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The Impact of Graduate Population Growth on Unemployment: A Study on the Role of Higher Education and Government Policies in Nagaland

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Abstract

Unemployment is a complex and persistent global challenge, but it is particularly acute in regions experiencing rapid population growth. When the number of people entering the workforce outpaces the rate of job creation, the result is a swelling pool of unemployed individuals. This mismatch is often intensified by a lack of proper vocational skills and a curriculum that doesn't align with the demands of the modern labour market. Nagaland's unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and above surged to 7.1% in 2023-24, with youth unemployment reaching 27.4 % and 39.6% in urban areas. The present study aims to understand the impact of graduate population growth on unemployment and the role of government policies and higher education. The findings demonstrate that the rising graduate population in Nagaland has directly intensified unemployment and job competition. Graduates strongly prefer government jobs, while many lack confidence in their higher education preparedness and remain only moderately aware of policies. Together, these factors reveal the urgent need for interventions in policy, education, and employment creation to reduce graduate unemployment.

Keywords: *Graduate population growth, unemployment, government policies, and higher education*

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Introduction

Youth unemployment has become a critical socioeconomic challenge, exacerbated by the nation's rapid population growth and the consequent expansion of its working-age population. India's population is projected to reach 1.17 billion by 2060, with a median age of 29 and a labour pool of 600 million. However, the economy has not kept pace with job creation, leading to high youth unemployment. (Mehrotra S, & Parida, J, 2025). Nagaland faces even more unemployment issues, compounded by its geographical isolation and economic structure. Nagaland's unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and above surged to 7.1% in 2023-24, with youth unemployment reaching 27.4 % and 39.6% in urban areas. Approximately 28 million educated youth are actively seeking jobs, while 100 million (mostly women) have stopped looking for work altogether, becoming "discouraged workers". (Santosh Mehrotra and Jajati Parida, 2025).

Nagaland has experienced rapid urbanisation, with the State recording the highest urban population growth in India at 66.7%. Many people move from rural to urban areas in search of better employment, education, and healthcare facilities. Dimapur, Kohima, and Mokokchung are the primary urban centres, with Dimapur emerging as the fastest-growing city due to its strategic location and connectivity. The State faces a critical challenge of leveraging urbanisation for economic growth while addressing youth unemployment through targeted policies. (Mehrotra and Parida, 2025).

According to the report by the Department of Labour & Employment and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, in Nagaland, there are more than 72,000 registered, educated, unemployed youths. (Nagaland Post, 2024). The main reason behind these unemployment issues is due to a mismatch between the skills of its graduates and market demands. Many graduates pursue degrees in fields with limited local opportunities, such as the humanities or social sciences, while sectors like technology and manufacturing remain underdeveloped. This results in a surplus of qualified candidates for scarce professional roles, leading to underemployment or migration to other states in search of work. (Census of India 2011. Nagaland population Data).

Despite a growing youth population in Nagaland, the state faces structural constraints that hinder employability, including a mismatch between educational needs and market demands, a reliance on government jobs, and an underdeveloped private sector. Many educated youths lack the practical skills required for industries such as manufacturing, IT, or agro-processing. They emphasise theoretical knowledge over vocational or skill-based learning, which can lead to high unemployment despite educational attainment. (Patton, C., 2025). Nagaland's initiatives and policies, such as the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDM), National Career Service (NCS), and Skill Development Scheme, aim to train 5,000 youth in market-relevant skills to achieve 60-80% employment rates, reduce dependency on academic degrees, and promote hands-on expertise. These policies and initiatives are crucial in mitigating youth unemployment amidst population growth in Nagaland. (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, .2025. PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0). In line with NEP 2020, Samagra Shiksha Nagaland is implementing Vocational Education in 138 schools across all the districts with a total enrolment of 14,124 students in ten different vocational trades. (Samagra Shiksha, Nagaland Annual report 2023-2024). These policies and initiatives are crucial in mitigating youth unemployment amidst population growth in Nagaland.

