

**ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL**

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>  
 Vol. 03 No. 02. Apr-Jun 2025. Page#.1423-1438  
 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.3.2.024) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.3.2.024)  
<https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.3.2.024>  
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://openjournal.org)



## **Examine the psychological and social effects of prolonged unemployment among educated youth, using a quantitative approaches**

**Zainab Bibi**

Department of Sociology, Government College University Faisalabad  
[zainabishaq25@gmail.com](mailto:zainabishaq25@gmail.com)

**Sadaf Maqsood** (Corresponding Author)

Department of Education, Agriculture University Faisalabad  
[sadafmaqsood445@gmail.com](mailto:sadafmaqsood445@gmail.com)

**Fayyaz Ahmad**

Department of Sociology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad  
[fayyazahmadmahar0@gmail.com](mailto:fayyazahmadmahar0@gmail.com)

**Muneeb Ahmed**

Department of Sociology, Government College University Faisalabad  
[ranamuneebahmed07@gmail.com](mailto:ranamuneebahmed07@gmail.com)

**Arshed Ali**

MPhil Scholar, Punjab Home Department Pakistan  
[arshadferoz1159@gmail.com](mailto:arshadferoz1159@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*Unemployment remains a critical global concern, particularly in developing nations where rapid educational advancement outpaces employment opportunities. This study investigates the psychological and social effects of prolonged unemployment among educated youth, Pakistan a rural region facing limited economic development. The research addresses a significant gap by examining how extended joblessness influences mental health, self-esteem, and social relationships among degree-holding individuals unable to find employment for more than six months. The primary purpose of the study is to explore how prolonged unemployment impacts the psychological well-being and social integration of educated youth, with particular attention to the mediating role of self-esteem and the moderating influence of family support. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed, using structured questionnaires administered to a purposive sample of 242 unemployed youth. The study utilized established scales such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and DASS-21, and statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS and AMOS. Findings reveal that prolonged unemployment significantly correlates with increased psychological distress and adverse social effects. Self-esteem was found to mediate this relationship, with lower self-esteem exacerbating mental health issues and social withdrawal. Moreover, family support emerged as a significant moderator, buffering the negative effects of unemployment on self-esteem and psychological health. These results carry substantial theoretical and practical implications. The study reinforces Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory by illustrating how the absence of employment disrupts psychological and social functioning. Practically, it underscores the need for multi-dimensional interventions including mental health services, self-esteem enhancement programs, and family-based support initiatives to mitigate the consequences of youth unemployment. By focusing on a rural, under-researched population, this study contributes novel insights to the discourse on unemployment and offers a localized framework for policy and community-level support mechanisms.*

**Keywords:** Psychological Factors, Social Effects, Unemployment, Quantitative Approach, Educated Youth.

### Introduction

Unemployment remains a serious problem for countries everywhere, but it is particularly troublesome in developing nations where the rate of population growth exceeds the rate of job creation. Out of all types of unemployment, the long-term problem of educated youth is especially challenging (Cieslik et al., 2022). Many youngsters invest much of their time and money in getting a college education, thinking it will help them find steady and important jobs. But when these expectations are not achieved and long-term unemployment occurs, the results can be very negative for both psychology and social life (Lawes et al., 2023). If employment is associated with social status in a society, unemployment can cause mental health issues and damage relationships with others. Issues related to common diseases also block personal development and may damage the unity of society. Since many educated youth in rural Pakistan cannot find jobs, urgent research should be carried out to understand all aspects of this issue (Zahid et al., 2023).

This study looks into the results of long-term unemployment on educated youth, in Pakistan as a case study. In this work, unemployment over a long period is the main independent variable and self-esteem, support from family, psychological consequences and social factors are the dependent variables. For this context, prolonged unemployment is when a person doesn't have a job for more than six months, trying hard to find work. It matters a great deal since surviving unemployment for a long time usually results in feeling hopeless, less motivated and having mental health issues (Mayer & Holleder, 2022). Self-esteem shows how healthy a person's mind is; it relates to how a person sees and appreciates themselves. If educated people do not get jobs, it can make them feel worthless and discouraged (Pimienta, 2023). Family support plays a dual role it can either buffer the negative psychological impacts or, in some cases, add pressure, depending on familial expectations (Zhang et al., 2020). The psychological effects may include symptoms such as anxiety, depression, frustration, and hopelessness, while the social effects may manifest in terms of social withdrawal, loss of social status, strained interpersonal relationships, and in some cases, involvement in deviant behavior (Wang et al., 2021). Understanding the interplay of these variables is crucial in addressing the broader impacts of youth unemployment and formulating effective intervention strategies.

