies or histories. In formulating the questions, in addition to the main question, a set of appropriate probing questions were also compiled to combine the main question, in order to help expand or probe into the question been asked, if needed. See Appendix 1 for the sample sheet of the questions used in the interviewing.

Flexibility, during the interviews was allowed when needed, thus allowing for an in-depth conversational style of interview if and when some participants found this style easier. Descombe (1998:113) states that its is not unusual for a sliding back and forth within an using semi structured and unstructured interviewing techniques when an in-depth understanding into the experiences of peoples' lives is needed.. A thematic topic-centered approach to interviewing can be adapted by researcher in a loosely structured or semi-structured interview (Mason, 2002:62-64). Thus, the questions used for both the individual interviews and the focus group discussions were semi structured, covering certain themes that the researcher was investigating.

The following are suggestions from Berg (2007): the 'Ten Commandments of Interviewing'. These were taken into account during the interview process, in order to enhance the results of the interview process.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF INTERVIEWING

1. Never begin an interview cold
2. Remember your purpose
3. Present a natural front
4. Demonstrate listening awareness
5. Think about your appearance
6. Interview in a comfortable venue
7. Do not be satisfied with monosyllabic word answers
8. Be respectful to the interviewee
9. Practice, practice and practice some more
10. Be cordial and appreciative to the interviewee

(Adopted from Berg, 2007:129-131)

Focus group discussions

In this research, focus group discussions were used as a method of triangulating the information, rather than just using a stand alone data gathering technique (Berg, 2007:144). Therefore, these focus group discussions were used as a method to enhance the individual interviews, with the understanding that although an interviews has its strengths, some participants may find it easier to talk when they have peer support. It is fair to note that this was found to be true during the group discussions.

For the focus group discussions, the same set of questions covering the set themes were used but the questions were directed as general questions to be discussed by the whole group. I remained mainly in the role of the facilitator and used probing questions and redirection when needed, based on the initial interview question being discussed. However, at certain point, as the focus group discussion continued, the questions were adapted, if needed, to go with the flow of the group discussions but always in a controlled way, in order to keep within the framework of the themes and objectives being covered.

Some important issues that Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson (2001) addressed in conducting focus groups in social research were well covered during these focus group

discussions. Some specific important aspects were taken into consideration by the facilitator, who ensured that the discussions remained within the themes and that no one participant lead or over dominated the group. The facilitator also encouraged the more timid participants of the group to be part of the discussions (Bloor et al, 2001: 42-43). Care was also taken regarding the composition of the groups to avoid what Bloor et al (2002: 50) term 'the deathly hush: group silences'.

Observations and further clarification of data gathered

Certain extra data was gathered by means of observations, in order to enhance and triangulate the data being gathered. Observations were undertaken during the period of the consultation survey and other data was collected during the data collection period, such as recording the number of young people who applied for or attended interviews for a given advertised job.

Since I myself belong to the research community, I had a natural opportunity to live within the research setting and thus I also had the opportunity to clarify certain issues raised by the subjects, through general conversations with elders, community members, personal friends, etc.

In addition, certain observations were undertaken of the mass media, such as job advertisements in newspapers and the entry requirements for available jobs, which were closely related to some of the issues discussed by the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an integral part of any research and it is an aspect that needs to be followed throughout the research process, starting from data collection and analysis through to the writing up of the research (David & Sutton, 2004:81., Goodley, Clough, Lawthom & Moore, 2004:76., Laws, et al. 2003:233., Mason, 2002:100). Ethical considerations relating to research involving human beings cannot be overemphasised. Thus, several issues were taken into consideration in the research process, from the

beginning at the research preparation stage through to data collection and also in the write up of the research.

Following the guidelines of the 'Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations, involving Human Participants' at Massey University, a low risk notification of approval was obtained. In a data collection process one of the very first issues of concern is to gain the necessary access to the place needed for the research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:3) and therefore gaining this access is a primary and crucial step, which was considered before conducting the research. Hence, an approval to conduct research in the Maldives was obtained from the relevant ministry in the Maldives: The Ministry of Planning and National Development.

Maximum measures were taken to protect the research participants at all levels. Signed, informed consent was obtained. (See Appendix 2 and 3 for a sample of the consent forms used for individual interviews and focus group discussions, respectively) Berg (2007:79) states that getting written consent with a name and address can itself be a serious threat in protecting the anonymity of the subject, in that, for example, at least the researcher/investigators are in the position to know the person interviewed by name and sight. Consequently the involvement of a few assistants as possible was considered and a high degree of confidentiality was assured for the subjects through this measures being taken during the research. Hence, all interviews and focus group discussions were undertake by me personally. In addition, all tapes were listened to, transcribed and translated and handled only by myself. The potential participants were made aware of any issues of concern at the point of obtaining the informed consent (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:111). Also the participants were made aware of related issues and information regarding the research, such as their right as a participant to continue with the process or withdraw from the research at any time etc., (Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample of the 'Information sheet' used for this purpose).

For a local researcher, undertaking home based research can have its many advantages but is also not immune to having its own share of disadvantages (Leslie & Storey,

2003:82). Thus, since I was a local researcher, issues such as conflict of interest, that can arise in home based research, or other political issues that may act as difficulties within research process, were considered prior to the research and discussed with the supervisor, in order that I was prepared to handle any such issues as smoothly as possible (Scheyvens, Nowak & Scheyvens, 2003:147).

According to Scheyvens, et al. (2003:146), the researcher is obliged to keep the anonymity of the participants if they are asked to do so. Therefore, in consideration of the research setting being a community where people know each other, if not by name then at least by sight and with a certain level of familiarity, I had to be very careful maintaining the privacy aspect during the data collection phase. It was a definite possibility that I could unexpectedly meet up with participants at any time either on the road or in a café. Thus, serious consideration and care was taken to avoid giving any clues as to who were the participants in the research. According to Laws, et al. (2003:241), protecting anonymity, when undertaking research in small communities can be very difficult situation and in many instances it is even unrealistic. Therefore, I was very careful in protecting the anonymity of the participants in the study, by taking into consideration every measure possible to ensure their anonymity within such a close knit community.

Data collection procedures

As mentioned above, in the section relating to participants, certain factors were considered in identifying the participants and a snowball technique to sample collection was used. The initial participants were chosen in two main ways. Firstly, I went into the community, and visited shops, offices, interview venues etc. and asked potential participants the initial screening question, which was based on the participants' age and whether they had experienced any difficulties securing a job. Secondly, personal contacts and colleagues were consulted regarding identifying some young people known to them, who had experienced such difficulties. Subsequently, the participants were chosen with the help of the initial participants by the method used in the snowball technique for participants' selection. The majority of the participants were identified by myself and the remainder through two other of my personal contacts.

The next step was to invite these participants to the interview venue and making travel arrangements for them if necessary. On arrival the participants were received with consideration given to such factors as treating them with respect and informing them in detail about the research. Obtaining informed consent was a high priority and thus this was acquired immediately after they have had read the information sheet provided. The participants questions were clarified as much as possible within the research guidelines.

In the process of preparing for the interviews, factors that enhance successful interviewing and data gathering were considered. One such issue is termed by Glesne & Peshkin (1992:93) as issues of 'personal dimensions', such as building rapport with the participants and the personal subjectivity of the researcher. Mason (2002:94) highlights other factors such as 'relationship work', being well built into the data collection process. Building a good rapport with the participants was used as one of the keys to successful in-depth interviews, which was the objective of the data collection. At the same time, maintaining a balance and not forming what Glesne & Peshkin (1992:93) termed as 'over-rapport' or friendship was carefully taken into consideration and avoided as much as possible, in order to circumvent any situation that may bias the research data. However, it should be fair to note that the level of rapport needed to be maintained at a reasonably close and personal level, in order to draw out the in-depth information required for the research and also these participants were further required to come attend the focus group discussions.

The length of the initial interview process fell within forty five minutes and the focus group discussions were, on average, one and half hours, with an extra time allowed for a small social gathering at the end of the group discussion as a means of thanking the participants for their valuable contributions. In the process, the time spent following the focus group discussions (refreshments at a local restaurant lasted over an hour) which added more meaning and weight to the process for both the individual interviews as well and the focus group discussions. Thus, indirect further discussions of the themes discussed were introduced in a more non structured open place with participants again sharing their experiences. The information gathered from these types of informal settings

was kept as an informal fieldwork diary. It was also a time when I was able to discuss with the participants the best ways to contact them at a later date for member checks of the transcripts, thus email addresses and contact phone numbers were exchanged.

After the interviews were transcribed and translated, member checks forms were examined. This time the participants were not requested to attend a certain venue but instead but they were contacted at their preferred venue, such as home, work, by the roadside of their homes or at work. I personally took the transcripts and gave them to each participant. Then I made arrangements to collect the member check forms when they had been read by the participants. Once again this process could be seen as a sign of value and respect to the participants and it was well received by the participants.

As the research progressed, certain issues, brought up by participants, were confirmed by means of observations, such as the confirmation of general job entry requirements stated in job advertisements and the ways and means of selection procedures used in the interview process for jobs. In his way, information was gathered from local news papers. Also in a few institutions, human resource directors and secretaries were approached and the resulting conversations shed extra light on the themes discussed and often partly confirmed certain issues were raised by the participants. All this information was kept as an informal diary.

Data Analysis

The data analysis cannot be separated from the data collection, since one should be always considering the aims and focus of the research and then identifying ways to make sense of the data (David, & Sutton, 2004:195., Laws, et al. 2003:385., Mason, 2002:148). Hence, the research data analysis was carefully considered and the way in which the data was to be analysed and explained was based on information gathered through the literature review on the subject and its relevance to the research question. In this way, the research questions were formed around a selected set of key themes, which allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic and this in turn would answer the research question.

Therefore, there was on-going analysis: gathering, building on, confirming and reconfirming the data collected in the process of the data gathering. A set of guidelines identified by Laws, et al. (2003:385) was followed during the data collection phase this became part of the analysis when appropriate. The following is adapted from Laws, et al (2003:385);

Analysis can begin during an interview or focus group:

- *Probe to check your understanding of what the respondent really means.*
- *Check one person's experience or views against another's.*
- *Ask for suggestions and explanations, where people's views diverge.*

At the end of an interview or focus group:

- *Ask respondents to identify the main topics of concern to them.*
- *Summarise what has been said and asked for confirmation.*

Laws, et al. (2003:385) also state that the above mentioned steps can help the researcher to be clear about the information obtained from the participants. Particularly in the analysis of the focus group discussions, attention was given to preserve the special uniqueness of these focus groups and thus the data was treated not on an individual basis but on a group basis with emphasis on the interactions of strong agreement or disagreement relating to a certain issue or theme (ibid.: 397). This also added significant strength to the triangulation of the data collected.