The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of graduate population growth on unemployment in Nagaland, investigate the present scenario of higher education curricula and government policies in addressing employability amidst the population pressure, and provide strategies to reduce the negative effects of population growth on youth employability. This study aims to understand why young people struggle to find employment despite a growing workforce.

Significance of the study

The issue of population growth and youth unemployment has emerged as one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in many developing regions, including Nagaland. With the increasing number of young people graduating from colleges every year, the demand for suitable employment opportunities far exceeds the available supply, thereby intensifying the problem of unemployment. This study, The Impact of Graduate Population Growth on Unemployment: A Study on the Role of Higher Education and Government Policies in Nagaland, is significant as it seeks to critically examine the relationship between demographic growth, the preparedness of higher education systems, and the employability of young graduates in the state.

Although youth unemployment has been widely studied at the national and global levels, there is a noticeable research gap in region-specific inquiries, particularly within the context of Nagaland. Limited scholarly attention has been given to how the expanding population of graduates directly affects local unemployment trends, or how higher education curricula and government initiatives are adapting to this challenge. This lack of localised evidence not only restricts effective policymaking but also undermines efforts to design interventions that are contextually relevant to the socio-economic realities of Nagaland. By addressing this gap, the present study contributes to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of population growth and youth employability in the region.

The study is also timely and policy-relevant. In alignment with the first objective, it will provide empirical insights into the extent to which the growing population of graduates contributes to unemployment in Nagaland, thereby informing state planning bodies, educational institutions, and policymakers about the scale and urgency of the issue. Through the second objective, it investigates whether the existing higher education curricula and government policies are adequately preparing students for the job market, shedding light on potential

misalignments between education and employability. Finally, by proposing strategies to mitigate the adverse impacts of population growth on youth employability, this study goes beyond diagnosing the problem to offering practical, evidence-based solutions.

Ultimately, the significance of this research lies in its ability to bridge the gap between academic discourse, policy formulation, and practical interventions. It will not only enrich the existing body of literature on population and unemployment but also serve as a guiding framework for stakeholders seeking to enhance youth employability in Nagaland. By situating the findings within both regional and broader socio-economic contexts, the study aspires to contribute towards creating a more sustainable, inclusive, and employment-ready future for the young population.

Objective of the study

1. To understand the extent to which the growing population of college graduates affects unemployment in Nagaland
2. To investigate the current scenario of higher education curricula and government policies in addressing employability amidst the population pressure
3. To propose strategies that reduce the negative effects of population growth on youth employability.

Methodology of the study

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, collecting survey and interview data simultaneously and comparing the results. The quantitative sample included 150 graduates, both employed and unemployed, who completed a short Likert-scale survey on graduate growth, job competition, higher education preparedness, preference for government jobs, and awareness of relevant policies. The qualitative sample comprised 20 graduates, 2 employers, 2 higher education institutions, and 2 government officials, who participated in semi-structured interviews about their job search experiences, perceptions of higher education quality, and participation in government programs. Data were collected through an online and offline survey and face-to-face interviews, analysed using mean scores and thematic analysis, and then integrated into a joint display table combining survey results with interview insights.

Literature Review

Abdilah Amin (2024). A Study on the Impact of Population and Unemployment Rates on Economic Growth and Poverty in East Kalimantan from 2011 to 2023. It aims to examine the direct correlation between population size, unemployment rates, and economic growth in East Kalimantan Province. To analyse how population numbers and unemployment rates, either directly or indirectly, impact poverty levels through their influence on economic growth in the same province. Employing the path analysis method through SPSS 25 analysis tools. The research concludes that while an increase in population or unemployment may not have a direct, immediate impact on poverty, its effect is still felt indirectly through economic growth. To effectively combat poverty and improve the economy in East Kalimantan, the government and policymakers should focus on implementing an integrated strategy that addresses population growth, unemployment, and economic development simultaneously.

