

Young University Graduates in the Labour Market in Bejaïa, Algeria

Tarek Saoud

Introduction

The issue of young graduates' position within the labour market has become increasingly central in contemporary discussions. The question of access to employment, as well as the conditions surrounding it, raises numerous concerns about this group, particularly in developing countries. Here, this demography faces many of the same risks and challenges, such as unemployment, precarious work, and the dominance of informal sectors, as other, less-educated groups. In the case of Algeria, the considerable expansion of the youth population since independence, particularly among graduates, has not been accompanied by a comparable increase in economic development. This disparity has hindered the creation of sufficient employment opportunities and prevented the establishment of a dynamic labour market. As a result, securing stable, well-paid employment has become an increasingly difficult pursuit for many.

Among all social groups, it is the young graduates who are most affected by the shortage of job opportunities, especially given the substantial intellectual and financial investments made in their education. This investment comes not only from the graduates and their families but also from the Algerian state, which guarantees access to free higher education and covers a large portion of students' living costs, including housing, transportation, food, and scholarships. These young individuals are often forced to compete for a limited number of positions against a surplus of candidates, especially in job interviews, exams, and competitive selection processes. In many cases, older candidates with more experience and seniority are more likely to secure these positions.

Pursuing entrepreneurship, often proposed as a solution to the lack of employment opportunities in Algeria, presents its own challenges. The financial capital required to start a business is typically out of reach for many young graduates, and the bureaucratic processes involved in setting up and running a business require knowledge and expertise that are often lacking among this group. Considering these factors, many young graduates find themselves unemployed or working in precarious or informal jobs. Deprived of essential rights, such as social security, pension contributions, and career progression, they are unable to achieve financial and social autonomy, often delaying the formation of their own households until much later in life.

This article thus seeks to explore and understand the dynamics surrounding the employment situation of this population. It also revisits key historical events that have contributed to the current state of the labour market in Algeria, drawing on empirical data from a 2018 study on "young" higher education graduates in Algeria – Bejaïa (Tarek, 2022). Therefore, this study focuses on those aged 19 to 35 years,

referencing the definition of youth according to the National Youth Employment Support Agency (ANSEJ) as mentioned in the executive decree no. 03-290 of 6 September 2003 (p. 2), in charge of assisting unemployed young entrepreneurs in creating and expanding their own economic activities.

This study conducted through a socio-anthropological approach aimed at exploring the various factors that shape the experiences and perceptions of this young population in relation to their job search. The research utilised a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. On one hand, 14 in-depth interviews were carried out using snowball sampling, while on the other hand, a total of 398 questionnaires were retained – 266 from 300 distributed in paper format and 132 from a version distributed in digital format. The study objective was to construct a sample reflecting the diverse realities of the job market. The paper questionnaires were distributed using voluntary sampling among young graduates who visited the local employment agency (AWEM) in Bejaïa, while snowball sampling aimed to reach graduates who had successfully found employment. In parallel, a digital questionnaire was disseminated through voluntary sampling on Facebook, utilising Google Forms as the platform for data collection.

The issue of access to stable employment: contextualisation and historical factors

Access to stable employment is currently a central issue of public concern, both at the national and global levels. The technological and technical evolution of labour processes has profoundly transformed the demand for human labour. Over the past few decades, the development of industrial machinery, information and communication technologies (ICT), automation, and computerised devices has led to a substantial reduction in the need for manual labour, both in terms of quantity and quality. Machines, now able to perform tasks with greater precision and efficiency than human workers, have largely supplanted manual labour in many industries.

Human labour, which requires training, experience, and compensation, now competes with machines that do not require education, wages, or rest. This shift has prompted many companies and institutions to increasingly replace human workers with automated systems and machinery. As a result, the labour market has been reconfigured, with a significant rise in unemployment, precarious work, and informal labour, factors that underscore the importance of securing stable, formal employment. The changes in labour dynamics are not solely the result of technological advancements. They are also deeply influenced by socio-economic transformations that have taken place over the last two centuries. Industrialisation and the subsequent expansion of the service sector have reshaped labour structures globally.

At the same time, the establishment of increasingly rigorous labour regulations has played a pivotal role in shaping modern economies. These regulations, aimed at formalising various economic activities, have given rise to a sharp distinction between formal and informal labour. The growth of formal labour markets, characterised by stability and legal protections, contrasts starkly with the informal sector, where workers often face uncertain and precarious conditions. This shift has fundamentally redefined the concept of labour, making the conditions under which work is performed a key determi-

nant in the creation of social roles and positions. In this context, employment has become not only a cornerstone of economic productivity but also an essential pillar of social well-being.

