

# Exploring the Impact of Relative Deprivation on Negative Affect of Unemployed Youth in Haryana

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**Abstract-** The issue of unemployment, especially among the educated youth, is a matter of grave concern due to its profound impact on an individual's psychological health. Unemployment is binary status (one is either employed or not), but the feelings of deprivation that come with unemployment can vary greatly. These feelings can, in turn, impact the psychological well-being of individuals. This research delves into the concept of relative deprivation, a psychological phenomenon that arises from a person's perception of being worse off compared to others, and its role in predicting the psychological well-being. For the study a sample of 240 Unemployed Graduates was collected using University Students Relative Deprivation Questionnaire (USRDQ), Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB), and Eight State Questionnaire (8SQ). The study suggests that relative deprivation can trigger a range of negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, depression, regression, fatigue, and guilt. The outcomes of this research are anticipated to shed light on the psychological consequences of unemployment and guide the development of strategies aimed at enhancing the mental health of unemployed youth. However, further studies are required to confirm these results and investigate other factors that may influence these dependent measures of unemployed youth.

**Keywords-** Unemployment, Negative Affect, and Relative Deprivation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Going through unemployment is an unexpected and disconcerting event that can have a wide range of long-lasting impacts on a person's life. It's not just a professional setback but also disrupts the person's daily routine, financial stability, and future planning. The impact extends beyond the individual, affecting their family and social relationships. The stress and uncertainty associated with unemployment can also lead to mental health issues, further complicating the situation. Therefore, being unemployed is not just an economic issue, but a comprehensive life event with far-reaching implications. In our modern era, having a job is often seen as essential to one's social, personal, and home life. It provides a pathway to a certain quality of life and is vital for an individual's well-being (Rani, 2015). The escalating rate of unemployment continues to pose a significant developmental hurdle for the economic expansion of numerous nations, and this trend has been on an upward trajectory for several decades (Okpako et al., 2021).

The sense of relative deprivation is understood as the perceived deficiency of resources required to maintain the lifestyle and activities that an individual or group is used to within their social context. This concept is generally evaluated by comparing an individual or group's conditions to those of the broader society. Relative deprivation can lead to feelings of discontent when one feels deprived of something they believe they are entitled to. This term is widely used in various disciplines to describe feelings of deprivation in economic, political, and social contexts that are relative rather than absolute. It is often associated with poverty and social exclusion. The experience of relative deprivation can potentially instigate deviant behaviors both at an individual level and within the broader societal context (Grasso et al., 2019). This essentially means that when individuals or groups perceive that they are worse off or deprived in comparison to others, it can result in them engaging in behaviors that deviate from societal norms or expectations. This could take shape in numerous ways, including deteriorating mental and physical health, engagement in criminal activities, indulgence in gambling, acts of rebellion, or other types of societal disturbances. It's a significant factor to consider in understanding the dynamics of individual and societal behavior. The experience of deprivation can significantly differ from one individual to another. Factors such as personal circumstances, societal context, and individual resilience can greatly influence how one perceives and responds to deprivation. It's a complex issue with many nuances.

Unemployed youth often find themselves in a socially deprived group. This can be due to the behavior of others who may stigmatize or marginalize them because of their unemployment status. They often face issues such as social exclusion because of their unemployment status, and this is a significant issue in the Haryana state. According to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) the Haryana state has the highest unemployment rate in the

country at 34.1 per cent (CMIE, 2022). This high rate of unemployment, particularly among the youth, can lead to a feeling of deprivation when they compare themselves to their employed counterparts.

The current study delves into the association between relative deprivation and negative affect among unemployed youth. Relative deprivation refers to the evaluation of oneself being worse off when compared to some social reference, leading to feelings of discontent and resentment. Negative affect encompasses a range of negative emotions such as anxiety, guilt, depression, regression and so on. In the context of unemployment, relative deprivation could arise from comparing oneself to peers who are employed, leading to feelings of being left behind or disadvantaged. This could trigger negative emotions, contributing to negative affect.

There are ample of studies that highlight the significant impact of relative deprivation on negative affect, including aggressive behaviour, depression, and other forms of social deviance. Wang et al. (2023) investigated the influence of relative deprivation on the aggressive conduct of university students. The findings of the study indicated that relative deprivation was a significant positive predictor of aggressive behavior among these students. In a similar manner, another investigation aimed to investigate found the effects of the sense of relative deprivation on depression among college students. It was found that the sense of relative deprivation was associated with depression. It also found that smartphone addiction and sleep played a mediating role, accounting for 31.793% of the association (Lui et al., 2024). In addition, Ohno et al., (2023) discovered that relative deprivation, when based on objective measures such as income data, adversely affects subjective well-being. This suggests that individuals who are objectively worse off in terms of income tend to report lower levels of happiness and satisfaction with their lives. Furthermore, the research indicated that the subjective feeling of personal relative deprivation - that is, the individual's own perception of being unfairly worse off compared to others - is a significant predictor of mental health issues and depression. This means that individuals who feel that they are relatively deprived are more likely to experience mental health problems and symptoms of depression. The study underscores the importance of both objective and subjective measures of relative deprivation in understanding and addressing mental health and well-being. Some social scientists have also cited relative deprivation, as potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading to extreme situations to political violence such riots, civil war, and social unrest. There has been instances of social deviance such as increased crime rate. (Keperman, 2018; Gurney, J. N., & Tierney, K. J., 1982; Kawachi, 1999).