While several studies have explored the causes and economic implications of youth unemployment, there remains a significant research gap concerning its psychological and social consequences, particularly in the context of rural Pakistan. Much of the existing literature either focuses on urban populations or broadly addresses unemployment without differentiating the effects based on the duration of unemployment or the level of education (Engbersen, 2019). The previous studies have often overlooked the moderating role of family support in either mitigating or exacerbating the emotional distress caused by prolonged joblessness. There aren't enough research studies that consider the culture, society and economy of Pakistan, where possibilities are restricted and the way people are expected to think and act is different (Shah et al., 2020). This study's goal is to help fill that gap by gathering facts on the mental and social challenges that long-term unemployment brings to those young educated individuals who live in the area and explore the resources they have access to.

The focus of this research is on studying and analyzing the psychological and social results of unemployment among educated youth. The study is mainly focused on gauging the results of long-term unemployment on confidence, determining how families support those out of work, studying their psychological conditions and observing changes in their social life. The study also seeks to explore the relationship between these variables to understand how they interact and influence each other. For instance, does strong family support help in

maintaining self-esteem and mitigating anxiety, or does the lack of employment overshadow any emotional backing provided by the family? Additionally, the study aims to provide practical recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and mental health professionals to design interventions that can support unemployed youth both emotionally and socially. The findings of this study will be beneficial not only for the academic community but also for stakeholders involved in youth development and social policy formulation.

Despite the increasing educational attainment among youth in rural Pakistan, a growing number of individuals remain unemployed for extended periods, leading to significant psychological and social repercussions. However, limited research has been conducted to systematically examine how prolonged unemployment affects the self-esteem, mental well-being, and social relationships of educated youth, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. This gap in research hinders the development of effective support systems and policy interventions tailored to the unique needs of unemployed educated youth in such regions. Addressing this problem is crucial for fostering inclusive development, preventing the long-term marginalization of the youth, and ensuring that the nation's investment in education translates into tangible outcomes for its young citizens.

### **Hypothesis Development**

A steady connection has been observed between youth who are unemployed for a long period and problems both mentally and socially. Not having a job not only creates financial concerns but also greatly influences people's mental state and ties with others. Many young jobseekers face psychological distress because of financial issues, possible economic risk and stress from parents (Noor et al., 2024). Research showed that as people deal with more economic difficulties, they typically experience greater psychological distress. It was worrisome to find that 54.4% of higher-educated migrant youth in Kolkata with no jobs suffered from depression, 61.8% from anxiety and 47.9% from stress. It was highlighted that unemployment plays a major role in mental health problems which points to the necessity of specific interventions (Yang et al., 2024). As well as psychological problems, being unemployed for a long period can cause social problems as well. Research that was published in the Journal for Labour Market Research revealed that social exclusion is more common among the unemployed. Unemployed individuals often experience a decline in living standards and reduced participation in social and cultural activities, leading to long-term social isolation (Yang et al., 2024). In the context of Pakistan, the situation is particularly concerning. Reports have shown that youth unemployment leads to increased stress, depression, and a diminished sense of purpose. These psychological effects are compounded by social issues such as rising crime rates and social unrest, as unemployed youth may resort to illegal activities out of frustration and desperation.

### **H1: Prolonged Unemployment has negative effects on the Psychological health and Social Effects on youth.**

The mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between prolonged unemployment and its psychological and social effects on youth. Prolonged unemployment often leads to diminished self-worth, which in turn exacerbates mental health issues and social withdrawal. The relationship between self-esteem and social avoidance among university students (Mule, 2018). The findings indicated that self-esteem was negatively associated with social avoidance, and that resilience and social distress partially mediated this relationship. Specifically, social distress accounted for a significant portion of the mediation effect, suggesting that lower self-esteem leads to increased social distress, which then contributes to greater social avoidance (Ahmed et al., 2021). Self-esteem mediates the relationship between psychological capital and anxiety among college students. A study found that self-esteem partially mediated the association between psychological capital and anxiety, indicating that higher psychological capital leads to increased self-esteem, which in turn reduces anxiety