In Algeria, several demographic and economic factors, alongside the global trend toward mechanisation and automation, have significantly influenced the structure of the labour market. The country's post-independence population explosion and rural exodus, for instance, have created significant pressures on urban labour markets. In parallel, increasing school enrolment rates and greater access to education for women have contributed to a more educated, but also more competitive, workforce. These shifts, however, have not been matched by corresponding economic growth or job creation, leading to a saturation of the labour market. Furthermore, the economic crises linked to fluctuating oil prices have exacerbated the situation, further limiting the availability of stable employment opportunities and adding complexity to the already precarious labour market conditions.

The rural exodus

The rural exodus played a crucial role in the rise of urbanisation rates and, consequently, in the increase of unemployment in Algeria. Following independence, Algeria experienced a significant migration towards urban areas, especially those along the coastline. The departure of nearly the entire European population triggered a massive rural exodus, with many individuals seeking to access housing, jobs, and resources (Guillermou, 1999, p. 50) that had been vacated by the Europeans. As a result, the urbanisation (ONS, 2008, p. 83) rate grew from 31.43% in 1966 to 49.54% in 1987, reaching 65.94% by the 2008 census, and climbing further to 75% in 2023 (World Bank website, 2024).

This rapid urban growth was not accompanied by adequate urban development (Belguidoum & Mouaziz, 2010, p. 104), projects, leaving cities, particularly Algiers, Oran, Constantine, and Annaba – the country's major metropolises – struggling with significant overcrowding. This imbalance resulted in a severe housing crisis (Guetta & Megdiche, 1990, p. 107) and placed immense pressure on the job market, contributing to a substantial increase in unemployment, which surged to 32.9% (ONS, 2020, p. 95) in 1966.

The massive shift of the Algerian population from agricultural work to industry and services, combined with the lack of sufficient infrastructure, had a particularly negative impact on access to stable employment. Young people, often without work experience, were hit hardest. The situation was further exacerbated by the economic and social crises (Bouyacoub, 2012, p. 95) the country began facing in the 1980s. Despite a significant reduction in unemployment (ONS, 2020, p. 95) following the industrial and agricultural revolutions (bringing the rate down to 8.7% in 1984), the unemployment rate again surged, reaching 28.9% of the active population by 2000.

The demographic boom

The rapid growth of Algeria's population has also played a significant role in disrupting the balance of the labour market, particularly for the younger generation. This group, which increasingly reaches working age, is confronted with a labour market that has not evolved at the same pace. The total

population grew from 12 million in 1966 (ONS, 2020, p. 43) to 46.3 million in 2023 (ONS, 2020-2023, p. 11), with the youth population aged 15 to 29 rising from 2.7 million to 11 million over the same period.

As Algeria's population expanded and urbanised, access to stable employment became increasingly challenging. Malthus' theory (Montoussé, 2008, p. 24), which suggests that while populations tend to grow geometrically, resources increase arithmetically, is particularly relevant here. Similarly, as the youth population in Algeria grew exponentially, opportunities for stable employment and income became scarcer and more difficult to access.

The increase in school enrolment rates

While increasing school enrolment rates is, in theory, a positive strategy for providing every member of society with an opportunity to enter the labour market, in practice, it becomes problematic when the labour market itself suffers from significant imbalances between labour supply and demand. This is evident in what has come to be known as Anderson's paradox (Fillieule, 2018, p. 72).

The expansion of schooling after independence, rising from 45.9% in 1966 to 76.7% in 1977 (ONS, 2020, p. 168), initially had a positive effect on slowing demographic growth and reducing unemployment rates. However, starting in the 1980s, the impact of this policy reversed. Once a certain threshold of educational attainment was reached, the labour market could no longer absorb all the graduates produced by the education system, including those from vocational training and higher education. Many of these graduates found themselves either unemployed for extended periods or forced into precarious and informal employment. This issue was further compounded by the economic crises that the country faced, which hindered economic development and reduced its capacity to absorb the growing pool of skilled labour.

