

Tackling Unemployment in Pakistan through Effective Government Policy Implementation and Governance: A Public Administration Perspective

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Abstract

Unemployment remains a major socioeconomic and governance challenge in Pakistan, affecting economic stability, poverty reduction, youth development, and inclusive growth. This study examines unemployment from a public administration perspective, focusing on the gap between government policy formulation and effective implementation. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design based on secondary data obtained from government reports, labour force statistics, International Labour Organization publications, and relevant policy documents. The findings indicate that Pakistan's unemployment rate increased from 6.3% in 2020–21 to 7.1% in 2024–25, while the number of unemployed people rose from approximately 4.5 million to 5.9 million. Youth unemployment, gender disparities, skills mismatches, rural employment constraints, and informal working conditions emerge as important concerns. The analysis further highlights institutional fragmentation, inadequate interdepartmental coordination, limited outcome-based monitoring, and weak accountability as challenges that may undermine the effectiveness of employment programmes. The study argues that sustainable employment generation requires evidence-based planning, clearly defined institutional responsibilities, market-oriented skills development, support for entrepreneurship, and stronger coordination among federal, provincial, district, and local institutions. It also emphasizes the importance of gender-responsive policies, rural economic diversification, and monitoring systems that assess job quality and sustainability rather than merely counting employment opportunities. The study concludes that a coordinated, transparent, and results-oriented public administration system can strengthen employment policy implementation and contribute to reducing unemployment in Pakistan. Since the research relies on secondary sources, its findings represent an analytical synthesis rather than causal proof.

Keywords: Unemployment; Public Administration; Policy Implementation; Governance; Youth Employment; Institutional Capacity; Pakistan; Employment Policy; Accountability; Labour Market.

INTRODUCTION

Employment is a fundamental determinant of economic development, social stability, poverty reduction, and human welfare. It provides individuals with a sustainable source of income, strengthens household purchasing power, improves living standards, and contributes to national productivity and economic growth. In developing countries, employment generation is particularly important because rapid population growth and an expanding working-age population increase the demand for productive economic opportunities. When economies fail to generate sufficient decent jobs, unemployment and underemployment can intensify poverty, income inequality, social exclusion, and pressure on public institutions (Ali *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, employment generation has become an important policy priority for governments seeking to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. From a public administration perspective, however, employment is not simply a function of economic growth; it also depends on the capacity of government institutions to formulate appropriate policies, allocate resources efficiently, coordinate implementation, and ensure that public interventions produce measurable outcomes (Zahid *et al.*, 2023).

Pakistan faces a complex set of labour market challenges arising from demographic pressures, limited employment absorption, structural economic constraints, skills mismatches, regional inequalities, and the prevalence of informal work. The country's expanding labour force requires continuous employment creation across agriculture, manufacturing, services, information technology, and emerging economic sectors (Zaheer, 2023). However, the availability of productive employment has not kept pace with the expectations and needs of many jobseekers. The *Pakistan Economic Survey 2025–26* reports that the unemployment rate increased from 6.3% in 2020–21 to 7.1% in 2024–25, while the estimated number of unemployed people rose from approximately 4.5 million to 5.9 million (Government of Pakistan, 2026). These figures illustrate the continuing challenge of absorbing the available workforce into productive economic activities. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate alone does not fully capture the extent of labour market difficulties because underemployment, insecure working conditions, low wages, informal employment, and exclusion from the labour force also affect economic well-being (Begum, 2022).

The unemployment challenge is particularly significant among young people entering the labour market after completing secondary, technical, and higher education. Although educational attainment can improve employment prospects, qualifications do not necessarily translate into suitable jobs when educational curricula are disconnected from occupational requirements and industry demand. Many graduates face difficulties obtaining practical experience, professional guidance, apprenticeships, and access to reliable information about available vacancies (Hassan and Zeb, 2021). At the same time, employers may experience shortages of workers possessing the technical, digital, managerial, and practical competencies required for productive activities. This situation reflects a broader coordination problem between educational

institutions, vocational training authorities, employers, and government agencies. The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes the importance of strengthening skills development, improving access to decent work, and enhancing coordination among labour market institutions as part of Pakistan's employment and development agenda (ILO, 2023–2027). Addressing these challenges requires an integrated approach in which education and training policies are designed in accordance with changing economic conditions and the actual requirements of employers (Zia-ur-Rehman, 2023). Unemployment also reflects significant differences in access to economic opportunities across geographical locations and social groups. Rural communities frequently depend on agriculture, livestock, seasonal wage labour, and informal enterprises, where employment may be affected by seasonal production cycles, climate variability, rising input costs, limited market access, and inadequate rural infrastructure. In southern Punjab, including districts such as Multan and Muzaffargarh, economic opportunities can be expanded through agricultural value addition, food processing, livestock enterprises, agricultural machinery services, small-scale manufacturing, and digital entrepreneurship. However, these opportunities require effective public investment, access to finance, appropriate skills, and institutional support. Women encounter additional barriers associated with mobility, unpaid care responsibilities, unequal access to productive assets, limited training opportunities, and concerns about workplace safety. Therefore, an effective employment strategy must recognize differences in local economic conditions and ensure that young people, women, rural workers, and disadvantaged communities can access productive and decent employment (Warraich and Ahmed, 2024).