Related review of literature clearly reveals the association between relative deprivation and negative affect. In addition to these variables, other factors could also be at the play, and the relationship between relative deprivation and negative affect could be influenced by individual characteristics, situational factors, and other socio-economic factors. The current study aims to examine the association between relative deprivation and negative affect. In this study, the researchers are not only aiming to validate the findings of previous research, but also to understand how these findings apply to the distinct culture and situation of the Haryana State.

## II. METHOD

### Participants

In this study, a sample of 240 unemployed graduate individuals were selected from various districts of Haryana State, namely Gurgaon, Rewari, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri, and Mahendergarh. The data collection process took place at both government-run and private libraries, as well as employment exchanges within these districts. These participants were aged between 20 and 30 years, with an average age of 24.6 years. The gender distribution included 118 females and 122 males. In terms of geographical distribution, 150 participants resided in rural areas, 20 in semi-urban areas, and the rest 70 in urban areas.

### Measures

Following measures were used to collect the data:

#### *University Students' Relative Deprivation Questionnaire (Jia, 2022)*

The questionnaire is designed to assess the perception that one's group or oneself as a person is undeservingly worse off than other people in a relevant social context. The scale measures three aspects of Relative Deprivation: social comparison, cognitive evaluation, and emotional experience. This self-report questionnaire comprises 19 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert Scale. These items are categorized into three dimensions: Social Comparison, Cognitive Evaluation, and Emotional Experience. The questionnaire has a high Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.916, with the coefficients for the three factors ranging from 0.805 to 0.934. The test-retest reliability of the questionnaire is 0.919, indicating its high reliability. It also exhibits high content validity. The questionnaire is primarily intended for university students and individuals of a similar age group, but it can also be used with unemployed youth.

#### *The Eight State Questionnaire(8SQ) (Curran and Cattell, 1976)*

The Eight State Questionnaire, or 8SQ, is a self-assessment tool designed to evaluate eight key emotional or mood states. These states include Anxiety, Stress, Depression, Regression, Fatigue, Guilt, Extraversion, and Arousal. The questionnaire is composed of 96 items, with 12 items dedicated to each state. It can be administered to individuals or groups and is suitable for adults and adolescents aged 16 and above. The 8SQ allows for the assessment of a person's or group's emotional reactions to various situations or environmental changes. The questionnaire has demonstrated high

reliability, with an immediate retest coefficient of 0.93, and good concept validity at 0.72. Its applicability is broad, making it a versatile tool for assessing emotional states.

### Procedure

The participants chosen for data collection were encouraged to take part in the study. After building a good relationship with them, their written consent was obtained. They were asked to provide demographic information and were given clear instructions. They were assured of their anonymity and urged to respond honestly. The questionnaires were given to each participant individually or in group of 5 to 10 participants. After completion, they were thanked for their participation. The scoring was done according to the guidelines in the respective manuals. The collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS (25.0) software.

## III.RESULTS

Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, were computed, and are presented in Table-1.

**Table-1**

*Descriptive Statistics for the variables under study*

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtoses
Anxiety	16.72	6.16	.29	-.13
Stress	17.41	4.44	.17	-.11
Depression	18.80	5.84	.21	-.09
Regression	17.17	5.23	-.09	-.23
Fatigue	16.38	5.63	.23	.59
Guilt	17.19	5.73	.30	.23
Relative Deprivation	76.29	19.90	-.34	-.22

Inspection of Table-1 indicates that the data distribution is generally normal, with only minor deviations. Therefore, the data was deemed suitable for further statistical analysis.

**Table-2**

*Intercorrelation Matrix for the variables under study*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RD	1						
Anxiety	.52**	1					
Stress	.47**	.66**	1				
Depression	.56**	.69**	.64**	1			
Regression	.46**	.71**	.62**	.61**	1		
Fatigue	.47**	.75**	.63**	.69**	.71**	1	
Guilt	.48**	.71**	.62**	.66**	.68**	.74**	1

*Note.* RD = Relative Deprivation.