The gradual access of women to education and employment

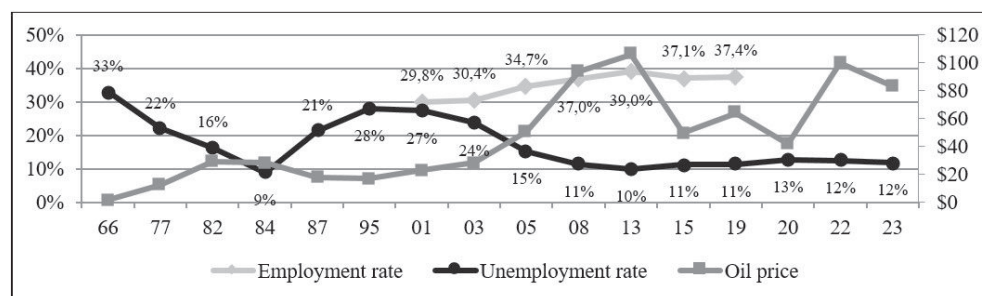
The increase in school enrolment has been notably characterised by a substantial rise in the enrolment rates of young girls. During the colonial period, girls' education was severely hindered by the instability caused by frequent clashes between the *mujahideen* and colonial forces, as well as the dominance of rural and traditional lifestyles in most Algerian families. However, following independence, a sense of security emerged, and a significant portion of the population began migrating to urban areas, where access to education was more readily available. This shift had a positive impact on the schooling of young girls. As a result, the enrolment rate for girls (ONS, 2020, p. 168) increased dramatically, rising from 34.2% in 1966 to 64.2% in 1977, and further to 91.7% in 2008. Furthermore, the participation rate of girls (ONS, 2020, p. 176) in education relative to boys improved from 36.7% in 1966 to 39.8% in 1977, and reached 49.3% in 2008, bringing it nearly to parity with that of boys.

In the same vein, women's progressive entry to education has also increased the possibilities of their access to paid work and consequently contributed to their growing presence in the labour market. Thus expanding the pool of job seekers with higher qualifications. Women are no longer confined

to domestic roles but now represent a significant portion of the active labour force, particularly in the case of university graduates. In fact, according to the National Statistics Office in 2019 (p. 5), the female activity rate was recorded at 62.2%, with an employment rate of 47.3%, compared to 79.2% and 70.5%, respectively, for men.

The oil crises and their economic impact

One of the most significant factors contributing to the current stranglehold on Algeria's labour market, in addition to the growth of the active population, is the economic crises triggered by fluctuations in oil prices. The structure of the Algerian economy, which has been heavily reliant on hydrocarbons since independence, led the country into a severe economic crisis in the 1980s. By the mid-1980s, oil prices had plummeted, exposing the structural vulnerabilities of the Algerian economy. This marked the end of the illusion of a robust industrial economy, which had been overly dependent on oil and gas revenues. The downturn in oil prices left a predominantly young population unemployed, pushing the unemployment rate to a peak of 28.1% in 1995, as shown in graph 11.1, before it began to decline with the subsequent rise in oil prices.



Graph 11.1. Evolution of employment and unemployment rates in comparison with oil prices from 1966 to 2023

Sources: ONS, 2020, pp. 95-96.

This economic crisis was followed by a social crisis in 1988, and later by a political crisis in 1991. These crises prompted the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1994, which introduced a structural adjustment program aimed at alleviating the mounting national debt and stabilising the country's economy. These reforms included the closure or privatisation of numerous public enterprises, the country's transition toward a market economy, and the growth of the private sector. These measures were intended to reduce public spending and absorb the rising number of unemployed workers.

Three decades after this economic adjustment, Algeria's economy still faces instability, and the labour market continues to be in a state of distress. Although the government has implemented various schemes to facilitate professional integration in an effort to reduce unemployment,¹ a significant

¹ These schemes are primarily the National Employment Agency (ANEM), the National Agency for Microcredit Management (ANGEM), National Youth Employment Support Agency (ANSEJ), renamed in 2020 as the National Entrepreneur-

portion of the population continues to struggle with finding stable employment, particularly young people and university graduates.

The situation was further exacerbated by the second oil crisis, which occurred between 2015 and 2020. Although this crisis was less severe than the previous one, it still negatively impacted the dynamics of the labour market, leading to periodic recruitment freezes, especially in the public sector. This situation was one of the underlying causes behind the 2019 *Hirak* (Oussedik, 2020, pp. 69-73) protests, during which many Algerians, particularly the youth, took to the streets in several cities to express their dissatisfaction with the country's deteriorating economic, social, and political conditions.

Thus, the confluence of various factors, such as the rural exodus, demographic explosion, the gradual increase in school enrolment, and expanded access to education and employment for women, on one hand, and the economic crises related to the decline in hydrocarbon prices, which have indirectly impacted the employment sector on the other, has led to a labour market that is increasingly congested with job seekers. Consequently, securing decent work² has become an ever-more elusive goal. Indeed, unemployment, along with precarious and informal work, has become a pervasive reality affecting both graduates and non-graduates alike.