Although economic growth and private investment are essential for creating jobs, the effectiveness of government policies remains equally important. Public administration provides the institutional mechanisms through which employment objectives are translated into operational programmes and services. These mechanisms include policy formulation, budget allocation, institutional coordination, recruitment and training of personnel, programme implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. A government may introduce an employment policy with clearly stated objectives, but its success depends on whether the responsible institutions possess adequate financial resources, technical expertise, administrative authority, and implementation capacity (Ali *et al.*, 2025).

Weak coordination, unclear institutional responsibilities, delays in fund disbursement, inappropriate beneficiary selection, and inadequate monitoring can create a substantial gap between policy intentions and actual results. Consequently, the persistence of unemployment should be examined not only in relation to economic conditions but also through the administrative processes that determine how employment policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated (Nawaz *et al.*, 2024).

The distinction between policy formulation and implementation is especially important in vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and employment-support programmes. For instance, a government-funded training initiative may enroll thousands of participants, yet its contribution to employment remains uncertain if the training does not match labour market demand or graduates receive no assistance in

finding work. Similarly, entrepreneurship schemes may provide financial assistance without ensuring business mentoring, market linkages, transparent selection procedures, or follow-up support. In such circumstances, programme outputs may be reported as evidence of progress even when sustainable employment outcomes remain limited. Effective public administration requires a shift from activity-based reporting towards results-based management, whereby the performance of employment programmes is assessed through indicators such as job placement, employment retention, earnings, business survival, and working conditions. This approach can strengthen accountability and help policymakers identify which interventions generate the greatest public benefit (Farooq *et al.*, 2026). Governance is therefore a central component of an effective response to unemployment in Pakistan. Transparent decision-making, accountability, institutional coordination, citizen participation, and evidence-based planning can improve the allocation of public resources and the delivery of employment services. Responsibilities relating to economic planning, education, vocational training, labour administration, entrepreneurship, and social protection are distributed across multiple government institutions and levels of administration (Hussain and Zaman, 2024). When these institutions operate without clearly defined responsibilities and shared performance indicators, programmes may become fragmented, resulting in duplicated activities, inefficient expenditure, and gaps in service delivery. Stronger coordination between federal and provincial governments, district administrations, educational institutions, employers, and local communities can improve the identification of labour market needs and connect jobseekers with relevant opportunities. Moreover, transparent procurement, merit-based recruitment, accessible grievance mechanisms, and independent programme evaluation can strengthen public confidence and reduce the risk of resources being diverted from their intended purposes (Jaffar, 2024).

The need for an effective governance framework becomes more pressing in the context of Pakistan's broader development priorities. Sustainable employment generation requires a combination of macroeconomic stability, private-sector investment, industrial diversification, improved infrastructure, demand-driven skills development, and targeted support for small and medium-sized enterprises. At the administrative level, these interventions must be supported by reliable labour market information, realistic employment targets, adequate financing, and continuous performance monitoring (Almas, 2020). Government institutions should distinguish between jobs announced, individuals trained, placements achieved, and employment sustained over time. Employment programmes should also consider the quality of work, including fair remuneration, occupational safety, social protection, and compliance with applicable labour standards. Such an approach would help ensure that employment policies contribute not only to reducing unemployment but also to improving livelihoods, productivity, and social inclusion (Ur Rehman, 2023). Despite the importance of these issues, understanding unemployment primarily as an economic or demographic problem provides an incomplete explanation of why government interventions may fail to achieve their intended objectives. Greater attention is needed to the administrative capacity, coordination arrangements,

accountability mechanisms, and implementation practices that influence employment outcomes. Examining these dimensions is particularly relevant in Pakistan, where employment-related initiatives involve multiple institutions and where regional and social inequalities create different implementation requirements. A public administration perspective can therefore provide a useful framework for assessing the relationship between government policy commitments and the practical delivery of employment opportunities (George, 2023).

The present study **Tackling Unemployment in Pakistan through Effective Government Policy Implementation and Governance: A Public Administration Perspective** states that the administrative and governance factors that influence unemployment reduction. The study aims to identify the principal implementation barriers affecting employment policies, analyze the roles of federal, provincial, and local institutions, and assess the importance of coordination, transparency, accountability, and performance-based monitoring. It further explores how employment policies can be strengthened through labour market-oriented skills development, entrepreneurship support, rural economic diversification, and inclusive employment planning. Using a qualitative analysis of secondary data and relevant policy documents, the article develops a governance-oriented framework for improving the implementation and evaluation of employment-generation initiatives. It argues that sustainable progress requires a shift from the announcement of employment schemes towards evidence-based, coordinated, and accountable public administration that measures success through the creation of productive, inclusive, and sustainable jobs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The present study employed a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design to examine unemployment in Pakistan from a public administration perspective, with particular emphasis on government policy implementation, institutional capacity, governance mechanisms, and employment-generation strategies. The study was conducted within the academic context of the **Department of Political Science, Public Administration, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan**. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding administrative processes, institutional relationships, policy implementation challenges, and governance factors influencing employment outcomes rather than measuring statistical relationships through primary experimental or econometric methods. The descriptive component was used to explain the employment situation in Pakistan, while the analytical component examined the extent to which administrative arrangements and implementation practices may influence the effectiveness of government employment policies.