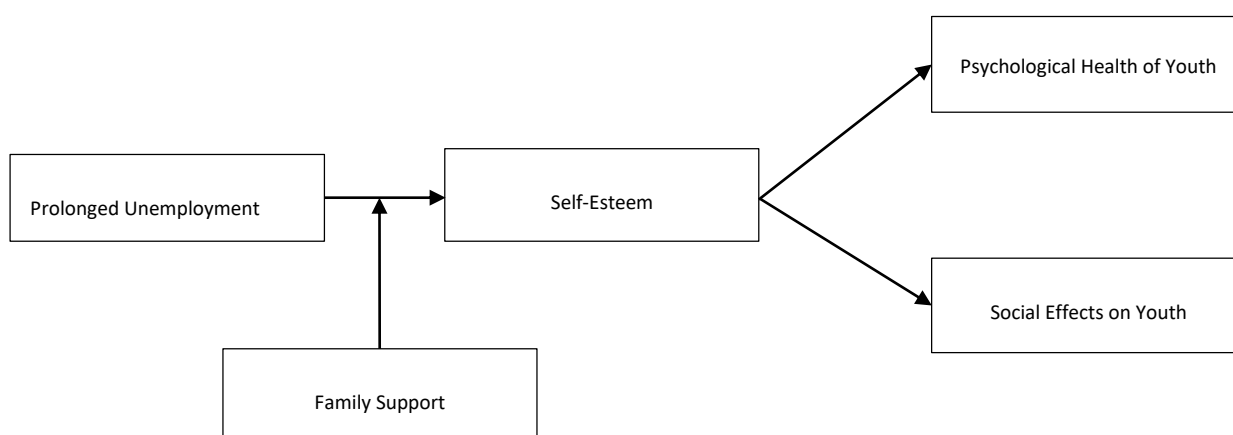
levels (Li et al., 2023). The effects of unemployment anxiety or depression among business faculty students in Turkey revealed that feelings of personal accomplishment mediated the relationship between unemployment anxiety and depression. This suggests that unemployment-induced low self-esteem contributes to increased depression levels (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). These studies collectively underscore the critical role of self-esteem as a mediator between prolonged unemployment and its adverse psychological and social outcomes among youth. Addressing self-esteem issues through targeted interventions could mitigate the negative impacts of unemployment on young individuals' mental health and social well-being.

## **H2: Self Esteem mediates the relationships between Prolonged Unemployment, Psychological Health and Social Effects on Youth.**

The way that family support affects the link between long-term unemployment and self-esteem among youth. When someone stays unemployed for a long time, it can lead to low self-esteem, but having a strong family group can help lessen these feelings. Public Health that being supported socially, largely by family, greatly reduces unemployment-related stress among young people (Mokona et al., 2020). It was shown in the research that young people who are unemployed and have strong family and friendship networks tend to have better mental well-being than those without them. The researchers discovered through a study of Chinese adolescents that family assistance tempered the link between negative occurrences and certain antisocial behaviors through self-esteem (Zhou, 2023). The study results demonstrate that support from family can help safeguard a person's self-esteem from the impact of stress events which may thus decrease the risk of antisocial actions. Personality concluded that parental love and the current economic situation both play major roles in developing adolescents' self-esteem. It was stressed in the study that having a good family life boosts self-esteem which is helpful when someone is unemployed (Filosa et al., 2022). All these studies show that having family support is key to reducing the negative impact of unemployment on the self-esteem of young people. Support within families may help reduce the psychological problems caused by youth unemployment.

## **H3: Family Support moderates the relationships between Prolonged Unemployment and Self-Esteem.**

**Figure.1. Research Framework**



## **Literature Review**

Unemployment happens for a long time, youth can experience problems with mental well-being and being part of the community, mainly the well-educated youth. During the past few years, the global economy has seen changes that make it harder for young people to get stable jobs. A lot of research shows that youth unemployment is both an economic and a social and emotional challenge, affecting the most educated youth since they feel societal

pressure to perform well (Banks & Ullah, 2024). As schools improve and job choices increase, more people are graduating, but finding jobs is now tougher than before. This has led to many well-educated individuals being unemployed which makes them feel stressed and lonely (Oxenham, 2024).