As explained previously in this chapter, , the data was generally collected by means of individual interviews and focus group discussions, in addition to supplementary observational and verification data. The raw data was taped records of the interviews conducted, in conjunction with the informal diary notes taken at different points in the research. The memos taken were then later linked when listening to and transcribing the tapes, which had been stored after being translated (Wengraf, 2001: 210-211). During this process, the data was reduced to the answers given by the participants, which were related to the themes identified. The set of key themes identified was the main feature

upon which the reduction of the raw data was based.(Laws, et al. 2003:395). As the transcriptions of the individual interviews and focus groups were processed the commonalities and differences among participants were highlighted (Descombe, 1998:211) and at the same time new and interesting points came to light which were unique for the particular case under research.

Laws, Harper & Marcus (2003:389) call for the taking of measures to reduce personal bias when analysing the data. Consequently, great care was taken in order to avoid any personal bias during data analysis. It was hoped to avoid personal bias through immediately handing over the direct translations to the research supervisors after the member check as raw data and before analysis and interpretation. This was undertaken in order to receive feedback if there were contradictions when the data was analysed.

After considering all factors, the data was analysed under the set of themes identified, interpreted and valued, in relation to the research question and the information required.

Personal reflections on the research process

This research process, 'Journeys toward Employment: Experiences of Young Adults of the Maldives', has been very productive in achieving the objectives of the research. Although, it is fair to admit that it has also been a somewhat emotional and rough journey for me as well. I have had some mixed feelings at certain points of this research. During some moments, I was humbled when I listened to and read their stories and at other times I was sad and felt a certain sense of guilt since I had never experienced these barriers to finding employment. I even had moments when complete silence seemed appropriate. However, as a researcher I strongly endeavoured to remain neutral and empathetic, rather than feeling sorry for the participants and in this way I could be non biased or judgmental and therefore the research would be productive.

Possibly, the root cause of my feelings was because I see myself as 'one of them'. Once, I was also a young urban adult from the Maldives, with my own hopes and dreams of employment and I appreciate that my generation were the lucky ones. We all had jobs lined up waiting for us and we felt as though there were dhonis (a boat that travels

between islands) and taxis waiting to pick up us and take us to wherever we wanted to go and work. Our journey from school to the working world cannot be compared to the situation faced today by young adults seeking employment. This change can be observed not only in the Maldives but also in several parts of the world. On reflection, I believe that my guilt and sadness may have been related to being amongst the 'lucky generation' who had easy access to employment.

Although it was difficult and sad it is to listen to the participants' stories, I still chose to do so because I knew that this could be a way of identifying ways to help them. I have taken their stories at face value and avoided any bias or judgment. I have acknowledged every difficulty voiced by each young adult: large or small, important or unimportant. Whatever, it may seem to others, I honestly believed that for each participant, what may be seen as unimportant and small to some people is indeed a 'huge wave' in front of them. The process of securing employment has not been even close to 'easy' for the participants of the research.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology upon which the research was conducted and discussed the research data collection and analysis in addition to the presentation of some personal reflections on the research process. The research took a case study approach and used purely qualitative methods for data gathering and analysis. This chapter looked into certain key issues of the research, such as getting approval to conduct research, ethical considerations, piloting the study etc. It also discussed certain issues, specific to local researchers undertaking research in their own communities and environment and how the researcher can deal with those issues.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The importance of addressing issues of youth unemployment cannot be overemphasised for the development and stability of countries. It has been recognised that world youth in developing countries are more vulnerable to and affected by unemployment. Several studies have identified issues that become barriers to securing employment. The major issues and themes recognised by previous research have been addressed in Chapter Two, which discussed the related literature on youth and unemployment. It has been found that there is a common concern relating to youth unemployment in all societies, although the difficulties faced by youth are in some ways common and at other times differ between countries.

The aim of the present research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the difficulties and barriers faced by the urban youth in the Maldives as they go through the process of securing employment. In this chapter, I put forward the research findings of this primary research conducted in the Maldives. This is presented by the analysis of the raw research data, consisting of the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions conducted with the key stakeholders, who were the young urban adults themselves and also my own personal reflection on the results in the context of the Maldives. The interview questions were based on several themes identified whilst examining related literature and these questions were then used in the interviews to help identify the barriers experienced by these young urban adults during the process of seeking employment.

In this chapter, I will first provide a summary of the research in addition to presenting some of the general findings of the research, such as how participants find information on available jobs and the meaning of the words 'employment' and 'unemployment' to the participants. The remainder of the chapter will analyse and present the research findings under five major themes. The order of presentation of these themes will be according to

their significance as a barrier experienced by the research participants. Finally, I will present the reader with some suggestions put forward by the participants, which they believe could lessen the difficulties they face in the employment process.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

General Findings of the Research

The interviews conducted identified certain barriers that urban youth face during the employment seeking process. Some of the themes strongly match the related literature addressed in Chapter Two. In addition, some new issues were identified which are specific and meaningful to the present urban youth in the Maldives. The most important finding is the frequency and relevancy of the different types of difficulties faced by these young adults. This is both in relation to the findings of the related literature and those of young individuals themselves: some issues were common amongst some participants but others experience was the entirely the opposite. In general, it is fair to say that there was strong agreement among the participants on certain themes. In this way, the most significant issues or themes, identified as having become as a barrier to unemployment, were those issues related to academic achievements, discrimination and stereotyping of individuals. The themes identified as being the lesser barriers were the unavailability of jobs and the physical and psychological issues related to unemployment. Negative behaviours, such as crime and drugs getting in the way of securing employment were hardly identified as an issue by the participants in the research.

Source of Information on Jobs

The general source of information on the availability of jobs, stated by the majority of the participants, was reported to be through mass media, such as newspapers, radio/television and other forms of local advertisements. In addition to these sources, nearly half of the participants reported that family and friends have also been a good source for finding out information about the availability of jobs in the market. Some type of connection, such as family or known people in government offices, companies and other such institutes, does

these participants to get up to date news on available jobs, even before the jobs are formally advertised. Some participants noted that some available jobs are not even advertised publicly.

Meaning of Employment and Unemployment for the Participants

During the interview, participants were asked how they define ‘employment’ and ‘unemployment’. What does it mean to be employed or unemployed? The answer to this question proved that all the participants had similar connotations as to what employment and unemployment meant for them. Thus, out of 21 participants who were asked this question, all defined employment and unemployment in a similar way. Details of their answers can be viewed in the table below, which is followed by a summary.

MEANING OF EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants	Employment	Unemployment
1	Way forward	No life
2	Gaining	Wasting
3	Satisfied	Boring
4	Respect	-
5	Doing something good	Not doing anything
6	Happiness/ Increase self-esteem	Not a good person
7	Independent	Dependant
8	Happy	Dependant
9	Improvement in life	Uneducated
10	Respected/Trustworthy	No respect
11	Happiness/Increase self-esteem	Loser/Wasteful time
12	Useful/Stable/Respected	Useless/No one
13	Independent/Respect	Useless/Unstable
14	Good life	Psychological problems
15	Valuable person	No one
16	Happy/Respected	Not a useful person
17	Respect/Something good	No chance in life

18	Accepted/Respected	Not accepted
19	Able/Responsible	No body
20	Able/An equal	Nobody/Unhappy
21	Good future/Move forward in life	Just someone/Doing nothing

As can be seen above, employment was defined by all twenty one participants with a positive connotation and unemployment with a highly negative meaning. Employment was defined as something that is basic to a person's life and it was defined with several positive meanings such as, happiness, independent, increase in self esteem, respect, satisfaction in life, valuable person, trustworthy, stability, able, accepted, responsible, etc. On the other hand, unemployment was defined by all 21 participants as something that has a totally negative meaning attached to it. Thus, the meaning of unemployment was defined with almost the opposite words used to define to employment. These were unhappy, dependant, useless person, no respect, no life, wasting, boring, not accepted, looser, nobody, unstable person, etc.

Education, Training, Skills and Work Experience

The most frequently reported barrier that youth by youth in their experiences towards securing a job was related to academic achievement. This has been reported a barrier in the employment process by all twenty one participants. According to the participants, very little recognition is given to other factors which are also important in a job, such as motivation, dedication, skills, etc Academic achievement is not the only barrier but this, coupled with other issues, has been reported and it will be presented below, under the respective themes.

The difficulties arising, from educational achievements are multiple. One of the first difficulties, that the young person faces is not having the necessary qualifications and certificates, which are a requirement for a level entry job and this requirement, voiced by most participants, is set too high. Secondly, preference is basically given to those people who have achieved the highest number of subjects in GCE O levels and/or A levels, in addition to those who have the best grades. No acknowledgment is given to other factors,

such as loyalty, dedication, skills, etc. Thirdly, there is a greater chance is for the person, who has the highest level of qualification so therefore, at times, an over qualified person gets chosen for the job.. As a result, the young person who is only qualified for that level of job does not have a chance and s/he is left out.

As stated above, firstly, some of the participants' effort to enter the job market is blocked, due to the high levels of entry requirements that are stated on job advertisements. Therefore, this means that the young adult cannot make that first step into the job market because s/he does not meet the entry level requirements stated on the job vacancy. As reported by participant 15 *"My educational results not meeting the entry requirements is also a difficulty for me...Most jobs ask for GCE O levels with a good number of subjects which need to be passed at a high level"*. In the same way, participant 18 who, at the period of the interview, was in 'a job' though not a fulfilling job, also voiced similar feelings with even a degree of bitterness *"I did see enough available jobs but I didn't have the necessary entry requirements in some way. I did feel very sad when it was getting harder to get a job"*.

Secondly, as reported by many participants, excellent grades in GCE O levels and/or A levels becomes a ticket that guarantees a job. Participant 8 voiced such a concern saying that *"I kept feeling that my results were the reason that I found it difficult to get a job. My results were not that good"*. Participant 4 also believed that when there are many people applying for the same job, then educational results are considered very important in the short listing of candidates. Therefore, people with lower grades get left out without getting a chance to even attend an interview. Thus, participant 4 says, *"People with the best results get the jobs"*. Also, whilst talking about academic achievements, participant one voiced an interesting point. Since there is so much weight given to GCE O and A levels with good grades in many subjects, sometimes employers do not recognise, consider or take into account a higher diploma.. As participant 1 states *"The most difficult issue is that all jobs are based on educational results and subjects and certificates. I have no O levels – I mean I have not done many subjects. I do have a*

higher diploma, but they do not consider that. They were asking for a certain amount of subjects'.