Sources of Data and Materials

The study relied on secondary data obtained from published government reports, official labour market statistics, policy documents, and publications issued by

international organizations. The principal sources included the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), particularly its Labour Force Survey publications; the Government of Pakistan's *Pakistan Economic Survey 2025–26*; and International Labour Organization (ILO) reports addressing youth employment, skills development, decent work, labour market governance, and employment policy. Relevant government documents concerning vocational training, entrepreneurship development, employment generation, and economic planning were also considered where available. These sources were selected because they provide information on labour market conditions, government priorities, institutional responsibilities, and policy interventions relevant to unemployment reduction in Pakistan. The materials were reviewed for their relevance to the research objectives, institutional credibility, policy significance, and contribution to understanding employment-related challenges. Greater emphasis was placed on official statistical publications and policy documents to establish the national context and identify the administrative arrangements associated with employment generation. International publications were used to complement national evidence and provide broader perspectives on skills development, inclusive employment, and labour market governance. The study did not involve primary data collection through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, or field experiments (Ali *et al.*, 2022).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection involved identifying and reviewing relevant publications addressing unemployment, employment policies, public administration, institutional coordination, and governance in Pakistan. The review focused on documents that provided information about unemployment trends, youth employment, vocational and technical training, entrepreneurship programmes, gender-related employment barriers, informal work, and the implementation of government development initiatives. Publications were examined to identify recurring administrative challenges, policy priorities, and institutional responsibilities associated with employment generation. The selected materials were organized according to their relevance to the research questions. National labour market statistics were used to describe the broader employment situation, while policy documents and institutional reports were examined to understand the implementation mechanisms and governance arrangements supporting employment programmes. Where information was available, attention was given to differences between provinces, rural and urban labour markets, and population groups, including young people and women. The use of multiple categories of documentary sources helped provide a broader understanding of the relationship between government policies and employment outcomes (Saad Zaidi, 2023).

Method of Data Analysis

The collected material was analyzed using **qualitative thematic analysis**. This approach involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring themes across the reviewed publications and policy documents. The analysis was structured around five principal dimensions: (i) government policy implementation, (ii) institutional and

administrative capacity, (iii) coordination among federal, provincial, and local institutions, (iv) alignment between education, skills development, and labour market demand, and (v) transparency, accountability, and performance monitoring.

The first dimension examined the gap between policy formulation and implementation, including the translation of employment objectives into funded programmes and practical services. The second focused on administrative resources, technical expertise, and institutional capacity. The third considered the distribution of responsibilities and coordination mechanisms among relevant public institutions. The fourth examined the relevance of vocational training, educational qualifications, and entrepreneurship support to labour market requirements. The fifth assessed the importance of transparent resource allocation, measurable performance indicators, beneficiary monitoring, and independent evaluation (Sareen, 2020). Evidence from the reviewed sources was compared across these themes to identify common patterns, institutional weaknesses, and potential areas for policy improvement. The findings were then interpreted within the broader framework of public administration and governance. Particular attention was given to distinguishing documented information from the study's analytical interpretations. The thematic analysis was used to develop a governance-oriented framework for improving employment policy implementation and supporting sustainable job creation in Pakistan (Safdar and Chohan, 2019).

Scope of the Study

The study focused on unemployment and employment policy implementation in Pakistan at the national level, while recognizing provincial and regional differences in labour market conditions. The analysis considered the roles of government institutions, vocational training authorities, educational organizations, employers, and local administrative structures in supporting employment generation. It also considered the implications of unemployment for young people, women, rural communities, and workers in informal employment (Aslam *et al.*, 2020). Although the research was national in scope, southern Punjab provided a relevant regional context for discussing rural employment diversification, agricultural value addition, skills development, and local economic opportunities. However, the study did not constitute a separate empirical investigation of Multan or other districts of southern Punjab. Its regional discussion was based on secondary evidence and contextual analysis rather than original field observations (Lalon, 2020).

Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, priority was given to official statistical publications, government policy documents, and reports from recognized international organizations. Information from different documentary sources was compared where possible to identify consistency, differences in definitions, and limitations in the available evidence. Statistical figures were interpreted in relation to their reported reference periods and definitions, recognizing that unemployment estimates may vary according to survey methods, age groups, and labour force classifications. As the study relied exclusively on secondary sources, it did not involve human participants

or the collection of personally identifiable information. Appropriate academic practices were followed by acknowledging the sources of information and distinguishing published evidence from the author's interpretation. All references and statistical claims should be verified against the original publications before final submission (Ali, 2020).