Experiencing long-term unemployment has been proven to lead to more anxiety, depression, and hopelessness and to a decline in self-esteem in most people. People who are unemployed experience more mental health issues on average than people who are employed. The effect on educated youth grows stronger because they may notice their achievements in school do not always pay off financially. Studies carried out in places such as Pakistan have found that having no job can stress people emotionally and lead to feeling useless, powerless and thinking about taking their own lives (Asplund et al., 2022). Young people who are not employed also experience more mental health obstacles since not having routine, a sense of purpose and community validation intensifies mental health problems.

Socially, unemployment isolates young people from networks that contribute to identity formation and social capital. Educated youth, often coming from middle or lower-middle-class backgrounds, face societal expectations that increase pressure to secure employment and contribute economically to their families. Their failure to do so results in social withdrawal, stigma, and deterioration of interpersonal relationships (Godinić & Obrenovic, 2020). In South Asia found that prolonged joblessness among educated youth correlates with reduced participation in community life, decreased civic engagement, and strained family dynamics. Furthermore, research has linked prolonged unemployment with increased social deviance and anti-social behavior, as individuals struggle to assert their identity and relevance within society (Farooq & Mwaba, 2023).

Self-esteem emerges as a significant psychological variable in understanding the consequences of youth unemployment. Rosenberg's theory of self-esteem posits that an individual's sense of worth is largely shaped by their perceived societal roles and accomplishments. For educated youth, joblessness not only impairs their economic mobility but also challenges their core identity and self-worth. The self-esteem mediates the relationship between unemployment and mental health, indicating that unemployment leads to lower self-esteem, which in turn results in greater psychological distress (Peláez-Fernández et al., 2021). The effects are often cyclical low self-esteem undermines motivation and job-seeking behavior, thus perpetuating unemployment.

Equally important is the moderating role of family support in mitigating the psychological damage caused by unemployment. The family encouragement and emotional security can buffer the negative psychological effects of unemployment, particularly when the unemployed youth maintain strong ties with their families (Maitoza, 2019). The presence of supportive family systems has been found to reduce depression, improve self-esteem, and sustain social participation despite the absence of formal employment (Triana et al., 2019). In collectivist societies like Pakistan, where familial bonds remain strong, family support serves as a protective factor against social alienation and psychological breakdown among jobless educated youth.

Despite the increasing interest in youth unemployment, most previous studies have focused on economic indicators or broader psychological impacts without isolating the unique effects on educated youth. Furthermore, there is a lack of quantitative research that simultaneously examines psychological effects (such as depression and self-esteem), social effects (like social withdrawal or reduced civic participation), and the roles of mediating (self-esteem) and moderating (family support) variables within a single framework. This creates a gap in both theory and practice, as policymakers and mental health practitioners lack integrated models that could guide holistic interventions. Therefore, a study employing a quantitative approach to analyze the interconnected roles of prolonged unemployment, psychological health, self-

esteem, family support, and social effects is essential for developing targeted solutions to this pressing issue.

### **Theoretical Support**

A suitable theoretical foundation that cohesively supports all the variables in our research is Latent Deprivation Theory by (Jahoda, 1982). This theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the profound psychological and social consequences of unemployment, particularly among educated youth. Jahoda argued that employment not only provides financial resources (manifest function) but also fulfills five crucial latent functions: time structure, social contact, collective purpose, status and identity, and activity. When individuals are unemployed, especially over a prolonged period, they are deprived of these latent benefits, which leads to a deterioration in their psychological well-being and social integration. In this context, Prolonged Unemployment is seen as a primary stressor that disrupts the psychological structure of everyday life, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. This directly relates to the psychological effects outlined in your study. Moreover, as unemployed individuals lose their social roles and daily routines, they often become socially isolated and experience a decline in their interpersonal relationships, supporting the presence of negative social effects in your model. The theory also indirectly supports the mediating role of Self-Esteem. As individuals remain unemployed despite being educated, they often internalize failure and perceive themselves as unworthy or unsuccessful, which lowers their self-esteem. This diminished self-regard mediates the relationship between joblessness and both psychological and social well-being. Jahoda's framework acknowledges the importance of perceived status and self-value, making self-esteem a natural psychological bridge between unemployment and its broader impacts. Furthermore, Family Support can be interpreted within this theory as a crucial external resource that may buffer the effects of latent deprivation. While Jahoda did not explicitly incorporate moderating variables, her framework aligns with later interpretations that suggest supportive social environments like a nurturing family can partially offset the psychological toll of unemployment. Family support helps maintain a sense of identity, offers emotional security, and reinforces purpose during a period when employment no longer serves those functions. Thus, Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory provides a unified theoretical lens that logically supports all the major constructs of your study. It explains how prolonged unemployment leads to deteriorating psychological and social conditions, how self-esteem mediates this process, and how family support can moderate the effects, making it an ideal and comprehensive theory for your research.