Amelia Mahdali (2024). "The Impact of Population Growth Rate, Minimum Wage, and Education on the Unemployment Rate in 2022." The research aimed to examine the relationship between the unemployment rate and several factors: population growth rate, minimum wage, and typical duration of schooling. It sought to understand how these variables influence unemployment. The study used a quantitative research design. The data used was secondary macro data from 2022. This data was sourced from the Central Statistics Committee and CNBC Indonesia. The study revealed that the population growth rate had no impact on the unemployment rate. The main influencing factors were migration, birth rates, and death rates. The minimum wage did not have an obvious effect on the unemployment rate in 2022. However, it was found to have a long-term, rather than a direct, effect. The study concluded that the typical duration of schooling has a significant influence on the unemployment rate, even as the average years of schooling continue to rise annually.

Agrahari, R., Ankita, and Neelam, K. in 2023, examined the current status of unemployment in India, focusing on its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. Using secondary data from sources such as the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) and national statistics, the study reported that in December 2022, the unemployment rate was 8.2%, with urban areas (9.0%) facing higher rates than rural areas (7.8%). The findings revealed that unemployment in India takes multiple forms-structural, technological, seasonal, and educated unemployment-arising from factors such as rapid population growth, slow economic expansion, seasonal dependence in agriculture, technological changes, corruption, and mismatches between skills and market demands. It recommended solutions such as population control measures, skill-oriented education reforms, increased foreign investment, and the creation of rural employment opportunities. The authors concluded that addressing unemployment is critical to ensuring long-term economic stability and social harmony in India.

Interpretation and Analysis

This chapter deals with a detailed analysis and interpretation of data collected through questionnaires and a semi-structured interview schedule. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the data collected from both closed and open-ended questionnaires for the present study were analysed and interpreted with the help of tables and charts. Each interpretation and analysis was made according to the objective-wise and theme-based responses by college graduates employed and unemployed principals, head of department, employers of institutions and sectors, which were calculated, tabulated, and further converted into percentages using simple statistical calculation, followed by interpretation and presented in two separate sections as given below.

Table 1.1 Data Interpretation

THEMES	SURVEY SCORE	GRADUATES INTERVIEW	EMPLOYERS	HIGHER EDUCATION	GOVERNMENT
Graduate population growth	4.58	1. Skill mismatch 2. Limited Job Opportunities	1. Positive due to fresh talent 2. Overwhelming applicant pool'	1. Graduate Outcomes	1. Skills and entrepreneurship High concern, top rank
Job Competition	4.53	1. Fierce Competition	1. Job-specific skill 2. Lack of job preparedness	1. Skill Development	1. Training and loans Schemes and initiatives
Preference for government Jobs	3.78	1. Prefer both Government & Private	1. Employer requirement over graduate desire 2. Mismatch of expectation and qualification	1. Organise a professional workshop	1. Mindset shift. Insecurity is a big factor
Higher education preparedness	3.47	1. Lack of Skill Development	1. Sincere internship completion 2. Integrate practical skill training	1. Work in collaboration	1. Creating Awareness and Curricula- industry gap
Policy awareness and preparedness	3.53	1. Lack of Awareness	1. Highly aware 2. Insufficiency of a mere graduate degree	1. Startup Mindset	1. Startups and Vocational education MSME & finance schemes
Solution		1. Skill Development	1. Develop a strong work ethic 2. Upskilling	1. Potentialism	1. Collaboration