Apart from the grades, the education level of a person also plays a large part in the guarantee of a job. This means that someone who has GCE A levels has a better chance of getting a job than someone who has GCE O levels, even though the job really does not require GCE A levels or a high level of academic qualifications such as a degree. As stated by participant 3, *"Jobs mainly depended on educational standards. Even having GCE O levels seems not enough either. If you study a bit more than it is easier to get a job"*. Hence, someone who has no GCE O levels suffers even more and even someone who has GCE O levels, which may be a sufficient qualification for a given job, still gets left out if there is an applicant with GCE A levels or a degree. Participants 9 and 10 have had such experiences. According to participant 9, *"The main difficulty for me was not having a GCE O level certificate"*, and participant 10 says, with frustration, *"All jobs gives preference to the certificates you have – no one gives any preference to any skills you may have"*. This same feeling, that having GCE O levels is not considered to be enough to qualify to get a job these days, was also voiced by other participants. As a result, they have chosen to go to further studies, in the hope of being better equipped to challenge the employment process. Participant 3 confirms this situation by saying, *"To make it easier to overcome the difficulties of getting a good job, I have started studying ...I am doing my GCE A levels now"*. In the same manner, a few other participants also believe that at times an expatriate would secure a job easier than a local person and this is related to them holding high levels of academic qualifications. Regarding these circumstances, participant 2 stated *"As I see expatriates get jobs easily because they have better qualifications, such as degrees, masters and PhDs"*.

Within the focus group discussions, this issue of educational achievements being a barrier has been discussed and agreed upon amongst the participants. Within focus group one, there was agreement that the young people themselves believed that education should be a significant factor when screening someone for a job. However, this focus group felt that employers also need to acknowledge other factors, such as motivation, dedication, skills,

etc. *“Education is a factor but employers should also give some weight to things like motivation, practical skills, etc”*. According to focus group two, the most significant barrier is the entry criteria, which are being set too high for most jobs and this makes it harder for young people to apply. Focus group three also agreed with the feelings of the previous groups feelings and stated *“Good results ensure better job opportunities”*.

In addition to academic achievements, focus group three also identified that not having previous training comes in the way of young people getting a job. As they say *“Lack of work experience also makes it difficult for young people to get a job ...Also lack of skills training becomes a difficulty”*. They also added that, unless they get a job, how can they get the work experience or even skills training when what is taught in school is just academic knowledge. Thus, within all three focus group discussions, it was agreed that in some way or another educational achievements have become a barrier to some extent and this should not be so at entry level for jobs for job seeking young adults.

Discrimination and Stereotyping

Discrimination and stereotyping was the second most frequently reported barrier that youth have experienced in their employment seeking process. There were several forms of discrimination experienced by these young people in the process of finding a job. According to most participants, coming from a certain social background or having power over or connections to the employer is one of the most influencing factors for someone to secure a job easily. On the other hand, someone who does not have such means are then disadvantaged and left on their own to struggle finding a job. Thus, the above mentioned forms of discrimination are recognised as being the more frequent forms of discrimination that youth have experienced, rather than some of the more commonly assumed types of discrimination, such as gender discrimination. Also, there was little voiced by participants in relation to certain other forms of stereotypical discrimination, such as the way someone chooses to present or dress themselves, maybe in ways which may be seen as inappropriate to society.

Nine of the twenty one participants voiced that they had experienced discrimination in their struggle for employment. High levels of discrimination in society were related to not having powerful connections or contacts and therefore a person had to find a job either by themselves or through friends or family. The following statements highlight many such feelings voiced by the participants in relation to this concern. Participant 1 states *“The easiest way to find a job is having a direct contact with someone from where you want a job. Interviews and availability of the job is for name sake only. What normally happens is that jobs are personally and internally offered to a known person before it gets advertised in the newspaper. The interview is just a formality. Having a good contact with the so-called right people guarantees a job”*. The same feeling was duplicated by participant 2 who said *“The most difficulty I experienced was that I did not know someone connected to a place to get a job. Because generally I feel that the jobs are already given to someone they know even before the jobs are advertised. ...Interviews are only done as just a formality to show to others.”*.

Participant 5 adds more to this saying *“...Another reason I think is corruption. Some people contact people in powerful posts and get their help to get them into jobs. I know this happens”*. Participant 7 adds more weight to this feeling by saying *“My sisters, who work in some of these places I applied, told me that that the interview was done just because the job went in an advertisement, but someone was selected before interviewing us”*. Participant 14 also says that discrimination is one of the barriers to employment. *“Preference is given to known people and people who have certain contacts get the chance even though jobs are advertised. Jobs are given underhandedly”*.

Furthermore, there were participants who have experienced this barrier of discrimination in the process of trying to find a job. Later, after a struggle, they have then got themselves jobs through using power and contacts. As participant 8 admits, *“First I tried the normal way ...but when it became difficult then later I tried differently. Then I got a job in a place where someone from home was working. I went through their contact to get a job”*. Participant 12 finally got a job after a long struggle with the same experience and confirmed getting a job through a family contact. *“My family helped me to get a job”*.

Participant 18, also after a lengthy search, finally got a job through a family business although s/he was not happy to have got the job this way but to do so because there seemed to be no other choice. *“Now I work for a family business ... since they are my family they gave me a chance ...I feel a lot of jobs are given this way. There is discrimination. People give preference to their family and friends while giving jobs”*.

Different types of discrimination experienced by youth in the employment process were also strongly agreed upon within the focus group discussions, even by those who had not voiced these feelings personally in the individual interviews. There was general agreement that belonging to a certain social class, and having power and contacts was an influencing factor on the guarantee of job. This means that youth, who do not have these attributes, must struggle even more to secure a job. It was also agreed amongst the participants, that when it comes to having the power and the right connections, then even educational results and achievements takes a back seat. Focus group one states, *“Preference is given to known people. Though advertised, jobs are given to people even before the advertisement underhandedly. Even people with poor results get the job when they are connected...Neither the parents nor the employers give this issue a thought. Discrimination is seen as a normal thing”*. Another interesting point was put forward by focus group two, when they stated that belonging to a certain political party can also act as a barrier or an advantage when securing a job. Focus group two also agreed about discrimination which results from having power and contacts. According to discussions in focus group three, the above is very true. *“Discrimination such as giving preference to known people...interviews are just done for name sake...even in the government sector there are also all these discriminations. A good high level connection guarantees a job”*.

To a lesser degree, there are also other ways in which young people have experienced discrimination, compared to those ways stated above. This is discrimination, based on looks and other forms of stereotyping. Participant 4, who has had rejections from jobs for reasons not clearly known, voiced the opinion, *“I also think gender discrimination is an issue too”* in the employment process. Participant 11 also voiced similar concerns and adds *“...the only other thing is gender discrimination”*. Though not directly related to

gender, some participants have also experienced power of authority from seniors that gets in a way of maintaining a job. One such incidence was reported by participant 3 who said, *"...these older people tend to take advantage and intervene on my sales and take away my hard work. I have no right to say anything: if I do I get into trouble"*.

Within the focus group discussion the factor of gender discrimination as a barrier was discussed amongst participants and agreed upon. According to focus group one, gender discrimination, such as women getting preference for certain jobs and men for others, has been reported. Focus group two states *"Even if you apply they will not consider you for those jobs. They,, lets say, want a specific gender"*. Added to this, jobs have been given based on looks such as beauty and this 'requirement' has also been reported as being a barrier to some people. As focus group one states *"Beauty is also given preference for certain jobs ...especially receptionists, waiters for coffee shops etc"*.

In addition to the requirement of beauty as a barrier for some young adults in the employment process, some other forms of stereotyping relating to an individual's looks, has also been reported as being a barrier. According to participant 1, *"Other reasons other than education are my looks, my armband and my chain. People give a negative label to these looks such as assuming you are on drugs. Employers want us to look different to what we are. Let us say if you present yourself with a certain look they will hire you, if not they will dislike you and not hire you"*. Participant 20 has not found a job due to physical build. *"Difficulties getting a job were multiple. Once I had difficulty getting qualified for the job due to my physical build ... I failed to get the job"*. This situation arose because the participant was one inch shorter than the requirement for that job.

Apart from the above forms of discrimination, the part of the country where you were educated has been reported as being a barrier to some participants. Participant 12 stated that if you have studied at an Atoll school and then come to Male', you can find it very hard to get a job, since people are discriminated against on the basis of where they have studied. Similar feelings were voiced by participant 4 while talking about barriers to

employment and similar experiences had been mentioned by other participants. *“My friends have also had similar difficulties. Some of them have had difficulties in getting a job in Male’ because of the place they studied. I mean in Atoll schools”*.

Surprisingly, not everyone within the groups agreed on all types of discrimination. Discussion within focus group two brought up a new form of discrimination, which they say is more recent and a new addition to discrimination factors. They state, *“Also these days belonging to a certain political party can influence the possibility of getting a job or decrease the possibility of getting a job for someone, depending on which party the company favours ...Even in interviews they asked these questions”*. One participant from the group adds, *“One person I know has said this to me. He said he deliberately said he was favouring one of the political parties (not one which he favours) to ensure that he gets that job. And he did”*. However, not everyone could agree on this type of discrimination, saying that they had not yet heard about it.

Physical and Psychological Issues

A physically related health condition, such as poor physical health due to poverty as a result of unemployment, was not reported by any participants as being a barrier to their employment. However, on the other hand, psychological issues, such as decreased mental well-being, unhappiness, anger, decreased self-esteem and high levels of frustration, due to repeated failure to find and secure a job, were reported by the majority of participants. These issues had, to some degree, become a barrier over a period of time for these young people. Some of the anger and frustration which were rooted in discrimination have got in the way between them and their job seeking, even though they possessed all the attributes to be a good employee. Despite the comments above, it is interesting to note that almost all participants reported that, after a period of time, they have found ways to combat the negative impact of discrimination and have indeed turned it the other way around: they have found positive ways to deal with this type of discrimination.

From 21 participants, 15 have voiced the experience of frustration, decreased motivation and unhappiness, at some point whilst attempting to find a job. They found it difficult to

cope with repeated failures. As a result, this frustration and unhappiness became a barrier to their employment, since their level of motivation decreased to the extent that, for a period of time, they stop searching for jobs. However, having said that, a surprisingly phenomenal occurrence was reported by almost all these participants. Either from having no choice or even just by their nature, they did not seem to linger and be held back for too long. They all appeared to have periods of falling back but then they would start to challenge the issues around them either by repeatedly applying for jobs, or commencing further study if they needed to, without wasting any time.

According to participant 5 *"I kind of started getting frustrated when I kept failing to get a job repeatedly. But since I had no choice I kept repeatedly going for it"*. Participant 7, with nearly three years of waiting for a job, was both unable to secure or hold onto for several reasons. *"Those days I am getting less and less interested in applying for a job. Even recently for this job I just got yesterday, I did not feel like coming for the interview. But since my family persuaded me I went to the interview. I kind of felt all places I apply to are unfair"*. Similar feelings of frustration, due to repeated failure, was expressed by participant 15 and this had led to a decrease in confidence which hampered enthusiasm for further job hunting. *"Repeatedly failing to get a job makes me feel that I will never get a job ever. Sometimes I am even reluctant to apply for a job these days"*. Participant 14 also had feelings of frustration and adds *"For me the process of getting a job has been difficult ... I was feeling a bit down, sad and frustrated"*.