Even today, the Algerian labour market remains highly vulnerable to a variety of crises. The most recent example of this is the global COVID-19 pandemic (Benabbo & Belarbi, 2021, pp. 689-694), which broke out in December 2019 and reached Algeria by February 2020. The pandemic had a profound and disruptive impact on the employment sector, particularly during the period of lockdown, which lasted from March to October 2020. This unprecedented situation paralyzed much of the formal and informal economy. The suspension of transportation, the closure of businesses, and the cessation of economic activities requiring direct human interaction, as well as the closure of places of worship and recreational facilities, led to many people losing their income or, in many cases, their jobs entirely. This disruption severely affected the labour market, which was already struggling with structural issues, causing inertia across nearly all sectors of the economy.

Indicators of labour market performance in Algeria

In evaluating the balance of the labour market, the most relevant indicator is the employment rate. This indicator represents the proportion of employed individuals relative to the total working-age population, offering a deeper understanding of a country's capacity to leverage its workforce. It provides insights that go beyond what unemployment rates alone can reveal. In Algeria, the employment rate was estimated at 37.4% in 2019, according to the National Statistics Office (p. 4). This means that, in simple terms, only about four out of ten individuals in the working-age population (as defined by the International Labour Organization) are employed. This figure is relatively low when compared to

ship Support and Development Agency (ANADE), the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC), and the Directorate of Social Action and Solidarity (DASS).

2 As defined by the ILO (2024), Decent work "encapsulates the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; security in the workplace and social protection for all; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men".

international averages. For instance, the World Bank (2024) estimated the employment rate for the same year at 58% globally.

Table 11.1. Comparison of unemployment and employment rates for 2023 between some developed OECD member countries and Algeria

Country	Unemployment Rate (%)	Employment Rate (%)
Norway	3.6	63.3
Canada	5.4	62.2
Japan	2.6	61.3
USA	3.6	60.3
Germany	3.1	59.6
France	7.4	52.2
Spain	12.2	51
Italy	7.7	46
Algeria	11.8 (2023)	37.4 (2019)

Sources: OECD (2024)

When comparing Algeria's unemployment and employment rates to those of developed OECD countries, it becomes clear that the gap is more pronounced in terms of employment rates than in unemployment rates. More than the unemployment rate, the employment rate reveals the extent to which a country's workforce is engaged in economic activity. It provides a valuable lens through which to assess the labour market's capacity to absorb the working-age population into productive work. This comparison highlights the importance of analysing both the employment rate and the unemployment rate together. Doing so offers a more comprehensive understanding of the labour market's structure. The employment rate, in particular, provides a valuable perspective on how effectively a country is utilising its available human resources and the overall efficiency of its labour market.

While the unemployment rate in Algeria has remained within a relatively acceptable range since 2006, fluctuating between 9% and 13% (as shown in graph 11.1), the employment rate paints a different picture. This rate has remained stubbornly low, hovering around 37% during the same period, signalling that the country has not made significant strides in improving labour market conditions. Although there has been a slight statistical improvement in these indicators since 2006, the progress remains insufficient to fully address the challenges facing the labour market.

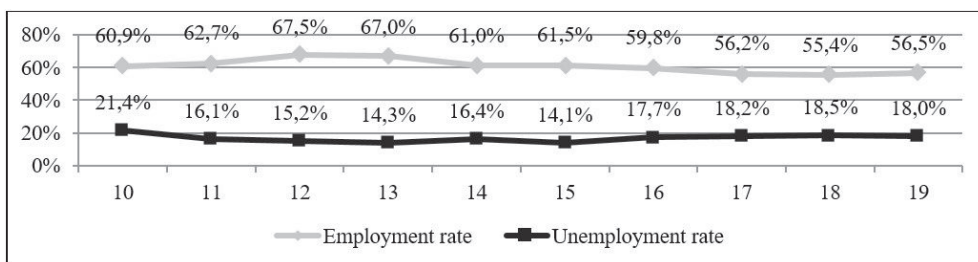
This modest improvement is not solely the result of rising oil prices, as previously mentioned, but also due to the establishment of the National Employment Agency (ANEM) by the executive decree no. 06-77 of 18 February in 2006. The agency was created to provide a comprehensive understanding of the labour market and workforce dynamics throughout Algeria (ANEM website, 2024). On the one hand, ANEM acts as an intermediary between employers and job seekers, facilitating job placements (Paugam, 2003, p. 4). On the other hand, it manages the placement of job seekers through temporary fixed-term contracts, arranged via a tripartite agreement between the job seeker, the employer, and the local Wilaya's employment office.