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age

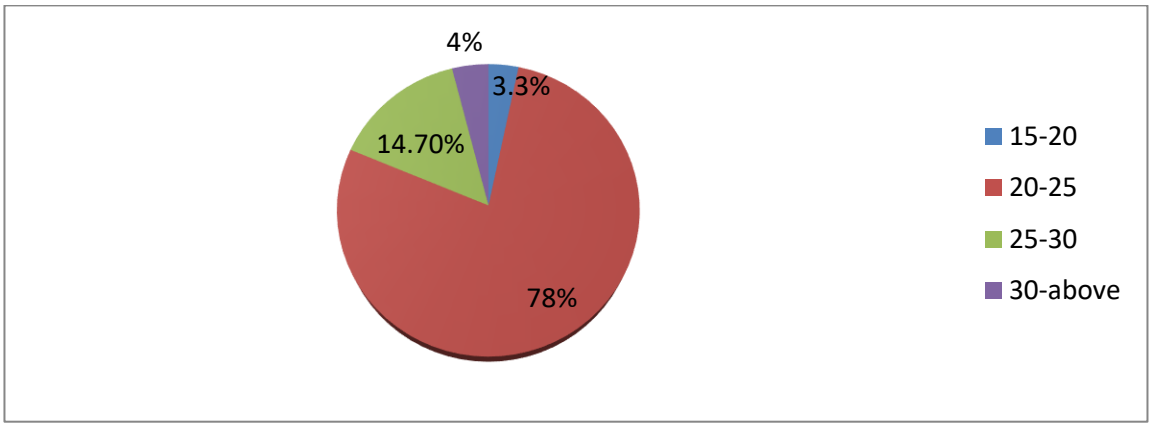

Fig.1.1 Age

Age:

In the Demographic Study age group, out of a total of 150 respondents, the age group 20–25 recorded the highest participation, with 117 responses (78%). This was followed by the 25–30 age group with 22 responses (14.7%), and the 30 and above group with 6 responses (4%). The 15–20 age group had the lowest participation, recording only 5 responses (3.3%).

These results indicate that the 20–25 age group was the most engaged, highlighting its particular relevance to the focus of this study.

2. Gender

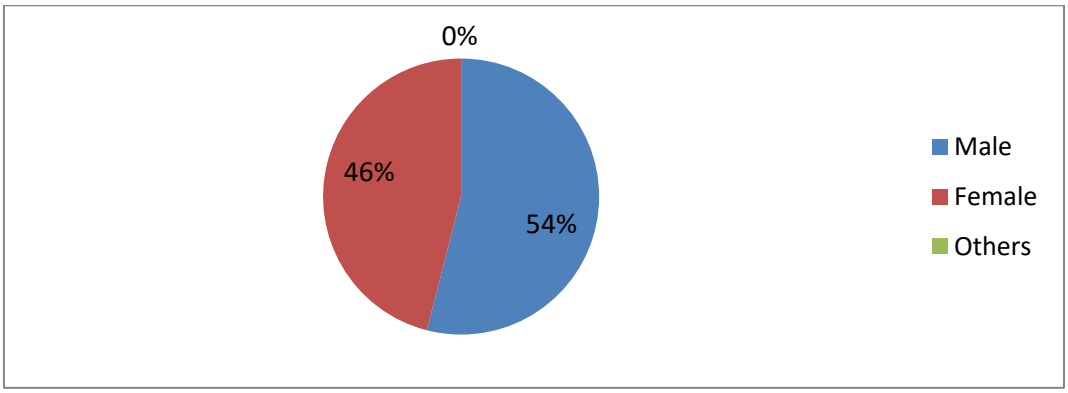

Fig. 1.2 Gender

Gender:

In the Demographic Study, the Gender Distribution of Responses. Out of a total of 150 responses recorded in the demographic study of gender, the highest number of responses came from male participants, totalling 81, which represents 54% of the overall responses. Female participants contributed 69 responses, accounting for 46% of the total. There were no responses recorded from individuals identifying as 'Others,' resulting in a 0% response rate from this category.

These figures indicate a higher level of participation from the male demographic. Female participation was slightly lower but still significant. The absence of responses from the 'Others' category may suggest a lack of representation or engagement from this gender group within the scope of the survey.