Failure to secure a job and then repeated failure hampers young people's enthusiasm and destroys their own ability to proceed further in their job search and eventually they start question their capabilities. As a result of this failure, they have voiced feelings of inadequacy. Participant 10 voiced *"Before I got a job I felt I was not really an able person. I am not useful to anyone. I had low self esteem"*. Some participants felt that being left with no job trapped them in a vicious cycle, which then blocked avenues that could lead them towards finding a job. Participant 14 says that not having a job means facing problems, both physically and psychologically, *"I had suffered a lot. Something as little as making a phone call to try to get some information also cost money. That way all*

issues were linked and it was very hard for me". Frustrations rooted in an inability to secure a job for a period of time keeps destroying confidence, to the extent that this then becomes a barrier to further employment opportunities. Participants started to believe that they were not fit enough to get a job. Participant 18 has experienced such feelings, *"I did feel very sad when it was harder to get a job .I thought I may never be able to work. So I was feeling as though I should not work"*. To add to an already difficult situation, some participants also have to face problems at home. Not being able to earn something to contribute towards the family budget can lead to family disputes. Some parents are unable to accept the fact that their child is trying hard enough to find a job and this was voiced by participant 21 who says, *"Because I can't get a job it is getting harder...each day of my life. And now I am having family problems and unless I get 'a job' I can't even go further into education"*.

Despite all the issues of frustration, anger, decreased self esteem and destroyed confidence, etc., there was still light at the end of the tunnel for the young participants in this research. An encouraging and surprisingly challenging attitude was found amongst nearly all participants, who had been frustrated for a period of time. As stated above, a great many participants have faced the difficulties of unemployment at different levels, some physically, others psychologically and also others with added problems at home or with finances. Some of these factors become an added pressure and developed into further barriers to be faced, when trying to change things in the hope of finding jobs. However, as reported, after a period of initial anger and frustration, nearly all the participants suffering from these negative emotions have somehow turned themselves around. Some have managed to do this on their own and some with the encouragement of family and friends and they have challenged the barriers to the best of their abilities.

Some participants have turned themselves around by redirecting their anger and frustration to building up a strong attitude to 'never give up'. In this sense participant 2 states, *"The harder it became to get a job, the more determined I became"*. Similar feelings were voiced by participants 3 and 10 who say, *"Though I have had difficulties I always try harder and do my best, I keep applying, trying"*, and *"The more I had*

difficulties the more determined I became to try harder to get a good job' respectively. Participant 1 also had a similar challenging nature but with a slight difference. "After all the frustrations I don't really feel like working for the government or private sector...But I am not giving up. I am trying to start my own business. I want to challenge people".

Each young person has their own ways of dealing with employment challenges. One way is to going on to further education and some chose this method to enhance better job possibilities. In this respect, as participant 2 states, , *"Because getting a type of job I like was getting difficult I thought of studying a bit more before pursuing any further until I get a right job"*. Similar feelings were also voiced by participant 3 who adds, *"As a way to make it easier to overcome the difficulties of getting a good job, I have started studying ...I am doing my GCE A levels now"*.

Others have found various ways to combat the frustration and fight to get a job when the situation was not fair. Some participants tried to work around the discrimination related barriers and try to secure a job by following the unfair trend of discrimination themselves. They chose to acquire jobs through contacts, since there was no other real choice, even though they realised it is unfair to others to do so. . Participant 8 has used contacts to secure a job, *"Then I got a job in a place where someone from home was working. I went through their contact"*. Other participants, who followed the same path, were participants 12 and 18 .According to participant 12, *"The job I finally got, I got through the help of my sister ... My family helped me to get a job"* and participant 18 admits, *"Initially I tried through the normal route, apply after seeing newspaper advertisement ...But when that did not work I tried though family ...I got a job there ... My dad helped me in the process"*.

Unavailability of Jobs

Regarding the availability of jobs, the young adults' experiences were not so much to do with no available jobs in the market but it was more that the jobs that were available had a high entry criteria, even though these jobs were low entry level jobs. Also, nearly all young people are looking for similar jobs, for several reasons. According to participant 3,

“Availability of jobs has not been scarce. I do see enough jobs in the news papers ...I do apply but I did not get a job easily”. However, there are other reasons that jobs seem scarce. One reason is related to the entry criteria. According to participant 14, *“There are lots of jobs in the market but I did not have enough educational requirements stated in most jobs”* Participant 9 also voices similar feelings *“I did not see many jobs I can apply for not having completed grade ten”*. The other issue is that a large number of young people only apply for certain types of jobs. As participant 15 states, *“One reason I find it difficult to get a job is due to the large number of applicants for the same job”*. The very same feeling is voiced by participant 19 who says *“I had no problem meeting the entry requirements ... that is why I feel the only reason I did not get a job is due to large numbers of people applying for the same job”*.

The focus group discussions also conveyed similar feelings, regarding the unavailability of jobs in Male'. As discussed in focus group one, there are sufficient jobs in the capital city and this can be witnessed by the high number of expatriates working in the city. Hence, it can be assumed that one reason for job scarcity of is the creation of a scenario which is 'artificial' so that it appears there is a lack of jobs for Maldivians but this is due to the number of expatriate workers in the country. The reason for such a scenario is voiced by the group, *“Maybe we are too proud. We want to do only certain jobs”* meaning that young school leavers are only looking for certain jobs. A similar idea was suggested by focus group two. *“There are other jobs ... the type that expatriates do. But most people don't want those jobs”*. One reason is that they believe that the jobs undertaken by expatriates are not favored by Maldivian young people because the salaries are too low. Expatriates, unlike the locals, get other allowances which increase their salaries indirectly. As stated by focus group three *“Also they give very low salaries for certain jobs, which expatriates do and thus locals don't go for them ...the salary may be ok for them but not enough for the locals for their living standards, plus they get other benefits like a living allowance, which locals don't”*.

Negative Behaviours and Consequences

This was the least experienced or talked about theme amongst the 21 participants interviewed. Surprisingly, only one person brought up the issue of unemployment and associated negative behaviours and the consequences of such negative behaviours. The only participant who brought up the issue was participant 14 who admitted that, during the struggle to get a job, s/he had experienced the high risk and negative issues related to the repeated failure of unemployment. Voiced with deep concern, participant 14 said *"I wasted a lot of time... so I am happy to do some job to start with ... Also I experienced that if you stay like that lost for too long you tend to be pulled into unwanted areas and bad habits. I have had that kind of pressure and some people I knew have gone into things like theft, drugs etc ...I tried very hard to be in control. But young people I know have got into robbery and things like that by having to stay unemployed. They steal to get money to fulfill their daily needs. I had to be very careful not to go down that road"*. Furthermore, this participant added that those who went down that road now face difficulties getting a job because their negative behaviours and habits have turned on themselves and become barriers to their employment. As can be expected, people do not want to hire someone with a bad record or habits, such as drug and theft as a label on them.

Attitudes of Young Adults

The discussion on the theme relating to the issue of availability of sufficient jobs in the market, for the young school leavers, brought up a new issue as being a barrier within their employment process. This is the 'attitude' of the young people themselves. As stated above by some participants, although there are many jobs in the market, a great many young people are looking for the same or similar jobs within certain places, such as in the public sector or in 'famous' private companies. However many other available jobs, most young people do not want to do certain jobs, such as working for small 'non-famous' businesses. The participants in focus group one agreed that the attitudes of young people not wanting to do certain jobs have become a barrier to their employment. Similar feelings were also voiced by the participants in focus group three, who say that

they themselves create a barrier to their employment and they agree that *“Attitudes of young people, us, to do certain jobs”* makes it harder for them to apply for certain jobs.

Multiple Jobs

There was another interesting issue voiced by the participants in focus group three. There are people who hold two or more jobs at any given time, both in the public sector or both in private sector, or one in the public sector and another in the private sector. According to focus group three *“Also one person gets the opportunity to do two jobs. This reduces the chance for the young people to get jobs”*. They state that when this happens the good jobs are taken by the same people, particularly when both jobs are in the public sector. Thus, this leaves limited jobs available for the new generation.

An Entreaty: Participants’ Voice

The main aim of this research was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the experiences and difficulties faced by young urban adults in finding and securing a job. Therefore, I believed that it was important, when gathering the data, that I should also find out what they themselves think are significant possible solutions to enhance the future employability for the young population of the Maldives. It was important to ask them because they are now at a point at which they have had experienced several difficulties to finding employment. It can be assumed that possible solutions and changes, voiced by the participant, were very much in line with the difficulties that they have experienced. The responsibility of making these changes and paving the way was not voiced as a responsibility of just the state nor the private sector but it was suggested that some changes also needed to happen within themselves and their families. Amongst the changes that the young people suggested nearly all areas suggested had equal weight. The findings are stated below.

First and foremost, all participants suggested that something needed to be changed regarding academic qualifications being in the forefront as the only gateway to employment. As participant 12 says, *“... results do not mean the only form of ability you*

may have to do a job. So these issues should be changed". And participant 15 adds, "... don't just choose based on educational qualifications, but also appreciate other things like motivation and skill. Give a chance". Participant 15 also suggests that employers should be reasonable in stating the level of entry requirements for jobs, particularly on entry level jobs. This is because not everyone has excellent results but they can have other valuable skills, plus not all jobs will require excellent academic certificates, especially skills based jobs. When educational qualifications are the main means of screening someone for a job then the average graders get left out. As participant 7 believes, results can affect even an able person, due to some unfortunate incidence at the time of exams. *"Poor results just do not dictate the person's ability. That may even have happened due to other factors in life. Hence they should also give credit to what the person can do at work, the practical side of it"*. When they have failed at the point of short listing, based on educational certificates, they do not have the opportunity to attend an interview to prove themselves and their capabilities.

All forms of discrimination were believed to have become endemic in Maldivian society today. Thus, the majority of the participants suggested it is very important that there is intense effort put into decreasing discrimination in all areas (which were previously discussed under the theme discrimination and stereotyping). Preference should not be given to people coming from a certain background or people who have power or connections to powerful sources. As participant 19 remarks, *"In my opinion discrimination should be reduced, such as giving preference to their families"*. Also, according to participant 18, employers have to stop giving jobs based on who you are or what family you belong to and adds that, *"In my opinion the most important thing to do is decrease discrimination such as not looking into social class, family and friends, beauty etc"*. Thus, gender discrimination and jobs given, based on physical beauty also needs to be eliminated. Even amongst the focus group discussions, everyone was in agreement to eliminate all forms of discrimination and particularly those that relate to social class or jobs given through connections and power, irrespective of exam results or the capabilities of that given person.

Participants also noted that there is a degree of discrimination between expatriates and locals, with preference given to the expatriates. Hence, as participant 5 states *"It will be good to decrease the number of expatriates and give more jobs to Maldivians"*. Some policy changes should be made in order to also protect the locals. Some participants believe that more jobs are given to expatriates which benefit the employers, such as the fact expatriates are willing to work for lower salaries and longer hours, which a local may find hard to do with having family around them. As participant 11 says, *"Preference to locals should be given too, together with giving a reasonable salary ... Because expatriates come for very little salary which locals couldn't really work for ... so consider these issues to give young people better opportunities"*.