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Pearson correlations were calculated to see the relationship between the outcome variables (negative affect) and the independent variable (relative deprivation). Table-2 depicts the intercorrelation matrix for the variables under study. Perusal of the intercorrelation matrix reveals positive and statistically significant correlations among Relative Deprivation and the factors of Negative Affect. It was observed that, all the factors of Negative Affect significantly correlated with the independent variable Relative Deprivation i.e., Anxiety (0.52,  $p < .01$ ), Stress (0.47,  $p < .01$ ), Depression (0.56,  $p < .01$ ), Regression (.46,  $p < .01$ ), Fatigue (.47,  $p < .01$ ), and Guilt (.48,  $p < .01$ ). The findings indicate that unemployed youth who experience higher levels of relative deprivation tend to exhibit a greater degree of negative emotions. In other words, the more these young individuals perceive themselves or their group as being unfairly worse off compared to others in their social context, the more likely they are to experience negative feelings states such as anxiety, stress, depression, regression, fatigue, and guilt.

Furthermore, regression analysis was carried out to predict the outcome variable (Negative Affect) based on the predictor variable (Relative Deprivation). Examination of Table-3 revealed that Negative Affect as predicted by Relative Deprivation, which was estimated by using the enter method, model emerged ( $F_{1,239} = 44.274$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .157$ ). When Negative Affect was entered in the model it accounted for 15.7% of the variance in predicting negative affect, which is significant. The adjusted  $R^2$  value for the model 1 was .153 which shows a very little difference in the  $R^2$  and adjusted

$R^2$  values. The minor discrepancy between  $R^2$  and the adjusted  $R^2$  indicates that if the results were derived from the population instead of sample, they would account for 0.4% less variance. The obtained  $\beta$  values suggest that a 1-unit increase in relative deprivation would result in a 0.565 unit change in negative affect. Whereas the standardized  $\beta$  values indicate that one standard deviation (SD) change in relative deprivation will result in 0.396 unit change in negative affect.

**Table-3**

*Regression Analysis for Relative Deprivation as a Predictor of Negative Affect*

Model	R	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	$R^2$ Change	F	df1	df2	$\beta$	Std. $\beta$
1	.396 <sup>a</sup>	.157	.153	.157	44.274**	1	239	.565	.396

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relative Deprivation

\*\* $p < .01$ .

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the study was to explore the relationship between relative deprivation and the negative affect, with the goal of observing the impact of relative deprivation on the negative affect of unemployed youth. Findings of the correlational analyses indicated positive and statistically significant relationship between relative deprivation and the factors of Negative Affect. The results are in line with the previous studies (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2010; Spencer, 2001).

In the present study it was observed that 15.7% of the total variance in negative affect among unemployed youth. This suggests that relative deprivation is a significant predictor of negative affect. Negative affect refers to a broad range of negative emotions, including anxiety, stress, depression, regression, fatigue, and guilt. In the context of unemployed youth, these negative emotions could be triggered or exacerbated by their perceived injustice. For instance, they might feel that they are undeservingly worse off compared to their peers who are employed, leading to feelings of anxiety and stress (Hannan et al., 1997). They might also feel less valued or recognized in society due to their unemployment status, which could contribute to feelings of depression and guilt (Creed & Reynolds, 2001). Furthermore, the challenges they face in fulfilling their needs or achieving their aspirations due to their unemployment could lead to feelings of regression and fatigue. Therefore, these findings suggest that interventions aimed at reducing relative deprivation could potentially alleviate these negative affect states in unemployed youth.

However, it's also important to note that since relative deprivation only accounts for 15.7% of the variance, there are likely other factors at play as well. This could be attributed to a range of factors. Unemployed youth may feel excluded or marginalized, leading to a sense of relative deprivation. They may also feel less valued or recognized in society, which can exacerbate these feelings. Additionally, they may encounter challenges in fulfilling their needs or achieving their aspirations, further intensifying their sense of deprivation. All these factors can contribute to the heightened negative emotions experienced by unemployed youth. The combination of economic factors, social unrest, and these negative emotions experienced by unemployed youth can create a volatile environment for the society at large (Bay & Blekesaune, 2002; Baron, 2004; Cramer, 2010). State of Haryana has witnessed several instances of youth-led protests that have indeed resulted in collective violence (Singh & Murari, 2019).

#### CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the role of relative deprivation in the emotional well-being of unemployed youth. Moreover, previous research has consistently found a significant relationship between these two variables. This suggests that relative deprivation could be a key factor influencing the emotional well-being of unemployed youth. It underscores the importance of addressing relative deprivation in interventions aimed at improving the mental health of this population.

#### LIMITATIONS

It's important to note that these findings highlight a correlation, not causation, and further research may be needed to understand the underlying causes and effects. Other factors could also be at play, and the relationship between relative deprivation and negative affect could be influenced by individual characteristics, the duration of unemployment, and other socio-economic factors. Further research is needed to fully understand this complex relationship and its implications for unemployed youth.

#### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These results underscore the need to address relative deprivation as a key factor in mitigating negative emotion states among unemployed youth. Further investigations could delve deeper into the complex interplay between these variables

to offer a more holistic view of the emotional states of unemployed youth. However, it's important to note that while relative deprivation explains a portion of the variance, there are likely other factors at play as well, given that the majority of the variance.

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### Conflict of Interests

There are no Conflict of Interests.

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