While this structure has increased job seekers' chances of securing employment, it has also contributed to a rise in job precarity. The contracts offered are typically temporary, providing neither professional stability nor financial security, and they often fail to ensure decent incomes. As a result, while unemployment is somewhat alleviated, the overall labour market situation does not improve significantly. Nearly a third of the employed population, 28.1% according to the National Statistics Office in 2019 (Calculated based on data, p. 4), is engaged in temporary employment. Moreover, these workers frequently find themselves unemployed again once their contracts end.

Situation of university graduates in the Algerian labour market

University graduates in Algeria exhibit employment rates that are significantly higher than the national average, as shown in graph 11.2, with employment rates hovering around 60%. However, this group still faces relatively high unemployment rates, approximately 17%, which is about 6 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for the general population.

As depicted in graph 11.2, the employment and unemployment rates for university graduates are notably higher than the national averages shown in graph 11.1. The higher employment rate among university graduates is largely attributed to their greater integration into the formal economy and participation in various economic activities. This trend is especially evident among women, whose employment rate stands at 47.3% (ONS, 2019, p. 5), compared to just 5.7% for non-graduates. Non-graduates, in general, tend to remain outside the formal labour market, often engaging in informal work or household activities, such as sewing, hairstyling, or cake baking.



Graph 11.2. Evolution of employment and unemployment rates among university graduates from 2010 to 2019

Source: ONS, *Activité, emploi et chômage*, 2010-2019

Interestingly, the higher unemployment rate among university-educated individuals can be explained by the fact that these individuals are more likely to register with labour offices when seeking work, making them more visible in the unemployed population. In contrast, non-graduates often do not register for employment services, which can lead to an underestimation of their unemployment rates. This phenomenon significantly inflates the unemployment rate among university graduates.

Additionally, the number of university graduates continues to rise year after year. In 2010, 199 767 individuals graduated (ONS, 2020, p. 175) from Algerian universities, a number that has been steadily increasing and is projected to reach (Calculated based on the Ministry of Higher Education and

Scientific Research website, 2024) 382 837 by 2023. However, the number of jobs created to match their qualifications has not kept pace with this growth, with many of the available positions being precarious (Khaldi, 2009, pp. 67-69). This mismatch presents a significant challenge for both the government, responsible for managing the labour market, and for the graduates who find themselves facing an increasingly saturated job market.

Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight that the dynamics of university graduates in the Algerian labour market, as illustrated in graph 11.2, have experienced a significant slowdown since 2013, after a period of notable improvement in the preceding years. This downturn has been marked by a continuous increase in unemployment rates and a decline in employment rates.

The tightening of the labour market occurred primarily due to periodic freezes in recruitment (Mokhefi, 2015, pp. 501-502) at the national level, a consequence of the sharp decline in oil prices (Mendil, 2020, pp. 104-107) starting in the second half of 2014. This drop in oil prices led to a reduction in the government's capacity to invest in the development of the employment sector and, consequently, in its efforts to integrate university graduates into the labour market.

Overall, while the labour market has been relatively more dynamic in the past two decades compared to earlier periods, access to stable employment remains a significant challenge. This is especially true for university graduates, who continue to face limited opportunities, often being relegated to fixed-term contracts and precarious jobs, despite the existence of numerous State programs designed to support professional integration and the creation of businesses and micro-enterprises in an effort to improve the employment sector.

The situation of young university graduates in the labour market in Bejaïa

Turning to the labour market in Bejaïa, calculation based on data from the 2015 statistical yearbook of the Wilaya indicates an employment rate of 56.4% (University of Bejaïa, 2015, pp. 16 & 18), which is 19.3% higher than the national employment rate of 37.1% in the same year. This difference highlights a greater proportion of the working-age population employed in Bejaïa compared to the national average – a configuration that is due to the fact that the Wilaya is a key industrial and tourist hub with numerous production and service activities.

Indeed, strategically located on Algeria's Mediterranean coast, Bejaïa is home to one of the country's most important commercial ports after the capital Algiers. Its industrial zones, including Bejaïa main town, El Kseur, and Akbou, host major companies like Cevital, Soummam, Danone, Candia, Ifri, Toudja, etc., and its tourist areas, in constant expansion, are supported by the National Tourism Development Scheme (SNAT) (Wilaya of Bejaïa, Directorate of Tourism and Handicrafts, 2012, pp. 7-8) and established by the government as part of a global sustainable development strategy to promote the tourism sector. Thus, contributing to a diverse economy and creating a considerable number of commercial and transport activities. Which drives dynamism to the local employment market.

The presence of significant economic infrastructure in Bejaïa has indeed created many employment opportunities, particularly for young graduates who often struggle to find their first job. However,

these opportunities remain insufficient. Many of the young graduates interviewed reported difficulties in securing stable employment with satisfactory incomes after completing their studies.