Within the focus group discussions, there were strong opinions as to why locals could not afford to do the jobs that taken by expatriates. It is generally because of the salary and the fact that locals are not receiving the extra allowances handed to expatriates. According to focus group three, *"Expatriates can afford to work long hours because they are here to work with no other obligations such as family with them ...Also the salary may be ok for them but not enough for locals for their living standards ... Plus they get other benefits like a living allowance, which locals don't get ... Need to have an employment policy that protects local rights"*. Also, as per focus group one, similar feelings were voiced such as, *"Increase salary. Because the salary on certain jobs expatriates do is not enough for our local living standard. Though they can afford to work, it is not enough for us"*. They added that, when this happens, the young adults then tend to compete for the same jobs within the public sector and private sector, where they can receive a reasonable salary.

Strong suggestions were also put forward by participants to have support services, training programmes and counselling, in addition to skills training. Generally, this idea came from the fact that so much weight is given to just academic qualifications and with all the issues, for example, discrimination, they believe it is very hard to manage without guidance and support and further practical training. Training courses for skilled work together with guidance and support open avenues for those who undertake these courses

and this was voiced by several participants in different ways. Youth services and schools also need to play a significant role in training, supporting and guiding the young people in the process of transition from school to the working world.

Participants 1, 2, 8, 9, 10., 14, 16, 17, and 18 all made such suggestions, respectively.. They are as follows: *“In my opinion we need to run courses for young people ... Also consider skill training and do innovative new things”*. *“If results are not good they can also guide young people to make choices, find opportunities and help them to find ways to overcome the problems, like career counselling”*. *“Career counselling is very important ...training programmes are also very important for young people”*. *“To improve the situation, children need to be well informed. There must be different types of courses run for this purpose”*. *“Youth challenge programmes and similar programmes should be done a bit more for the youth ... Youth should be made aware of how to go about finding a job”*. *“I feel people need to be trained for certain skilled jobs to make employment easier for the young people”*. *“Schools also need to play an important role ...After leaving school young people need to be guided towards employment ...Increase facilities and guidance”*. *“Young people can be given some form of training and experience before they leave school and be prepared more to go into jobs. This can be done through programmes and training courses”*. All the above are concerns and voices made by youth who have suffered in the employment seeking process and this is what they believe can help them and their friends to open doors for future employment opportunities.

Participant 14 adds to the above, saying that employers also need to be considerate and help the young to get into the working world. As stated by many participants, not all people have good academic qualification, although they may be very able skilled workers. Thus, employers also need to play a part in helping them get into skilled areas of employment. *“Some training should be given to the young people and employers should also take young people into jobs knowing that they are just coming out of school and hence have them trained on the job with guidance and support”*. Within the focus groups too, there was strong agreement for support to help young fresh school leavers.

Focus group discussions very strongly suggested the above solutions for future job enhancement for young people. As focus group one states, *“Career guidance and awareness programmes regarding types of jobs can help young people in future employment opportunities”*. Similar feelings were heard amongst focus group two participants. *“To improve on ways of helping youth to get jobs you need to run more training courses for the youth ...Open up ways of giving opportunities for the youth to get some training and experience of different professions ...This can be done both by the government and the private sector”*.

Participants were also very realistic in self-evaluating some issues. They admit that they also need to change within themselves, in order to combat employment difficulties. This they termed as ‘self change/attitude change’. They believe that they also need to change certain stereotypical ideas they have regarding certain jobs, which they must change to make life easier for them. Participant 4 admits that *“Maybe people have to change. Be ready to do different jobs. Not keep applying for the same jobs”*. Participant 10 voiced similar feelings. *“Youth also need to adapt a bit more to the jobs they like to do, such as taking any job to start with. Then later study and try to go further towards what they want”*. Participant 12 adds exactly the same feeling, *“For example, the jobs that the expatriates do should also be considered by us. Not be too choosy and have a certain attitude ...no one seems to be willing to do even their own house work these days. So unwillingness by us young people to do certain jobs also needs to be changed ... Meaning, to start with you may have to start with some ‘low’ level jobs”*. Last but not least, participant 17 also holds the same belief. *“Attitudes of us young people also needs to be changed regarding some types of work, for example, construction work. Those are also good jobs”*. As discussed in the focus groups, young people themselves need to change their attitudes and not see some jobs as ‘below’ them or seeing them as ‘dirty jobs’. Unless this attitude changes, not just amongst the youth but also amongst parents, there are bound to be difficulties for young securing jobs. Focus group one states, *“Parent’s attitudes and increased expectations of certain high level jobs are seen as the only jobs young people should do. As a result there is high competition for certain jobs ... Also young people have similar attitudes, they want only certain types of jobs”*. Thus, all these

attitudes need to be changed, in order to enhance better job opportunities for young people.

Concluding Comments

The findings and analysis of the primary data gathered through this research has been detailed above. These findings have brought to light several issues that young urban adults in the Maldives have experienced as difficulties and barriers in their journey towards finding employment. Most have experienced a difficult process but some have had some degree of luck and have gone through a slightly better process than others.

Some issues, that the young people have voiced, are quite a similar to previous literature reviewed,(refer to topic, Youth and Unemployment, Chapter Two) However, others have not had this type of experience and some of their experiences are different to the previous literature findings. Also, there was strong agreement amongst participants on some issues and vice versa.

Chapter 5, is based on addressing and discussing the findings of the primary data, in addition to the findings in the related literature of previous research. Some conclusions will be drawn on the similarities and differences of the issues faced by young adults in the Maldives and this will also be related to previous literature. Moreover, further comments will be added relating to the present research findings, together with that of the findings in previous literature, in the hope of identifying an approach that can help to overcome the barriers to youth employment in the Maldives.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The findings of the primary data in this research have shed light onto several issues young urban adults in the Maldives have experienced as difficulties and barriers in their journeys towards employment. Some have had rough journeys and others not so rough but overall it has not been an easy journey for the present participants in the research.

In this chapter, I will first brief the reader on the general findings of this research. I will then attempt to answer the research questions:

- Are there any difficulties and barriers faced by young urban adults in the employment process?
- If so, what are these barriers and difficulties?
- What are the possible changes that the youth themselves perceive as necessary, in order to combat difficulties and overcome barriers to employment?

I then relate the research findings of this present research with the related literature of the previous research addressed in Chapter Two. Some conclusions will be drawn to acknowledge the similarities and differences between the present research findings and previous research.

The discussions will be presented under six headings, that relate to the findings of this research in addition to that of past literature. The final heading will address some possible solutions that have been gathered from the participants as remedies for the difficulties they have experienced. I will then incorporate these valuable suggestions, made by the participants with that of the innumerable suggestions in past literature, in order to reach a realistic productive conclusion that can help enhance future employment for young adults in the Maldives and elsewhere.

General Findings

The main focus of this research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of young urban young adults in the Maldives, with the aim of identifying issues that have become barriers in their employment seeking process. The findings clearly indicate that the experiences of the young adults in this research have not been easy. Some have issues that have kept them unemployed for years. Others have taken jobs which are not very fulfilling for them. Some have even given up looking for jobs for a period of time, due to the frustration caused by several obstacles on their pathway to employment. However, after a period of time, most have somehow managed to survive without completely giving up. Some of the issues, identified by the participants, have strong similarities to the past literature which was presented in Chapter Two. Thus, some of the young adults' experiences were clearly related to previous findings. Others did not so strongly agree with past literature findings.

The most significant issues identified were issues related to academic achievements, discrimination and stereotyping of different types. Other issues were related to the unavailability of jobs and also psychological issues that were rooted in delayed employment, which later became a barrier between the young adult and their future employment. Young adults also voiced valuable suggestions for change that they feel are important and need to be acted upon, within society and also amongst themselves, as ways to overcome the existing barriers they have experienced, which have led to their unemployment.

The 'magic sheet of paper' and the 'glittering letters of gold'

The most frequently reported barrier that youth have faced in their experiences towards securing a job was related to their academic certificate and the level of their grades when they apply for a job. I chose to label these as the 'magic sheet of paper' and the 'glittering letters of gold'. Most participants voiced that if you have a high level degree or A levels with top grades, then this guarantees you a job. For example, participant 15 states, , *"My educational results not meeting the entry requirements are also a difficulty*

for me...Most jobs ask for GCE O levels with a good number of subjects which need to be passed at a high level”.

There are two issues in relation to academic certificate and grades held by people. One is that you may be able to apply for a job but you get left out when the process reaches the short listing stage because of your lower grades. As a result, you get no chance to even to attend an interview to prove yourself worthy for the job. There is also the issue that, even for an entry level job, having high entry requirements means that your gateway to the job is closed, due to your inability to apply, since you do not meet the high entry criteria. Thus, in both instances, the end result is that if someone has failed to produce the magic sheet with the letters of gold, to prove themselves worthy candidates for the job, then they are left out, irrespective of how dedicated or able they are otherwise. Similar findings have been reported by studies in other countries. The survey undertaken by IMCAP in Sri Lanka, which investigated the challenges of youth unemployment, also identified a person's level of education as an important factor when it comes to getting a job easily (ILO, 2004).

Education and training was also identified as a means of ensuring better future employment for young adults in Britain (Hodkinson, et al 1996:7-12). Hagell & Shaw (1996:107) suggested that young people should consider staying in education as the best choice when they face unemployment. In this process some even choose to take vocational training that is in line with the labour market needs. A similar belief has been found amongst the participants in this present research and hence they also consider going into further education, in the hope that it may guarantee them jobs more easily. For example, as participant 3 says, *“To make it easier to overcome the difficulties of getting a good job, I have started studying ...I am doing my GCE A levels now”.*

However, not all countries have had similar experiences to the above. In some countries, the opposite holds true and the more educated young people seem to find themselves unemployed (ILO, 2001). This could be the case because the less educated tend to easily accept low quality or low paid jobs. Thus, in a certain way, although the young adults

have some employment, they are in reality underemployed but on surface they are seen as someone who is truly employed. Therefore, it can be concluded that when educational achievements are given undue weight and other factors, such as the person's practical abilities to do a job are ignored, then it can result in able young adults suffering in the employment process, since they do not have an academic paper to prove their ability. This was exactly the case reported by some participants in this present research.

In addition to academic achievements, not having some previous job training has also come in the way between the young people and their prospective jobs. Previous research agrees with this factor. According to Visaria, (1998) as mentioned in Chapter Two, employers prefer experienced older people over young adults who come fresh out of school and who do not have previous work experience. Similarly, participants in this research also voiced the same concern and asked how they could be expected to get work experience without being in a job or even skills training, since they are only taught academic knowledge at school. Therefore, their only means to get work experience is securing a job. However, this avenue is blocked so there are no other means for them. In the same way as the young participants in this research have experienced, in most countries urban youth are faced with this problem to a greater degree than rural young adults.