3. RESULTS

Overview of unemployment in Pakistan

The analysis of official labour market statistics indicates that unemployment remains a significant challenge for Pakistan. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2025–26, the unemployment rate increased from 6.3% in 2020–21 to 7.1% in 2024–25. Over the same period, the estimated number of unemployed people increased from 4.5 million to 5.9 million. The working-age population and employed labour force also expanded, indicating that employment opportunities increased but were insufficient to prevent a rise in the number of unemployed people.

Table 3.1 Selected labour market indicators in Pakistan

Indicator	2020–21	2024–25
Unemployment rate	6.3%	7.1%
Number of unemployed people	4.5 million	5.9 million
Working-age population	159.8 million	179.6 million
Employed labour force	67.25 million	77.2 million
Labour force participation rate	44.9%	46.3%

Source: Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Economic Survey 2025–26.

The figures show that the number of unemployed people increased by approximately 1.4 million, while the unemployment rate rose by 0.8 percentage points. At the same time, the employed labour force increased by approximately 9.95 million. These results suggest that Pakistan generated employment over the period but continued to

face difficulties absorbing the expanding labour supply. The figures establish the scale of the employment challenge, although they do not independently identify the causes of unemployment or measure the effectiveness of individual government programmes.

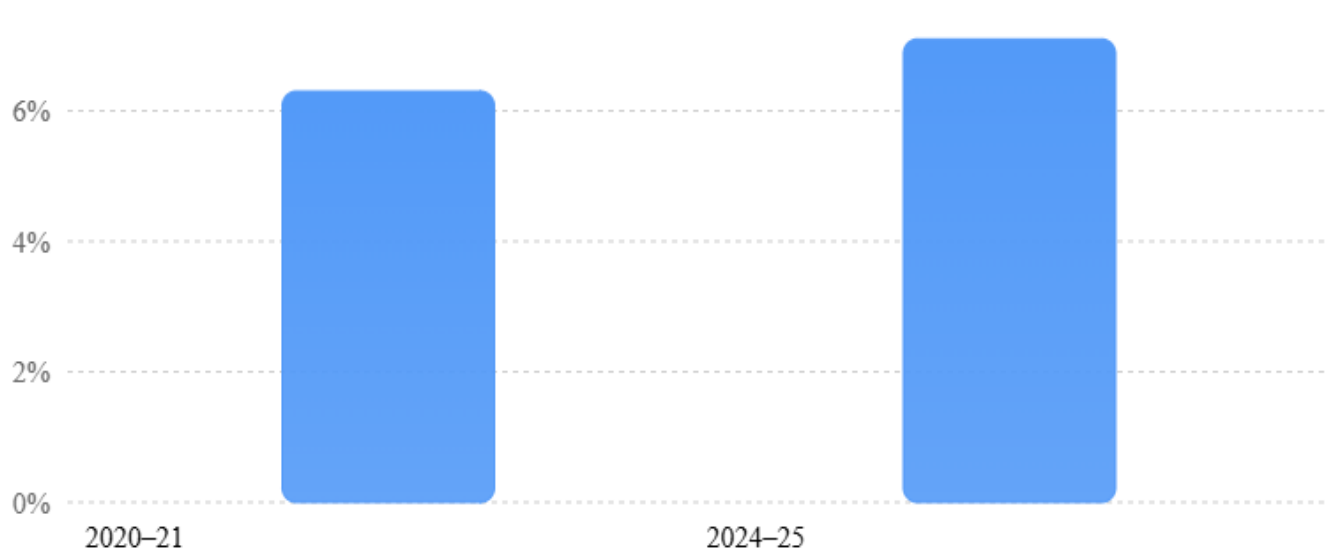


Figure 3.1 shows an increase in the reported unemployment rate between the two survey periods. From a public administration perspective, this finding highlights the importance of aligning employment programmes with labour force growth and evaluating whether government interventions generate sufficient, sustained employment opportunities.

Youth unemployment and exclusion from employment and education

The results indicate that young people experience a particularly serious employment challenge. According to the ILO's July 2026 report based on the Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024-25, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 was 12.8%, compared with an overall unemployment rate of 7.1%. The report also estimated that 28.4% of young people in this age group were not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

Table 3.2 Selected youth employment indicators in Pakistan, 2024-25

Indicator	Reported value
Population aged 15-24	46.3 million
Youth labour force	20.6 million
Unemployed young people	2.6 million
Youth unemployment rate	12.8%
Young people not in employment, education, or training	28.4%
Young people reported to have received technical or vocational training	4.9 million

Source: ILO report published by United Nations Pakistan, July 2026. Figures are rounded as reported.

The youth unemployment rate was 5.7 percentage points higher than the overall rate. This difference demonstrates that young people require specific attention in employment policy. Furthermore, the NEET indicator reveals a broader challenge than unemployment alone because it includes young people who are outside both employment and education or training (Gulzar, 2024).