In fact, 42.7% of the surveyed graduates indicated that they experienced long-term unemployment after obtaining their degrees, with half of them reporting unemployment periods lasting over two years. These young individuals, who have spent much of their lives focusing on education until their late twenties or early thirties, found themselves faced with prolonged and often indefinite periods of inactivity after graduation. For many, this situation was unimaginable, considering the significant effort they had invested in hopes of securing a decent job.

Regarding the sectors where these young graduates found employment, 71.9% of the respondents, who were either employed at the time of the survey or had worked previously, reported being employed in the following sectors: 22.9% in administrative roles, 21.4% in services, 18.7% in commerce, 13.7% in education and teaching, 6.5% in industry and craftsmanship, and 5.7% in construction. The remaining 11.1% were employed in other activities that did not fall into these categories. These include seasonal jobs, security roles, multipurpose positions and the vaguely described activities reported by respondents.

While a significant portion of these university graduates found jobs in sectors related to their qualifications, many were employed under precarious conditions. This was often due to being hired informally or through government programs designed to facilitate the professional integration of university graduates. However, these programs typically offer fixed-term contracts with meagre salaries, which further perpetuate job insecurity.

In this context, the survey revealed that 30% of young graduates who were employed or had worked previously had not benefited from any affiliation to social security. Among them, 15.9% were still pursuing their studies³ at the second or third cycle of university, while 84.1% were employed in the informal sector. These individuals often worked in family-run businesses, from home, or in other informal activities that ranged from commercial, agricultural, and artisanal to even industrial endeavours. This shift into the informal labour market was a necessary step for many young graduates who, unable to secure stable and formal employment, had no choice but to join this sector.

The difficulty in accessing suitable employment and the prevalence of long-term unemployment often forced many of these young people to accept working conditions that were not only precarious but also hazardous. These environments exposed them to dangerous tools and substances, required them to adopt risky postures, and involved unhygienic conditions that posed various health risks and diseases.

Additionally, the survey revealed that a significant number of young graduates were employed in precarious conditions, often through fixed-term contracts with low salaries. These included internship contracts, temporary positions, or contracts mediated by professional integration agencies such as National Employment Agency (ANEM) or Directorate of Employment and Social Security (DASS). Many young graduates had no choice but to accept these precarious jobs in an effort to avoid informal labour and unemployment.

³ Due to their affiliation with social security as students, they cannot be considered workers, as they would lose benefits offered to non-working students, such as scholarships and accommodation.

An illustrative example of this situation is Amir, who during our interview, described his experience of being employed under a Graduate Insertion Contract (CID)⁴ contract since 2014 as an administrative assistant in the after-sales service of an appliance store. Reflecting on his precarious situation, he shared:

The employee is always mistreated; whether you work or not, it's the same. You can't get by. They introduced this ANEM policy, and we've been stuck with it. Even if you have a good diploma and you find a job, you're still forced to go through ANEM. In fact, these contracts have become indefinite (...) This year is my fourth year under an ANEM contract. So, you will always feel poor, whether you work or not, you'll always remain poor. Worse still, you don't even have the hope of a salary increase, nor performance bonuses, nor any retirement contributions. Even if you resign to look for another job, it will be the same, through ANEM.

This form of employment has been heavily criticised by many young graduates interviewed. Several employers take advantage of the tight labour market and the weakened position of these young people, exploiting this situation to make them work under substandard conditions without regard for the costs related to working conditions, safety, training, or proper compensation.

Regarding compensation, the survey data revealed that nearly half of the young graduates interviewed, who were either employed or had previously worked, reported receiving a salary below the SMIG (minimum guaranteed wage), set at 20 000 DZD by the presidential decree no. 21-137 of 7 April 2021. Specifically, 44.4% of these graduates earned less than the minimum wage.

This wage level is notably lower than what these young individuals expected. On average, they estimated their desired salary to be 49 365 DZD. This salary gap is a crucial factor in their job search, as it directly affects their standard of living and social status. A higher income would allow them to achieve greater autonomy, particularly financial independence from their families, and the ability to eventually form their own households.

Regarding the methods (Saoud, 2021, pp. 31-32) through which young graduates accessed employment opportunities, the survey revealed that 57.5% of them found jobs through their social networks. Among these, 13.5% secured employment through a family member, 20.2% through a friend, and 23.8% through an acquaintance. These findings are consistent with the Algerian part of the results of the 2019 *Sahwa* study conducted and published by CREAD,⁵ which highlighted (Medjoub & Hammouda, 2019, pp. 158-159) that 58.8% of young people categorised as employed had found their jobs through their networks, with 21.4% using family connections and 37.4% relying on personal relationships. This aligns with the theory of strong ties and weak ties developed by sociologist Mark Granovetter (Lemieux & Ouimet, 2004, pp. 44-46), which explains the significant role the type of relationship plays in access to employment.