3. Higher Educational Qualification

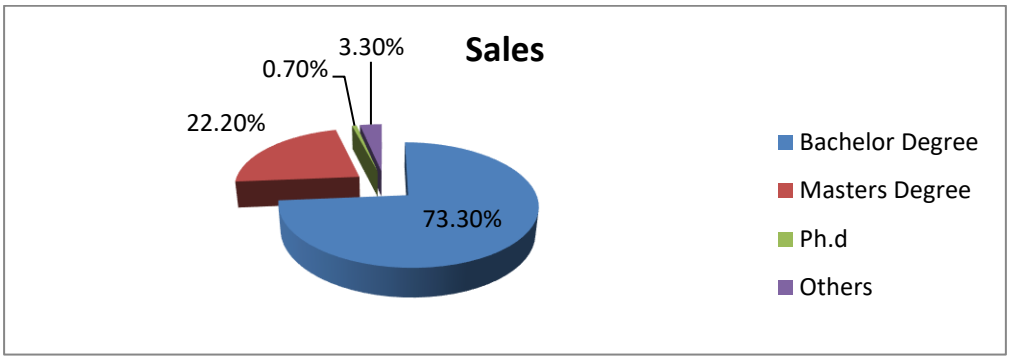

Fig. 1.3 Higher educational qualification

Higher Educational Qualification:

In the demographic study on higher educational qualifications based on 150 responses, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree, accounting for 110 responses or 73.3% of the total. Master's degree holders made up the second-largest group, with 34 responses representing 22.7% of the total. The "Others" category received 5 responses (3.3%), while the Ph.D. category recorded the lowest participation with just 1 response, making up 0.7% of the total. These results highlight a predominant participation from individuals with a Bachelor's degree.

4. Field of study

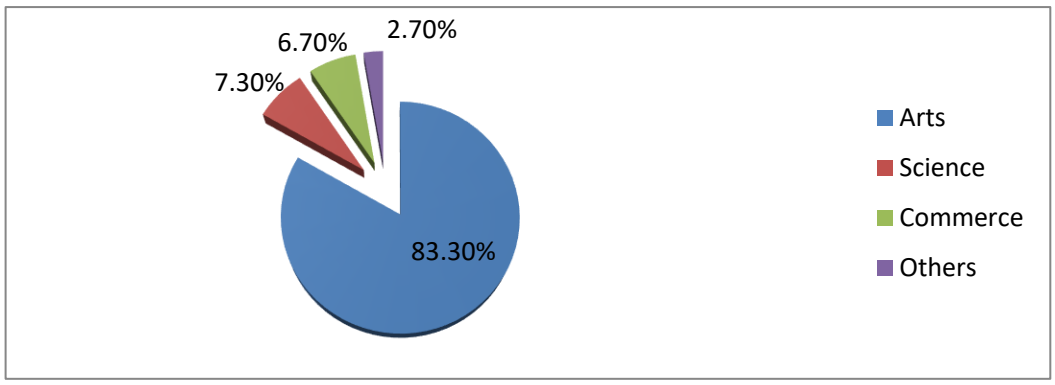

Fig. 1.4 Field of study

Field of study:

Out of the 150 total responses collected, the highest participation was from individuals with an Arts background, accounting for 125 responses (83.3%). This was followed by participants from the Science stream with 11 responses (7.3%), and those from the Commerce stream with 10 responses (6.7%). Additionally, 4 responses (2.7%) were recorded under the 'Others' category.

The data clearly indicates a predominant representation from the Arts field, while the lowest participation was observed from the 'Others' category.