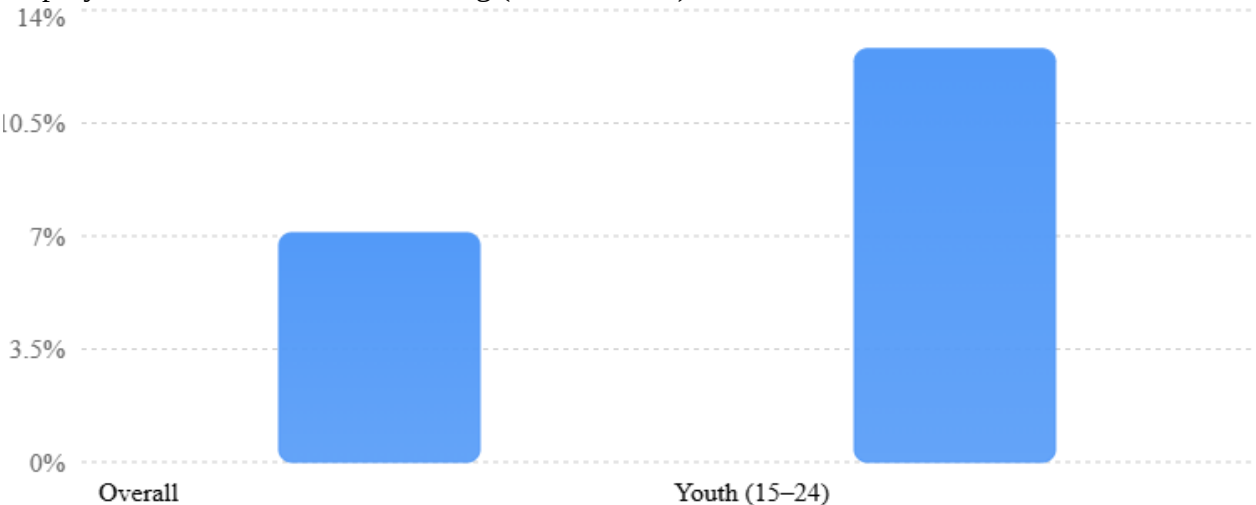


Figure 3.2 Comparison of overall and youth unemployment rates, 2024–25

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2025–26 and ILO reporting on the Labour Force Survey 2024–25

The findings point to the need for stronger coordination between educational institutions, vocational training providers, employers, and public employment services. Training participation alone should not be treated as evidence of employment success. Instead, government agencies need to track graduates' transition into work, job retention, and access to occupations matching their skills (Idris, 2023).

Trends in young people outside employment, education, or training

A further finding concerns the proportion of young people who are disconnected from employment and education pathways. The Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024–25 reports that the national NEET rate declined from 32.5% in 2020–21 to 28.4% in 2024–25. Although this represents an improvement, more than one-quarter of young people aged 15–24 remained outside employment, education, or training in 2024–25.

Table 3.3 NEET rate among young people aged 15–24 in Pakistan

Category	2020–21	2024–25
All young people	32.5%	28.4%
Young men	10.5%	13.0%
Young women	55.3%	45.4%

Rural population	33.1%	28.7%
Urban population	31.4%	28.0%

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2024–25, Table 8.8.

The results reveal differences by sex and geographical location. The overall NEET rate declined, as did the rates for young women and young people in rural and urban areas. However, the reported rate for young men increased from 10.5% to 13.0%. Young women's NEET rate remained substantially higher, at 45.4% in 2024–25, compared with 13.0% for young men. These differences suggest that employment policies should not rely on a uniform approach for all groups. Young women may require improved access to safe transport, relevant training, childcare, digital opportunities, and inclusive recruitment. For young men, the increase in the NEET rate warrants further investigation into barriers affecting their participation in education, training, and employment (Zahid *et al.*, 2025).

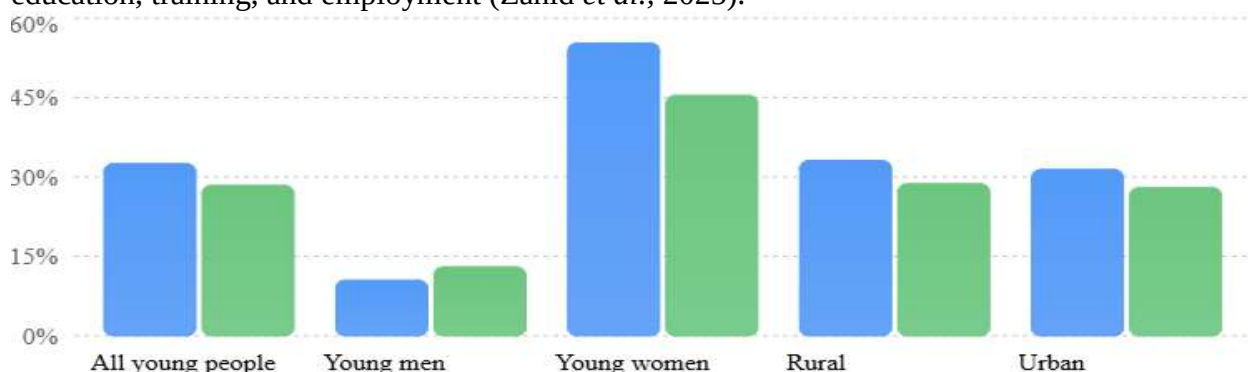


Figure 3.3 Change in the NEET rate among young people, 2020–21 to 2024–25

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2024–25.