It's the 'people' you know and/or which 'nest' you belong to

Discrimination and stereotyping was the second most frequently reported barrier experienced by youth in their employment seeking process. This discrimination was manifested by in different ways but the most significant one comes down to the 'people you know' and as on 'who you are'. In other words there can be discrimination against your social background. Some participants reported having power over people or having connections to someone in a top position at an office, institute or company and this had enhanced their chance of employment, for example, one participant states, *"The easiest way to find a job is having a direct contact with someone from where you want a job. Interviews and availability of the job is for name sake. What normally happens is that*

jobs are personally and internally offered to a known person before it gets advertised on newspaper. Interview is just a formality”.

Thus the above quote suggests that, at times, the task of securing a job by the participants in the research was a matter of knowing the so called ‘right people’ and it was a matter of ‘who you are’ rather than your abilities as an individual to do a job. Allat and Yeandle (1992:39-41) state that social capital is an asset to employment and a study undertaken in Britain also suggested that young people and families believe that employment is based on ‘who you knew, rather than what you knew’. The most interesting factor is that when it comes to discrimination of this nature, the young adults, who have previously mentioned the precious ‘magic sheet of paper and the glittering letters of gold’ are forced to take a back seat. Such is the level and strength of such discrimination. Even the highest of the high graders has to give way to the youth with the ‘right’ connections.

Whilst reviewing past literature on the topic, it can be noted that Dorrance and Hughes (1996:15) have also identified family background as an influencing factor for young adults having a greater chance of getting employed, for example, if their parents are employed. From this scenario, we can gather that one reason why easy employment may be easier for young adults, whose parents are employed, could be that either they are in powerful positions themselves or they have a link/connection to the ‘right people’ who can help their children get a job. Other studies have also shown discriminatory similarities, such as the social class to which a person belongs can also have an impact on the career path a young adult follows. A study undertaken in Britain reports that a majority of the high level ‘long-term career jobs’ are ‘owned’ by middle class people (Ashton and Field, 1976, cited in Hodkinson et al, 1996:7). Hence, once again, it can be assumed that opening the doors to employment depends on several issues, including who you are or with whom you have connections. The reason behind this happening can be as the result of parents networking knowledge and connections to places where their children can be employed.

As some participants reported, some of the discrimination also relates to corruption. Thus, after having had a hard time finding a job, they themselves have used the unfair channels of discrimination to their advantage in the desperation of to secure job. This means using the right people and connections. One such example comes from participant 8, who admits, *“First I tried the normal way ...but when it became difficult then later I tried differently. Then I got a job in a place where someone from home was working. I went through their contact to get a job”*. Further examples on this issue can be read in Chapter Four, which discusses the analysis and findings.

It appears that in the job market, discrimination comes in all shapes and colours. In this respect, some participants suggest that there is no limit to discrimination these days and indeed there is a new form of discrimination at the present time, which was born when political parties came into existence in the country. Focus group two states, *“Also these days belonging to a certain political party can influence the possibility of getting a job or decrease the possibility of getting a job for someone, depending on which party the company favours ...Even in interviews they asked these questions”*. Although new to the Maldivian context, such related forms of discrimination in the world market, which attracts the interest of powerful people and political parties, can be seen in past literature. One such comment in past literature highlighting this point is the following suggestion by Ranson (1996) who states that the market does favour the interests of people in high level positions or those who belong to political parties (Ranson, 1994; cited in Hodkinson et al, 1996:138).

Although to a much lesser degree, gender discrimination and other forms of stereotyping, such as the way someone looks, can become a barrier in the selection process for a given job and this occurrence was reported by the research participants. Certain forms of sexual or power related abuse and intimidation of young people at work can make it difficult for the young person to maintain his/her job. According to the ILO (2001), young adults, both young women and young men face discrimination in the job market on the basis of their sex and gender. Also, young women are vulnerable to several forms of gender

discrimination (Lehman, 2005). As reported in past literature, there are disparities within gender discrimination of women from country to country.

Initial frustrations that ended in challenges

Barriers to employment come from all different angles for young adults. Sometimes, it is the consequence of repeated failure to become employed that leads to other issues, which then later then became barriers to further future employment. In this way, psychological issues, such as a decrease in mental well-being, unhappiness, anger, decreased self-esteem and high levels of frustration have been reported by the majority of participants. Thus, anger, frustration and unhappiness have had a negative impact on job searching because of the decreased level of motivation. Research shows that unemployment can lead to decrease motivation and low self esteem which in turn can lead to decreased confidence and motivation and as a result the person stops looking for work (Manchin & Manning, 1998). Furthermore, according to the ILO (2001), the implications are even more serious if the person stays out of employment for a long period, since there is then more chance that the negative issues associated with unemployment are carried over into the latter part of their life.

Although some young people chose to take certain ways to deal with this situation, not all young people follow the same path (Adoric, 2004:191). This means that some react in a positive way and find ways to win their way along the employment seeking path. Fortunately, such a positive attitude was found amongst the research participants from the Maldives, when dealing with their frustration and decrease motivation. It is interesting that all participants reported that, after a period of frustration and low enthusiasm, they all found ways to deal with it and moved forward in their process to find employment. There was a sense of not wanting to give up, followed by finding ways to 'challenge' the barriers they faced. and therefore they were repeatedly applying for jobs or commencing further education, as a means to enhance future job opportunities.

This challenging nature in the young participants may have been inspired by or could possibly be due to some religious and/or cultural values in their society. Children in the Maldives have been taught to not to see every failure that comes across in life as unfairness or misfortune, but rather to accept it and find ways to overcome the problem in a positive way. Even with all the issues of frustration, anger, decreased self esteem, destroyed confidence, etc., there was still light at the end of the tunnel for these young participants in the research. Thus, as reported by past research, some people can deal with challenges in a more positive way than others.

Also, it was felt that these encouraging and challenging attitudes were partly influenced by encouragement from families and friends of the participants.. For example, participant 1 states, *“After all the frustrations I don’t really feel like working for the government or private sector...But I am not giving up. I am trying to start my own business. I want to challenge people”*. Also, each individual demonstrated different reactions and chose different approaches, when looking for employment after a period of failure. Some kept repeatedly trying, with the aim to not give up. Whereas enrolling for further education became a choice for others, in order to enhance their chances of better job possibilities. An example of this is the reaction of participant 3, who says, *“As a way to make it easier to overcome difficulties of getting a good job, I have started studying ...I am doing my GCE A’ levels now”*. Thus, each young person, sometimes with the help of their family, found their own ways of dealing with the situation..

Attitudes: Different shapes and colours

Rather than just the unavailability of jobs in the market, some of the reasons, which made finding employment difficult, were the attitudes of the employers together with those of the given individual job seeker. Employers seem to give a great deal of weight to academic achievements, having placed a high level of entry requirements on even entry level jobs. The best graders are considered to be the best employees in job selection. In addition, employers were also reported as giving preference to experienced older adults. As suggested by focus group discussions, there are enough jobs in the capital for job seekers but certain types of jobs are dominated by expatriates. As the participants

themselves admitted, the reason behind this may be that the preferences of the young people themselves are unrealistic. However many available jobs, most young people do not want to do certain jobs, such as some low level jobs or working for small and not so famous businesses. These jobs are then filled by expatriates. These young adults only want to do certain jobs, such as those in the public sector or white collar jobs. The participants admitted, *“May be we are too proud. We want to do only certain jobs”* ... *“There are other jobs ... the type that expatriates do. But most people don’t want those jobs”*.

There are two reasons why this may be happening. One is that salaries are too low for these types of jobs so therefore if a local works then they do not get the normal allowances which the expatriates receives for the same job. The other factor is related to their own attitudes, as they have voiced clearly above. Therefore the first issue is the way in which the employers discriminate against locals and prefers to employ expatriates: This situation needs to be changed. The second is the attitude of the young people themselves. Changing the ‘attitudes’ of any given individual is stated to be crucial, in order to decrease some forms of discrimination and enhance better prospects for future employment (HAI, 2001 cited in Harper, 2006:270).

A Difference

Research shows that unemployment in the early years of a young person’s life can have serious implications for their future employment. That is because when youth are faced with repeated difficulties in finding and securing employment for the financial support they need in their life and development, they tend to choose certain negative paths in their life as a way of coping. According to the ILO, “unemployment in early life may permanently impair young people’s future employability, as patterns of behaviour and attitudes established at an early stage tend to persist later in life. ... Communities with high levels of youth unemployment are at greater risk of crime, drug abuse and vandalism” (ILO, 2001:7).

However, as per the findings of the present research, this aspect was the least reported and least experienced by the young research participants. Only one young adult brought this up as an issue, having had close experience of the above and also having witnessed friends, who had gone down that path. Participant 14 confirms the above as something that is very possible within the experiences of unemployment. As this participant puts it, *"I wasted a lot of time so I am happy to do some job to start with ... Also I experienced that if you stay like that lost for too long you tend to be pulled into unwanted areas and bad habits. I have had that kind of pressure and some people I know have gone into things like theft, drugs etc ...I tried very hard to be in control"*. The participant who voiced this issue, who is now in employment after considerable difficulty, also confirms his/her young friends, who went down that path, are still struggling and facing difficulties in finding employment, mainly due to their negative behaviours that have now become part of their lives. They are finding it difficult to secure jobs because no one wants to hire them, due to these negative behaviours and past bad records which no tagged them.

Although this issue was not reported as a great barrier, it was nevertheless reported to have had consequences for a few young adults and it was reported by this one participant. The negative consequences of youth unemployment, resulting in negative impact, have been reported in past literature. In some countries, juvenile delinquency is reported as an issue close to youth unemployment, particularly within urban settings. This fact was also voiced by participant 14 when talking about the reasons why this participant's friends got involved in activities such as theft and robbery. As participant states, *"... young people I know have got into robbery and things like that by having to stay unemployed. They steal to get money to fulfill their daily needs. I had to be very careful not to go down that road"*.

The other issues not reported by the research participants, but still issues that are seriously considered as having a negative impact on youth unemployment in past literature, were issues such as the drastic negative choices some young adults tend to make when things get tough, such as suicide and prostitution (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996:18) (This is explained in detail in Chapter Two.) These kinds of behaviours and

unhealthy choices, that become a road block for the young people seeking future employment, were not reported by the participants in this research. One reason I believe that negative paths were not the choice of the participants in the research was because, generally, the participants had shown challenging natures. After a period of anger, frustration, decreased motivation and low confidence they still picked themselves up to somehow challenge the barriers that they were facing. They have chosen to repeatedly try to get jobs, moving into more healthy options, such as getting the support of family and friends or going on to further studies. As Maria (2002:193) suggests, some young people use alternative positive ways, such as findings ways of networking and also overcoming those issues that become barriers to ensure future employment.