According to this theory, strong ties (such as family members or spouses) tend to be more insular and provide fewer new opportunities or information. In contrast, weak ties (such as acquaintances or

4 The CID is part of the Professional Integration Support Device (DAIP) established by the State through ANEM, where beneficiaries, according to the executive decree no. 08-126 of 6 March 2011, are paid 15,000 DA per month.

5 This study was conducted at the request of the European Union in 2015 on a sample of 10 000 young people distributed equally among five MENA countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

neighbours) are more open to external connections and, due to their more distant nature, accumulate and share information that is often more valuable and effective in securing employment.

In addition to utilising personal networks, other methods through which young graduates accessed employment opportunities were secondary. These included online job searches (12.3%), approaches to professional integration agencies (11.1%), direct inquiries with companies (7.1%), and participation in recruitment competitions (4.4%).

Despite showing a relatively higher employment rate compared to the national level, the labour market in Bejaïa still exhibits similar imbalances. Firstly, the supply of labour willing to work is much higher than the number of formal job opportunities available on the market. Secondly, a significant portion of the available job contracts are temporary and offer relatively low wages. Thirdly, many job seekers, unable to secure stable and rewarding formal employment, find themselves compelled to resort to precarious or informal employment.

Conclusion

Based on the data discussed, the stability of the labour market remains highly questionable, particularly for young university graduates, both at the national level and in the Bejaïa region. The high unemployment rates among this group and the scarcity of job opportunities, often confined to precarious and informal sectors, leave many young graduates in a deteriorated socio-economic situation. This situation significantly hinders their ability to achieve personal goals such as securing stable and well-paid employment, starting a family, purchasing a car, acquiring housing, etc. Unable to move forward, many young graduates find themselves stuck in a state of malaise and incertitude.

In this regard, D. Mandouélé explains that in modern societies, where social recognition is strongly tied to employment, “unemployment is perceived and experienced negatively... It leads to an anomic condition manifested by the experience of humiliation, boredom, and desocialization” (2011, p. 40). Without work, which is viewed as a fundamental norm of social integration, the individual risks becoming marginalised. This is one of the reasons why many young graduates face increasing obstacles in their pursuit of employment, struggle to leverage their human capital (Guillon, 2010, p. 57), and fail to position themselves in an ever-more demanding labour market.

Amid this distressing malaise, many young graduates exhibit remarkable optimism about their future, which is worthy of scientific attention. This resilience enables them not only to cope with the stress and uncertainty caused by their deteriorating socio-economic situation but also to continually search for ways to overcome the barriers in their path.

References

- ANEM. (2024). *Missions of ANEM*. <https://www.anem.dz/#/article/Mission>
- Belguidoum, S. & Mouaziz, N. (2010). L'urbain informel et les paradoxes de la ville algérienne : Politiques urbaines et légitimité sociale. *Espaces et sociétés*, 143(3), 101-116.