Thematic results of the documentary analysis

The qualitative review identified five major governance dimensions relevant to unemployment reduction: policy implementation, institutional capacity, intergovernmental coordination, labour market alignment, and transparency and accountability. The review also highlighted cross-cutting concerns involving youth employment, gender inequality, rural livelihoods, and the quality of informal work. These findings represent a synthesis of the policy and institutional issues discussed in the reviewed materials, rather than statistically measured frequencies of themes.

Table 3.4 Major governance findings and their implications

Analytical theme	Finding from the documentary analysis	Implication for public administration
Policy implementation	Employment objectives do not automatically translate into sustained jobs	Establish implementation plans, budgets, timelines, and outcome indicators

Institutional capacity	Programme delivery depends on administrative resources and technical expertise	Strengthen staff capacity, institutional resources, and implementation procedures
Intergovernmental coordination	Employment-related responsibilities are distributed across multiple institutions	Clarify institutional mandates and establish coordination mechanisms
Skills and labour market alignment	Training participation does not establish that graduates have secured suitable employment	Link curricula to employer demand and track graduate employment outcomes
Transparency and accountability	Programme activities alone cannot establish the effectiveness of public expenditure	Publish results and introduce independent verification of employment outcomes
Gender and inclusion	Young women face substantially greater NEET challenges than young men	Develop gender-responsive employment services and monitor access and outcomes
Rural employment	Seasonal livelihoods and limited diversification can restrict stable employment opportunities	Support rural enterprise development, agricultural value addition, and local economic planning
Job quality	Employment statistics alone do not establish income adequacy or decent working conditions	Monitor job retention, earnings, labour protections, and social security

The thematic results suggest that unemployment reduction requires coordinated administrative action rather than isolated programmes. For example, vocational training becomes more effective when it is connected with employers, apprenticeships, placement services, and follow-up assessments. Similarly, entrepreneurship assistance requires more than initial financing; business mentoring, access to markets, and transparent administrative procedures are also important.

The review further indicates that institutional coordination and accountability should be treated as interconnected requirements. Clear responsibilities can reduce duplication, while performance monitoring can help determine whether public resources are producing sustained employment outcomes. However, the documentary analysis does not establish that any single governance weakness has independently caused the observed rise in unemployment (Tariq and Bashir, 2025).

Employment policy implementation gaps

The documentary analysis identified a recurring distinction between programme activities and their intended employment outcomes. Government initiatives may

report the number of people trained, loans disbursed, or businesses supported, but these measures do not necessarily demonstrate how many sustainable jobs have been created. The findings indicate that programme evaluation should incorporate indicators that measure the transition from government support to actual employment.

Table 3.5 Identified implementation gaps and proposed administrative responses

Identified gap	Proposed administrative response	Suggested performance indicator
Limited outcome-based monitoring	Introduce results-based programme evaluation	Number of verified jobs sustained for 12 months
Weak coordination among institutions	Establish employment coordination committees	Percentage of agreed actions completed on time
Skills mismatch	Conduct regular employer consultations and labour market assessments	Percentage of graduates employed within six months
Barriers to women's employment	Improve access to safe, inclusive training and employment services	Women's employment and retention rates
Limited rural economic diversification	Integrate employment objectives into district development plans	Verified non-farm jobs created in targeted districts
Weak programme transparency	Publish budgets, eligibility criteria, and implementation results	Timeliness and completeness of public reporting
Inadequate business follow-up	Provide mentoring and post-financing support	Survival rate of supported enterprises after 12 months

The table translates the identified administrative challenges into practical mechanisms for improving policy implementation. The proposed indicators are intended for future programme monitoring; they are not results already measured in this study. Their baselines and targets should be established using official data and programme-specific assessments.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight that unemployment in Pakistan is not merely a consequence of insufficient job creation but is also associated with challenges in public administration, institutional coordination, policy implementation, and accountability. The increase in the unemployment rate from 6.3% in 2020–21 to 7.1% in 2024–25, alongside an increase in the number of unemployed people from approximately 4.5 million to 5.9 million, indicates growing pressure on the country's employment system. These trends emphasize the need to evaluate government employment policies not only according to their objectives and allocated resources

but also through their implementation and measurable outcomes. Although economic growth and private-sector investment remain important determinants of employment, public institutions play a critical role in translating policy commitments into practical opportunities. From a public administration perspective, effective employment policies require realistic targets, adequate financial resources, clearly assigned institutional responsibilities, and systematic monitoring. Without these administrative foundations, even well-designed policies may fail to generate their intended benefits. Therefore, reducing unemployment requires a governance approach that connects policy formulation with implementation capacity, institutional performance, and sustainable employment outcomes (Horne, 2024).