5. Year of graduation

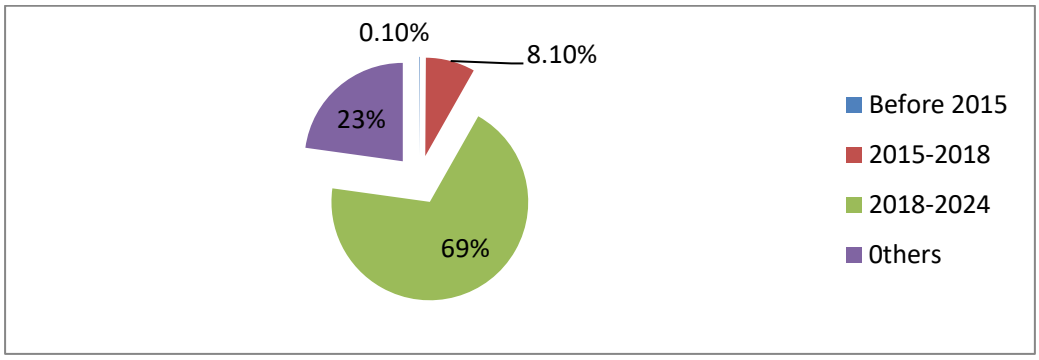

Fig.1.5 Year of Graduation

Year of graduation:

Out of a total number of 150 responses collected, the majority, 103 responses 69% were from individuals who graduated between 2018 and 2024. This was followed by respondents categorised as "Others," accounting for 34 responses (22.8%). Graduates from the period 2015 to 2018 contributed 12 responses (8.1%), while only 1 response (0.1%) was received from individuals who graduated before 2015.

6. Current employment status

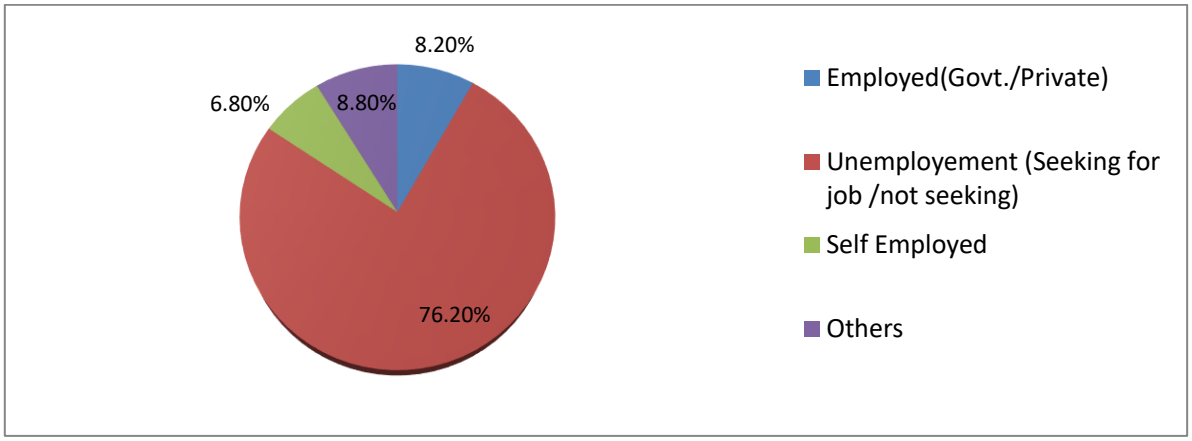

Fig. 1.6 Current Employment Status

Current employment status:

In the demographic study based on 150 responses, the highest proportion of participants 112 respondents (76.2%) identified as unemployed and actively seeking jobs, this indicates a significant high unemployment rate and reflects a growing trend of educated unemployment in the state and those from the employed 12 participants which is (8.2 %) in total and 10 participants from who are self-employed which is (6.8%). In total, follow-up under the category of others, 13 participants, 8.8%in total response.