- Benabbo, H. & Belarbi, A. (2021). Les répercussions de la pandémie Covid -19 sur l'emploi informel en Algérie. *Revue développement des ressources humaines*, 16(1), 682-696.
- Bouyacoub, A. (2012). Croissance économique et développement 1962-2012 : quel bilan? *Insaniyat*, 57-58, 91-113.
- Executive decree no. 03-290 of 9 Rajab 1424, corresponding to September 6, 2003, setting the conditions and level of aid provided to young entrepreneurs. <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2003/F2003054.pdf>
- Executive decree no. 06-77 of 19 Moharram 1427, corresponding to February 18, 2006, establishing the missions, organisation, and functioning of the National Employment Agency (ANEM). <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2006/F2006009.pdf>
- Executive decree no. 11-105 of 1st Rabie El Thani 1432, corresponding to March 6, 2011, amending and supplementing executive decree no. 08-126 of 13 Rabie El Thani 1429, corresponding to April 19, 2008, regarding the professional integration assistance mechanism. <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2011/F2011014.pdf>
- Fillieule, R. (2018). L'inégalité des chances : apports théoriques, réponses aux critiques et postérité. *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 56(2), 65-83.
- Guetta, M. & Megdiche, C. (1990). Famille, urbanisation et crise du logement en Algérie. *Sociétés contemporaines*, 3, 95-115.
- Guillermou, Y. (1999). Villes et campagnes en Algérie. *Autrepart*, 11, 47-60.
- Guillon, S. (2010). Le chômage des diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur à la réunion. L'Harmattan.
- ILO. (n.d.). *Decent work*. <https://www.ilo.org/topics/decent-work>
- Khalidi, A. (2009). Le marché de l'emploi en Algérie à l'épreuve du chômage et de la précarité de l'emploi. *Revue économie & management*, 8, 58-74.
- Lemieux, V. & Ouimet, M. (2004). L'analyse structurale des réseaux sociaux. De Boeck.
- Mandoué, D. (2011). L'insertion professionnelle des jeunes de milieu populaire. L'Harmattan.
- Medjoub, R. & Hammouda, N.E. (2019). Insertion professionnelle des jeunes par le réseau de relations en Algérie. In N. A. Benhaddad, K. Boucherf & N-E. Hammouda (Eds.), *La jeunesse algérienne : Vécu, Représentations et Aspirations* (pp. 150-168). CREAD.
- Mendil, D. (2020). Analyse macro-économique des politiques de l'emploi en Algérie dans une perspective d'un développement durable. *Mondes en développement*, 190(2), 91-110.
- Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. *Large aggregate*. <https://www.mesrs.dz/index.php/fr/agregats-2/>
- Mokhefi, M. (2015). Algérie : défis intérieurs, menaces extérieures. *Commentaire*, 151(3), 499-506.
- Montoussé M. (2008). 100 Fiches de lecture en économie, sociologie, histoire et géographie économiques. Editions Bréal.
- OECD. (2024). *Employment rate*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/employment-rate>
- OECD. (2024). *Unemployment rate*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/unemployment-rate>
- ONS. (2008). Armature urbaine. No. 163. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/armature_urbaine_2008.pdf
- ONS. (2010, Q4). Activité, emploi et chômage. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/emploi_chomage_2010.pdf
- ONS. (2011, Q4). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 592. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/donnees_stat_emploi_2011-verdefinitive.pdf
- ONS. (2012, Q4). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 651. https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/Donnees_Stat_Emploi_2012.pdf
- ONS. (2013, Q4). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 653. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/donnees_stat_emploi_2013.pdf
- ONS. (2014, September). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 683. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/donnee_stat_emploi_septembre_2014_bonne.pdf
- ONS. (2015, September). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 726. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/dsemploi_0915.pdf

- ONS. (2016, September). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 763. https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/dsemploi_0916.pdf
- ONS. (2017, September). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 796. https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/Activite_emploi_et_chomage_Septembre_2017.pdf
- ONS. (2018, September). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 840. https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/emplois_eptembre2018.pdf
- ONS. (2019, May). Activité, emploi et chômage. No. 879. https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/emploi_chom_mai_2019.pdf
- ONS. (2020). Rétrospective Statistique 1962 – 2020. <https://www.ons.dz/spip.php?rubrique394>
- ONS. (2020-2023). Démographie algérienne. No. 1030. https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/Demographie_A_lgerienne2020_2023.pdf
- Oussedik F. (2020). Le hirak : Quelques réflexions sur les enjeux d'un mouvement contestataire en Algérie. *Insaniyat*, 88, 69-82.
- Paugam, S. (2003). Les nouvelles précarités du travail, La précarité du travail : Une réalité aux multiples visages. Les Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Presidential decree no. 21-137 of 24 Sha'ban 1442, corresponding to April 7, 2021, setting the national minimum guaranteed wage. <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2021/F2021028.pdf>
- Saoud, T. (2021). Quête d'emploi et malaise social chez les jeunes diplômés universitaires à Bejaïa. *Insaniyat*, 94, 25-41.
- Saoud, T. (2022). Les jeunes diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur en Kabylie : Les stratégies de recherche d'emploi face aux contraintes de l'intégration. Le cas de la wilaya de Bejaïa [Doctoral thesis, University of Tlemcen]. <https://www.pnst.cerist.dz/detail.php?id=934522>
- University of Bejaïa. (2015). Statistical Yearbook of the Wilaya of Bejaïa. <http://www.univ-bejaia.dz/doc/Annuaire%20Statistique%202015.pdf>
- Wilaya of Bejaïa, Directorate of Tourism and Handicrafts. (2012). Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique de la Wilaya de Bejaïa. Phase I, Launch Report. <https://fr.scribd.com/document/342301486/Rapport-de-Lancement-Bejaia>
- World Bank. (n.d.). *Employment rate, 15 and more*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.TO.TL.SP.ZS>
- World Bank. (n.d.). *Urban population - Algeria*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=DZ>