This possibly indicates the great value of Jose Antonio Ocampo, UN Under-Secretary-General's words, as stated in the foreword of the 'United Nations World Youth Report 2005', where he says that it is important that policy makers and people who are significant to young people think and act clearly on this suggestion. According to Ocampo, it is not uncommon that policy makers are too involved with the negative stereotypes of young people and concentrating on the negatives issues such as drug abuse, delinquency and violence. As a result the majority of the young adults who are not involved in such behaviors are to some extent ignored (2005: iv). Some aspects of youth unemployment may be a matter of 'differences' between societies and individuals, as witnessed through the participants in this research, who are young urban adults in the Maldives. Thus, the issues that young adults face in different societies have to be explored and then valued by embracing such differences within and between individuals as well as in the societies.

Collaborative Efforts: Everyone has a role

The purpose of this research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the difficulties faced by young urban adults during their employment seeking process. This understanding can then guide us towards realistic strategies, that can help to overcome the barriers these young adults need to go through, towards finding employment. Hence, one of the interview questions was in relation to gathering input from these young adults

regarding their ideas and voices as to what can be done to challenge these barriers to their employment. The possible solutions and changes, voiced by the participants, were very much in relation to the difficulties that they have experienced. Overall, the suggestions made by all the participants comply with the fact that the changes should not be just the responsibility of one person but they must be the responsibility of all the significant people involved: that being, the state, the private sector, the community, their families and last but not the least the young adults themselves. According to the ILO employers' guide, the importance of the first few years of a young adults' life is a critical point towards learning and shaping them towards future successful employment. Hence, employers, educational institutes, vocational guidance centres and significant others people should recognise these barriers to youth unemployment and take necessary measures to help them overcome them (ILO, 2001).

One of the issues identified by the participants, as needing to be changed, is the issue of putting undue weight on just the academic qualifications and also keeping these in the forefront as the only gateway to employment. The participants appeal for this to be changed and they suggest that employers should be reasonable in stating the level of entry requirements for jobs, particularly for entry level jobs. The participants say that not all young people can have excellent results but they can still have other valuable skills needed for the job. The other issue, voiced by the young participants, was in relation to decreasing all forms of discrimination, whether it is due to sex, gender or family background. The participants particularly voiced that physical beauty and the social class to which you belong, being a certain eligibility criteria to reach employment, is very unfair. Many young women have to face several forms of discrimination (Lehmann, 2005). Participants also recognised a degree of discrimination between expatriates and locals, with preference given to the expatriates. Thus, suggestions were made to have some policies put in place that protect the local people and particularly the vulnerable young adults facing many forms of discrimination.

Many participants also voiced their concern about not having enough support services and training and counselling programmes and also the importance of skills training for

young school leavers, who desperately need such training and guidance. This was found to be very important when the young adults have to compete for jobs in a world full of discrimination and job appointments based on merits. Training courses for skilled work, together with guidance and support and the opening of avenues for those who undertake these courses, were identified as critical. Past literature has identified education and training as a crucial component for successful employability. The better the training the better youth will be able to challenge the barriers and adapt to the needs of changes in the labour market. Thus vocational training should be considered, in addition to training that fits in with the changing needs of industry, for example, changing technology and the need to ensure that young people are being made more employable (ILO, 2001: 21). Some countries, such as Japan, encourage employers to take in young school leavers into full-time employment and train them.(Sako, 1994:115).

Suggestions made by participants, relating to access to career guidance, counselling and support services, are also very important, in order for these young adults to be able to cope with the difficulties they face in a period of unemployment. Early long-term unemployment of young adults can lead to anger, frustration, and anxiety and further onto mental and psychological problems, which then makes the young person unable to find positive ways of dealing with the world. When this happens, psychological help is needed to assist them to deal with these negative issues (Adoric, 2004:189). Thus, it is critical that these young adult get support in the form of career guidance and/or career counselling so they can find positive ways to challenge 'their world': the world of youth unemployment. Participants were also very realistic when making suggestions as to what needs changing. They admitted that they also need to change, with regard to some of their attitudes. This they termed as a 'self change/attitude change' which, in addition to the above mentioned changes, should better enhance job opportunities and prospects for these young people.

Youth entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the ways of tackling youth unemployment. Many of the world's leading successful companies agree on the invaluable contribution of supporting youth entrepreneurship. Thus, this can be one area

recognized as paving the way to an opening avenue for young adults. The benefits are multiple (ILO, 2001) because, not only does it allow the person to be employed but young entrepreneurs are also found to be employing people of their own age, thus offering a helping hand to those in the same boat as they were, before they became entrepreneurs.

By gathering and compiling the participants' valuable ideas, in addition to the innumerable suggestions in past literature, the essence of these results is that people addressing these issues should not work alone but it should be a truly 'collaborative effort' by the so called significant people involved: the state, the private sector, educational institutes (whether state or privately owned), the communities and the young adults' families, together with the young adults themselves. Amongst the areas that need to be worked on are: an emphasis on both academic and vocational training; career counselling and career guidance; the opening of doors by means of entrepreneurship and self employment; creating equal opportunities for all by changing individual stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes by employers; and last but not the least some changes in the existing unrealistic attitudinal ideas of the young adults themselves, in order to enhance the prospects for their future employability. To be able to overcome the issue of youth unemployment, a holistic approach was found to be necessary (Dorrance and Hughes, 1996; ILO, 2001; Maria, 2002). This focus needs to be on several issues, such as those mentioned above and include the education and training of youth, to increase their employability and the motivation of young people towards entrepreneurship and increased equality. To particularly overcome the discrimination against young women in the job market, better vocational guidance and addressing equality issues could improve the situation. A literature review conducted by Legatt-Cook (2005:27) on contemporary school to work transition states "it is critical for policy makers to grasp the complex interrelation between changes in the education and employment systems in order to generate policy that might have a real chance of enhancing a positive difference to youth". At the same time, it should also not be a one man show, but it should also be the responsibility of many significant people, such as governments, employers, organisations and individuals to working towards the same goals (ILO, 2001).

Concluding Remarks

The above discussions have brought together the research findings, in addition to past literature on the topic explored. It can be recognised that the participants in the research, the young urban adults in the Maldives, have also experienced numerous difficulties in the employment seeking process. The difficulties they have experienced show many similarities to past literature on the topic but in other ways they are not similar. There were a few issues that had little in common to past literature on the topic.

The implications of unemployment were in general similar to that of past literature. However, the impact of unemployment on young adults and the ways in which they chose to deal with the situation were somewhat different to the general findings in the past literature. Nevertheless, the overall conclusion is that, wherever in the world young adults may be, they are going through, on average, a common set of difficulties, when attempting to move into the world of work and gainful employment.

Some conclusions were drawn on some realistic strategies that can be implemented, in order to help these young adults overcome the barriers they face – and are still experiencing in finding and securing employment. This conclusion was derived by combining the suggestions and appeals of the young participants in this research together with using the innumerable and invaluable strategies suggested in past literature. The importance of everyone working together towards a common goal was realised to be the best remedy for this difficult issue, which is common to all young adults throughout the world.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This present research was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the difficulties and barriers to employment of young urban adults in the Maldives. The main aim of the research was to acquire an in-depth understanding of these issues, which the current young urban adults have experienced in the process of seeking and securing employment, in order to address these issues to better enhance their employment opportunities in the future.

Chapter Two discusses past, related literature on the topic and Chapter Three offers details of the process of the research conducted, itemising issues that were considered important for the present research. A detailed analyses of the findings, in addition to a discussion relating to the findings of the research are addressed in Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

In this final chapter, I summarise the research findings and reflect on the objectives of this present research. This is followed with what I see as the important issues with implications for future practice and I offer recommendations for further research. I conclude the chapter with my final thoughts.

Reflections on the Objectives

In this study, I set out to explore and investigate the experiences of young urban adults in the Maldives in their process towards seeking and securing employment. The aim was to obtain an in-depth understanding of these experiences in the hope of identifying the issues and difficulties they face in the employment process, which becomes have barriers to their successful employment.

The findings of the research indicate that, just the same as elsewhere in the world, Maldivian urban youth also come across numerous difficulties and barriers to successful

employment. Some of these difficulties were in strong agreement with that of past literature on the topic of the research and others were different, which would be expected as a result of differences between different cultures and societies.

The present research conducted was qualitative in nature, in the hope of getting a close and an in-depth understanding of the experiences and difficulties that young urban adults go through in their job search process. The following is a summary of the findings of the research.

Firstly, most young adults report that they have faced immense difficulties, due to the educational qualifications and grades they hold when they leave school. One of the ways this becomes a difficulty is when a great deal of weight is given to individuals, who have taken many subjects and received excellent grades in the GCE O and A level exams. No consideration, or very little consideration, is given to other factors which should also be considered when choosing someone for a job, such as skills, dedication and motivation, to name but a few. This issue may also be connected to the previous issues in that grades are given a great deal of weight and the entry requirements also seem to be set too high for even entry level jobs. The result is that, once again, the low graders do not get a chance to even apply, let alone a chance to be selected for an interview, where they could show that, despite not having the highest grades, they do have an ability to do the job.

Secondly, many participants brought up the issue that discrimination is often used against young adults getting a job and there is also a degree of discrimination when jobs are offered.. Some discrimination is universal, such as that based on gender or to a lesser degree appearance etc. However, most discrimination stopping easy access to jobs is based on having contacts and connections to institutions, offices, companies and extra contacts through family and friends. The better contact you have with a person/s connected to the place where you are applying for a job, either through friends or family, the better the result of a guaranteed easy access to secure that job. As a result, those who do not have such contacts then get left out and in such cases, even the applicants with good grades have to 'take a back seat'. One other issue of a discriminatory nature was

also brought up by the participants, as an issue which comes between them and securing a job. They voiced that this was something which they feel was born very recently after political parties came into picture in the Maldives. Participants feel that, lately, belonging to any given party can act for or against you whilst you are in the process of seeking and securing employment.

The above issues are the two major barriers to employment for these young adults. The minor issues are as follows: Young adults also faced delays in finding and securing a job, due to the negative impact repeated failures to get a job have on these young people. Most of the participants in this research had few or many repeated failures in getting a job, and therefore they became frustrated and angry and their motivation decreased. Hence, as a result, they stopped looking for jobs and lost precious time for a certain period of time. However, at the same time one, positive factor was found amongst the young urban participants: after a period of relapse they have all reverted back, at some point, to the job search, either by moving into further education, to enhance better job opportunities in the future or they tried to combat the discrimination by using these same discrimination related tactics to their advantage. Therefore, instead of giving up or going down the path of getting into drugs, theft, etc., they chose to challenge the situation and keep working towards finding a job.

Past research also indicated that young adults, with repeated failures to find and secure employment and having experienced prolonged unemployment, can be drawn to negative behaviours such as crime, theft, vandalism, etc. Such issues were not directly seen amongst the present research participants, although one person did bring up this issue, since some close friends of this participant have gone down that path and still continue to experience difficulties, due to their negative behaviours. This behaviour in turn then becomes a barrier to their future employment.