A major issue identified in the study is the gap between policy formulation and implementation. Government policies and development programmes frequently emphasize skills development, entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, and employment generation; however, the achievement of these objectives depends on effective administrative arrangements. Implementation challenges may arise from unclear responsibilities, delays in funding, insufficient departmental capacity, weak coordination, and monitoring systems that emphasize activities rather than actual results. For example, the number of individuals enrolled in vocational training programmes does not necessarily indicate how many participants obtain employment after completing their training. Similarly, the distribution of financial assistance does not automatically demonstrate improvements in income, business sustainability, or household welfare. This distinction is important because programme success should be measured by its practical contribution to reducing unemployment rather than by the number of activities completed. Government departments should therefore introduce outcome-based monitoring indicators, including job placement rates, employment retention, changes in earnings, enterprise survival, and access to decent work. Such mechanisms would enable policymakers to identify weaknesses, improve resource allocation, and modify programmes according to evidence. A shift from activity-based reporting towards results-based management could strengthen public accountability and improve the effectiveness of employment policies (Huq, 2025).

Institutional coordination is another important dimension of Pakistan's employment challenge. Employment generation requires collaboration among education departments, technical and vocational training institutions, agriculture and industry departments, labour administration, social protection agencies, and small-business development organisations. When these institutions work independently, training programmes may not respond to labour-market requirements, financial support may not reach appropriate beneficiaries, and employment initiatives may remain disconnected from local economic priorities. Effective governance therefore requires clearly defined institutional mandates and stronger coordination among federal, provincial, district, and local-level authorities. Employment coordination mechanisms should bring together government departments, employers, educational institutions, private-sector representatives, and community organisations to identify labour-market needs and develop practical employment strategies. Joint planning, shared employment information systems, regular coordination meetings, and transparent

reporting can help reduce duplication and improve programme alignment. However, coordination should not be limited to meetings or administrative agreements. It must be supported by decision-making authority, adequate budgets, qualified personnel, and accountability for agreed responsibilities. Strengthening these arrangements would help government institutions operate as a connected employment system rather than as separate departments pursuing overlapping objectives (Idrees, 2026). Youth unemployment and the transition from education to employment also emerged as significant concerns. The reported youth unemployment rate of 12.8% in 2024–25 was considerably higher than the overall unemployment rate of 7.1%, while the youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) rate was reported at 28.4%. These indicators suggest that many young people experience difficulties accessing employment, education, or skills development opportunities. One contributing concern is the possible mismatch between educational qualifications, technical training, and the skills demanded by employers. When training programmes are developed without adequate consultation with industry and local businesses, graduates may complete their courses without acquiring the competencies required for available jobs. Consequently, youth employment policies should move beyond enrolment targets and focus on employability, practical experience, career guidance, apprenticeships, and employer partnerships. Public-sector training institutions should periodically review their curricula according to labour-market assessments and consultations with industrial, agricultural, and service-sector employers. Furthermore, entrepreneurship programmes should provide business mentoring, access to markets, financial guidance, and follow-up support. These measures could improve the transition from training to productive work and help young people develop sustainable sources of income. The effectiveness of such programmes should be assessed through post-training employment outcomes rather than participation figures alone (Munshi, 2026).

Gender inequality remains an important concern within employment governance. The reviewed statistics indicate that the NEET rate among young women declined from 55.3% in 2020–21 to 45.4% in 2024–25, while the corresponding rate among young men increased from 10.5% to 13.0%. Despite the improvement among young women, the substantial gender gap indicates that women continue to face considerable barriers to economic participation. These barriers may include restrictions on mobility, unpaid care responsibilities, limited access to finance, workplace safety concerns, and discriminatory recruitment practices. Consequently, employment policies must address not only the availability of training but also the social, institutional, and economic conditions that influence women's participation in the labour market. Public administration can contribute by promoting accessible vocational training, safe transport, childcare facilities, transparent recruitment procedures, equal remuneration, and effective mechanisms for reporting workplace harassment. Gender-responsive employment planning should also ensure that women from rural and economically disadvantaged communities can access relevant programmes. Moreover, monitoring systems should record women's participation, job placement, employment retention, earnings, and career progression separately from those of men. Such measures would

provide a more meaningful assessment of whether government programmes are improving women's access to sustainable employment opportunities (Basak, 2013). Rural unemployment and underemployment require particular attention because many rural households depend on agriculture, seasonal labour, and informal economic activities. In South Punjab, including areas surrounding Multan and Muzaffargarh, employment opportunities are influenced by seasonal farming operations, agricultural production costs, climate variability, access to markets, and the availability of non-farm income sources. Although agriculture remains an important source of livelihoods, dependence on seasonal activities can limit the continuity of employment and household income. Rural employment strategies should therefore incorporate agricultural development alongside economic diversification and small-enterprise development. District administrations can help identify local opportunities in agricultural processing, livestock-related enterprises, horticulture, agroforestry, and small-scale manufacturing. Multicropping and diversification may also contribute to seasonal employment where soil conditions, water availability, technical feasibility, and market demand are suitable. However, such initiatives require appropriate technical support, infrastructure, access to finance, and connections with buyers to become economically sustainable. Public institutions should also encourage vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes that respond to local economic conditions rather than applying identical interventions across all districts. In addition, rural employment programmes should distinguish between temporary work, self-employment, underemployment, and stable paid employment. This distinction is essential for determining whether public interventions are generating lasting improvements in rural livelihoods (Razzaque *et al.*, 2025).