Section B - Graduate population and unemployment

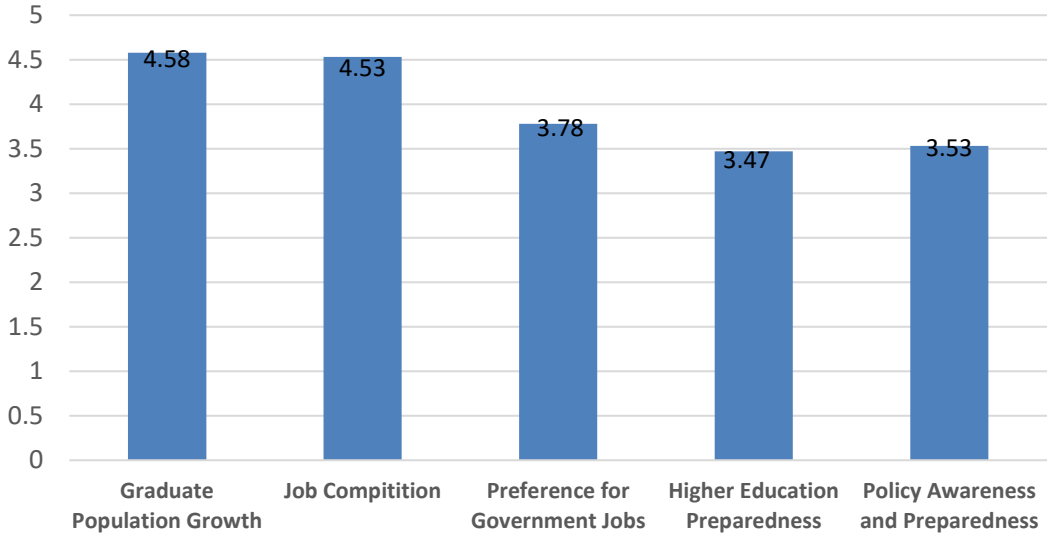

Fig.2.1 Graduate population and unemployment

Findings and Discussion

The survey and interviews were analysed under five major themes aligned with the research objectives, followed by a solution-oriented theme.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: The demographic analysis provides a background of the participants, offering context for interpreting the thematic findings.

Age Distribution: The age group 20–25 years recorded the highest participation (117 respondents; 78%), indicating that the study is most relevant to this active youth population. The 25–30 years group accounted for 14.7%, while only 3.3% came from the 15–20 years group. This shows that unemployment and job competition concerns are most acute among young graduates.

Gender Distribution: Among the 150 respondents, males (54%) slightly outnumbered females (46%). No responses were recorded from individuals identifying as 'Others', highlighting a lack of gender diversity in the dataset.

Educational Qualification: The majority of respondents were Bachelor's degree holders (73.3%), followed by Master's degree holders (22.7%). Very few participants held Ph.D. qualifications (0.7%). This reflects that most respondents belong to the undergraduate-educated segment of the graduate population.

Academic Background: Respondents were predominantly from the Arts stream (83.3%), with smaller proportions from science (7.3%), Commerce (6.7%), and Others (2.7%). The heavy representation of Arts graduates indicates an academic trend that may influence employment preferences and opportunities.

Year of Graduation: A majority of graduates (69%) had completed their studies between 2018– 2024, while 22.8% fell under the category 'Others'. Only 8.1% graduated between 2015–2018, and just one respondent (0.1%) graduated before 2015. This suggests that the findings largely reflect the perspectives of recent graduates.

Employment Status: The survey revealed that 76.2% of respondents were unemployed and actively seeking jobs, pointing to a significant unemployment challenge. Only 8.2% were employed, 6.8% self-employed, and 8.8% categorised under 'Others'. This indicates a strong concentration of educated unemployment in the state.

Theme 1: Graduate Population Growth

The findings show a strong link (mean score: 4.8), with 91.2% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the graduate population is rapidly increasing. This trend highlights an educational expansion in Nagaland. However, the growing number of graduates has not been matched by proportional job creation, leading to rising concerns of oversupply in the labour market. The strong consensus reflects the recognition of this demographic shift among young people themselves.