Another issue, brought up by the young adults, as a difficulty to their employment prospects was not an issue discussed in past literature but something the participants experienced in the research context. That is related to some unreasonable attitudes of the

participants themselves, in addition to those of the prospective employers. The attitudes of the participants themselves, which included unreasonable expectations of doing only certain jobs and also viewing some jobs as below their level and not appropriate for them, were brought up by the participants as being a barrier to their employment. Hence they agreed that changing some of these unreasonable, biased attitudes, which they have towards taking certain jobs, is necessary if these attitudes are not to become barriers to employment. At the same time, some participants also experienced unreasonable attitudes from prospective employers, such as the employers' preference for older experienced people, rather than young adults and this has also become a barrier that young people have to face. In addition, the participants pointed out that prospective employers often give preference to expatriates over locals, due to certain benefits that the employers receive when employing expatriates, such as employing those who are willing to work for low salaries and for longer hours.

In addition to the above issues, the young participants suggested yet another barriers to their employment: a number of people hold two or more jobs at a given time, sometimes both are in the public sector and at times both jobs are in the private sector and/or one job in the public and one in the private sector. This situation then reduces the chances for new job seekers to find employment, particularly when they have to overcome all the above mentioned difficulties in the process of finding and securing employment.

Finally, the main conclusion drawn from this research is that young urban adults in the Maldives have faced and continue to face several difficulties and barriers in their employment seeking process. Some of the issues are in strong agreement to past world literature on the topic. However, some other issues were identified as being different and quite unique factors, possibly only associated with the present research context and this would be due to the differences between various cultures and societies.

Implications for practice

The present research findings have brought light onto certain issues that should be considered, when dealing with issues of youth unemployment. One factor that needs to be focused on is the acknowledgement of the differences between and within societies and this depends on factors such as size, culture, population, etc., of any given society. Thus, institutions and/or people, who are involved in working with youth unemployment should consider recognising these differences.

One lesson we can learn from this present research, conducted in Male', the capital of the Maldives, is that a specific issue/s can be unique to a small nation state, such as the Maldives, with a small population of about 300,000 people, where families are close knit and live in close proximity to each other and with an extended family situation. The small population and the physical closeness of people living close by or together also binds families, forming a closeness among them and a strong sense of friendship among groups of people. Such a factor then brings out and enhances the opportunities of forming contacts and networks amongst a given group of people. People tend to 'look after' their families and give priority to their own family and friends. Therefore, those young people, who have close connections to people having access and power to help their friends and family to get into jobs, will have a better chance of getting into the working world. It is vis-à-vis for those who do not have such contacts or network. In these instances, it can happen that even someone who holds excellent educational qualifications must suffer and give way to those young people with good connections and access to networks?

Policy makers and organisations, together with individuals who have an interest in the topic, need therefore to explore the issues that are context specific and develop an in-depth understanding of a given specific nation, when addressing issues such as youth unemployment. This will then ensure a better understanding of the situation and the successful strategies needed to pave the way to a realistic and attainable solution to overcome the problems.

Recommendations for further research

Walsh (2005) states that in most good research "... one question asked leads to yet another question to ask" (Walsh, 2005:261). I am convinced that I am in such a position at this point of my research and thus has lead me to want to explore and find answers to some other relevant questions which could be beneficial for future research. Hence, I suggest that the following be considered for future research:

1. To investigate the attitudes of prospective employers, their views, feelings and considerations whilst offering jobs to young people. Also, to look for similarities and/or differences in the viewpoints voiced by the young adults, in comparison to the prospective employers.

2. To investigate and develop an in-depth understanding of the attitudes of parents and elders in the society. To understand their views and ideas and obtain answers to questions such as, 'What employment is available for young adults?' and 'What are the values parents/elders put on different types of jobs?'. This seems to be an important area to explore because young peoples' attitudes, to more, rather than to a lesser degree, are already and can be influenced and inspired in the future, by parents, elders and significant others. Thus, information about and answers to these questions may result in valuable information, which could be used when formulating ways to help the young adults towards easier and successful future employment.

3. To look for answers from other angles, for example, making the research more gender specific, such as: looking for employment barriers against young women/men; specific gender differences amongst young adults; the degree and the type of gender specific barriers that young adults face; or looking into the gender specific consequences of youth unemployment.

4. To investigate policy options and the development of more trade skills and to take a closer look at the impact of contract workers and the re-training of workers for growing areas of the economy.

Final thoughts

The journeys towards employment for young adults in the Maldives have its fair share of struggles, difficulties and barriers. These young adults, like all individuals, are not immune to the consequences and impact of such difficulties and barriers to something that so integral to their progress in life. Thus it is critical that policy makers, private businesses, parents and communities consider the needs of these young adults and the factors and strategies that can address and minimise the issue of increasing youth unemployment.

APPENDIX 1 Interview Questions

Screening questions:

1. How old are you?
 2. Have you ever experienced any difficulty finding a job?
-

Interview Questions:

1. How long did you have to/have been looking for a job?
 - Did it take a long time and if so how long? Please tell me what happened? Why did it take/is taking so long?
2. How do you normally get information about available jobs?
 - Is it in the news, newspapers, friends, or family contacts?
 - What or who has helped you most and can you tell me how and why?
3. What ways are the best ways of looking for a job and what are your ideas about this process?
 - Can you tell me about things you do to make it easier to get a job?
(for example talk to people around about getting a job, study, looking for jobs other than what you really want to do, lets say adapting a bit, etc)
4. What was it like looking for a job?
 - Meaning how did you feel, was it reasonable or was it very difficult?
Can you tell me about your experiences?
5. What were the difficulties you have experienced?
 - Were your difficulties related to, for example, ?
 - Education or skills
 - Discrimination because lets say, for example, to do with
.... Your type of education place of education

.... Work experience ... you being a male/female

.... Your family background ... contacts you have through family/friends

What mattered most in your case?

6. How was/is is the availability of jobs?

- Were the difficulties also, let's say, related to the availability of jobs?
- Or was it also that although jobs are still available, for example, there is a lack of availability of the type of job you want to do?
- Can you please tell me what you have experienced?

7. Now OK, you seem to have had some/great difficulty in getting a job. Can you tell me what you thought about having to face these difficulties?

- Different people may react differently to such a situation. What is your reaction?
- I mean, did you keep looking more and more or did you stop?
- Or instead did you go on to further studies and stopped looking for jobs, etc?
- How did you go about this?

8. Especially, if you don't mind me asking about your feelings, in terms of negative feelings such as frustration, anger, decrease motivation etc.

- What was it like for you?
- How did/do you see the situation for you?
- How did you react and what happened in your case?

9. And also, apart from not having a job, how are other things in life?

- For example how is your
- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| - Health | - Happiness |
| - Sports | - Social life |
| - Further education | |

- Does not having a job affect any of these issues, or any other issues in life? Can you tell me?

10. In other words, what did it actually mean for to you to be unemployed?

- What mattered to you most when you were unemployed?
- Which aspect of your life suffered most because of not having a job?
- Was it, let's say, OK without a job –I mean your life in general? Can you tell me something about how it was for you?

11. And how is your life different from someone who has a job?

12. Also, can you tell me how your family and friends and significant other people view you? I mean, because you had/have no job, did/does it matter in any way? Can you tell me something about it?

(If at this time the participant is in a job)

13. How did it feel to finally get a job?

14. Are you in the type of job you want and are you happy to be in this job?

15. What changed because you got the job?

- What is different in your life now? Can you tell me what changed, how it changed and why for example it changed?

(Is it the financial gain, or the personal satisfaction from the job, etc?)

16. OK, now we have talked of your difficulties Can you tell me your knowledge about your friends and what you may have heard of their experiences?

- Do your friends have/had difficulties in getting jobs? What were their experiences?
- Do they have similar experiences and similar issues? Can you tell me something about that?

Note: Question 16 is based on my feeling that someone, who may or cannot talk about some issues, can sometimes talk about these issues if they relate to someone else. Thus, to get some information relating to their general view, perceptions, ideas about related issues of unemployment I ask them to talk about someone else's views and opinions.

In your opinion

- Why is there so much expatriate labour in the country and locals with no jobs?
- What kind of changes can help young people to get better employment opportunities and productive work?

APPENDIX 2 Consent Form – Individual interviews

[Printed on Massey University Department letter head]

Research Title: Journeys towards Employment: Experiences of Urban Young Adults in the Maldives

<p>PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:</p> <p>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS</p>

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the interview

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me after 5 years

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name - Printed: _____

APPENDIX 3 Consent Form – Focus Group Discussions

[Printed on Massey University Department letter head]

Research Title: Journeys towards Employment: Experiences of Urban Young Adults in the Maldives

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:

FOCUS GROUP

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed or identity of any person in the focus group.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me after 5 years

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name – Printed: _____

APPENDIX 4 Information Sheet

[Printed on Massey University Department letter head]

Participation invited in the study of: Journeys towards Employment: Experiences of Urban Young Adults in the Maldives.

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction:

I am Farzana Shaugee, a student undertaking a research project as a requirement for the Masters of Philosophy degree in Development Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. My supervisors are Professor John Overton and Dr Donovan Storey, Institute of Development Studies, School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey University, Palmerston North.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of young urban adults in the process of getting employment in the Maldives. The study will seek an in-depth understanding of the different issues that these young adults face in the process of becoming part of the labour force in the Maldives. The study also aims to find out the difficulties these young adults are facing, in the hope that the study will provide some information/issues that can be addressed, in order to help young adults towards finding better opportunities for employment in the future.

Participant Recruitment

The participants in the study are in the 17-24 years age group, from the urban capital of the Maldives, Male'. The inclusion criteria is based on age, as specified above, in addition to the selection of those who answer 'yes' to the screening question, being someone who has had/is having difficulties in finding employment, irrespective of whether they are at the moment employed at the present time. The number of participants will be between 20-40 young people.

No discomfort or risk is anticipated and those who may find any discomfort during the interview process have the right to discontinue and thus remove themselves from participating in the study.

Project Procedures

The data will be collected by means of semi-structured interviewing and focus group discussions. All data collected, such as notes, forms, interview tapes and computer documents will be kept confidential by the researcher and then disposed of.

Participants in the individual interviews will be involved in the interview process for not more than one to one and half hours duration and the focus group discussions will not last more than two hours. Some extra additional fifteen minutes is anticipated when the researcher meets the participants to hand them (and later collect) the transcripts, for the members check approval, in case of the need to clarify some questions.

You, as a participant in this study, are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study anytime during the period of the fieldwork
- ask any questions about the study at any time during your participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview

Project Contacts and Ethics Review

Please feel free to contact me or any one of the supervisors listed below, if you have any questions about the project.

“This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz”.

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