The quality and sustainability of employment are equally important considerations. An increase in the number of employed individuals does not necessarily indicate that workers have achieved economic security or decent working conditions. Informal employment, irregular wages, inadequate social protection, unsafe workplaces, and the absence of clear work agreements can leave workers vulnerable despite their employment status. Therefore, employment policies should assess both the quantity and quality of jobs created. Relevant government departments and labour administration institutions should strengthen workplace monitoring, improve awareness of labour rights, promote compliance with applicable wage and occupational safety requirements, and expand access to social protection. Employment initiatives should also incorporate accessible grievance mechanisms through which workers can report wage disputes, intimidation, harassment, and occupational accidents. Transparent complaint-handling procedures would help public institutions identify workplace problems that conventional employment statistics may overlook. In addition, employers receiving public support through employment or entrepreneurship schemes could be encouraged to demonstrate compliance with relevant labour standards. By incorporating decent work indicators into programme evaluations, the government could move towards an employment strategy that prioritizes productive, secure, and adequately remunerated work rather than simply increasing the number of people classified as employed (Farole *et al.*, 2017).

The findings support an integrated governance approach based on evidence-informed planning, institutional responsibility, coordinated implementation, and transparent evaluation. Employment objectives should be translated into practical district-level action plans that specify budgets, implementation timelines, responsible departments, and measurable targets. These plans should reflect local labour-market conditions and identify opportunities for employment generation through public investment, private-sector development, technical training, agricultural diversification, and enterprise support. Monitoring systems should track the proportion of programme participants who obtain employment, the sustainability of jobs after six or twelve months, changes in earnings, women's participation, and the survival of supported businesses. Regular public reporting of these indicators would enable policymakers and citizens to assess programme performance and identify gaps between intended and actual results. Furthermore, district administrations should strengthen cooperation with employers, training institutions, and local communities to ensure that interventions respond to practical employment needs. However, monitoring systems must collect reliable information and use consistent indicators to avoid overstating programme achievements. The adoption of these governance measures could improve transparency, strengthen administrative responsibility, and support more effective use of public resources (Khatun and Saadat, 2018).

It is important to recognize that this study is based on secondary data and qualitative documentary analysis. Therefore, the findings provide an analytical interpretation of unemployment trends and administrative challenges rather than definitive evidence that a particular governance weakness directly causes unemployment. Employment outcomes are influenced by multiple factors, including economic growth, investment, demographic change, technological development, and labour-market conditions. Further research using district-level employment data, evaluations of specific government programmes, and interviews with employers, workers, and public officials would help assess the effectiveness of different administrative interventions. Such research could also compare employment outcomes across districts and provinces to identify which governance arrangements are associated with more sustainable results (Raihan, 2018). Overall, the discussion demonstrates that tackling unemployment in Pakistan requires a shift from policy announcements and programme delivery towards effective implementation and measurable public value. Employment generation cannot be assigned to a single government department because it depends on the combined performance of economic institutions, education and training systems, labour administration, private enterprises, and local governance structures. A coordinated, transparent, and accountable public administration system can improve the use of public resources, strengthen the relationship between skills and employment, and promote more inclusive opportunities for young people, women, and rural communities. Government employment programmes should ultimately be assessed according to the accessibility, quality, and sustainability of the opportunities they create. Although administrative reform alone cannot resolve all structural economic constraints, stronger implementation capacity, evidence-based planning,

and institutional coordination can provide an essential foundation for reducing unemployment and advancing Pakistan's long-term economic stability.

CONCLUSION

Unemployment in Pakistan remains a significant socioeconomic and governance challenge that requires effective public administration, coordinated institutional efforts, and evidence-based policymaking. The findings indicate that rising unemployment, youth exclusion, gender disparities, skills mismatches, rural employment constraints, and the prevalence of informal work highlight the limitations of relying solely on policy formulation without ensuring effective implementation. Addressing these challenges requires clear institutional responsibilities, adequate financial resources, stronger coordination among government departments, market-oriented skills development, support for entrepreneurship, and targeted employment opportunities for women and rural communities. Furthermore, transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms should assess not only the number of jobs created but also their quality, sustainability, and contribution to household welfare. District administrations should play an active role in identifying local employment needs and connecting government programmes with private-sector investment and community priorities. Although this study relies on secondary data and does not establish causal relationships, it emphasizes that improving implementation capacity and institutional accountability can strengthen employment policies. Ultimately, a coordinated, inclusive, and results-oriented governance system is essential for reducing unemployment, promoting decent work, and supporting Pakistan's long-term economic stability.

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