Theme 2: Job Competition

The issue of job competition emerged as a critical challenge, with a strong survey score of 4.53. A large majority (93.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that job competition is intense. With limited employment opportunities and a heavy concentration of graduates in similar academic streams (especially Arts), the labour market is becoming increasingly saturated. This finding aligns with the observed unemployment levels and suggests that graduate population growth is directly contributing to job scarcity and competition.

Theme 3: Preference for Government Jobs The analysis indicates a moderate preference (mean score: 3.78) for government jobs. About 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while nearly 29% were neutral, showing indecisiveness or openness to other sectors. The strong inclination towards government employment reflects the cultural and economic perception of government jobs as stable and secure. However, such a preference further intensifies competition due to limited vacancies in the public sector. This finding highlights a mismatch between employment aspirations and labour market realities.

Theme 4: Higher Education Preparedness. Preparedness for higher education recorded a moderate link (mean score: 3.47). A significant 44.7% of respondents remained neutral, reflecting doubt or lack of confidence in pursuing advanced studies. While 31.3% agreed and 13.3% strongly agreed about being prepared, smaller groups expressed disagreement. This suggests that while access to higher education has expanded, many students still lack the necessary skills, guidance, or resources to transition smoothly to advanced academic or professional levels.

Theme 5: Policy Awareness and Preparedness. Policy awareness scored a moderate level (mean score: 3.53). Around 40.7% of respondents agreed, while an equal percentage remained neutral. Only a minority expressed disagreement. This shows that although students are somewhat aware of policies related to employment and education, many are not fully informed. The lack of strong awareness could reduce participation in government initiatives meant to support graduates.

Theme 5: Addressing Graduate Unemployment

The findings suggest that unemployment among graduates is not only a result of population growth but also structural issues such as a lack of private sector opportunities, limited awareness of government policies, and over-dependence on government jobs.

Proposed solutions include:

- Job creation through government initiatives, private investment, and local industry promotion.
- Diversifying career opportunities by promoting private sector and entrepreneurial ventures.
- Awareness programs to improve understanding of employment-related policies and schemes.
- Skill-building and career guidance to improve higher education preparedness and employability.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This research study has examined the intricate relationship between population growth and youth unemployment, highlighting how demographic trends shape labour market outcomes. The study shows that structural factors such as limited job creation, poor alignment between education and labour market demands, and inadequate access to resources for entrepreneurship exacerbate the youth unemployment crisis. Moreover, unchecked population growth continues to place additional pressure on available economic opportunities, widening the gap between labour supply and demand. This dual challenge underscores the importance of approaching population and youth

unemployment not as separate issues but as interconnected dynamics that must be addressed through integrated development planning. The solution to youth unemployment in the context of a growing population requires a multi-pronged approach. First, governments must strengthen education systems to move beyond theoretical learning and emphasise practical, technical, and digital skills relevant to modern economies. Second, active labour market policies, including job placement services, apprenticeships, and industry-academic partnerships, are crucial to ensure smoother school-to-work transitions. Third, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation through access to finance, mentorship, and supportive business ecosystems can empower youth to generate self-employment and create jobs for others. Fourth, population management policies, such as family planning and awareness programs, must be aligned with national economic strategies to balance the labour supply with job market absorption capacity. Finally, investment in emerging sectors-such as renewable energy, agriculture modernisation, and the digital economy-can expand sustainable employment opportunities while promoting inclusive growth. In conclusion, while the challenges posed by population growth and youth unemployment are significant, they are not insurmountable. By harnessing the potential of the youth population through targeted education reforms, strategic employment programs, and effective population policies, societies can transform this demographic pressure into a powerful engine for sustainable development. The key lies in recognising young people not as passive recipients of opportunities, but as active agents of change whose energy, creativity, and innovation can reshape the future. Thus, the solutions lie in creating enabling environments where the youth population is seen as a valuable resource to be nurtured, invested in, and meaningfully integrated into the economic and social fabric of the nation.

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