### **Methodology and Scale Measurements**

#### **Research Methodology**

The current research study employs a quantitative research design to examine the psychological and social effects of prolonged unemployment among educated youth, focusing on the mediating role of self-esteem and the moderating role of family support.

#### **Research Design**

The study adopts a correlational and cross-sectional survey design, aiming to explore and measure the relationships among the key variables: Prolonged Unemployment, Self-Esteem, Family Support, Psychological Health, and Social Effects on Youth. This design enables the investigation of both direct and indirect relationships (through mediation and moderation) at a single point in time.

#### **Population and Sample**

The target population comprises educated unemployed youth in Pakistan, specifically individuals who hold at least a bachelor's degree and have remained unemployed for a period exceeding six months. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify respondents who meet these criteria. The total sample size consists of 242 participants, which is

considered sufficient for the application of statistical techniques such as regression, mediation, and moderation analysis.

#### **Data Collection Method**

Data were collected through structured, self-administered questionnaires distributed both online and in-person. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and asked to give informed consent. The questionnaire included validated scales for all key variables.

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

- Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software.
- Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize demographic and study variables.
- Pearson correlation to examine bivariate relationships among the variables of the study.
- Regression analysis to test direct effects of prolonged unemployment on psychological and social outcomes.
- Mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro (Model 4) to test the mediating role of self-esteem.
- Moderation analysis using PROCESS Macro (Model 1) to examine whether family support moderates the relationship between unemployment and self-esteem.
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) to ensure the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

#### **Measurement Scales**

Prolonged Unemployment measured using a self-developed item on duration (in months) and perceptions of job search difficulty. McKee-Ryan, F. M., Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., & Kinicki, A. J. (2005). *Psychological and physical well-being during unemployment: A meta-analytic study*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(1), 53–76.

Self-Esteem: Assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.

Family Support: Measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) family subscale. Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30–41.

Psychological Health: Measured using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21). Henry, J. D., & Crawford, J. R. (2005). *The short-form version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21): Construct validity and normative data in a large non-clinical sample*. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 44(2), 227–239.

Social Effects: Evaluated through a structured subscale focusing on isolation, social withdrawal, and perceived societal rejection. Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). *Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74(3), 264–282.

#### **Data Analysis and Result**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) along with the Pearson correlation coefficients among the key study variables. The average age of participants was 24.6 years (SD = 3.4), and the mean value for prolonged unemployment was 11.9 months (SD = 6.1), indicating that participants have experienced a substantial duration of joblessness. Notably, prolonged unemployment showed a significant positive correlation with psychological health problems ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and adverse social effects ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that extended periods of unemployment are strongly associated with deteriorating mental health and increased social strain. Furthermore, prolonged unemployment was negatively associated with self-esteem ( $r = -0.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and family support ( $r = -0.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), implying that longer unemployment may diminish individuals' self-worth and perceived familial backing. Self-esteem demonstrated a strong negative

correlation with psychological health issues ( $r = -0.56$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and social effects ( $r = -0.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ), highlighting its protective role against psychological and social challenges. Additionally, family support was positively correlated with self-esteem ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that individuals with stronger family support tend to have higher self-esteem. Age was significantly positively correlated with psychological health problems ( $r = 0.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and social effects ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that older participants may face greater psychological and social difficulties during unemployment. Education level (qualification) showed a modest but significant positive association with family support ( $r = 0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that higher education may be linked with better familial relations. Overall, the correlations reflect a complex interplay between unemployment, mental health, social well-being, and support systems, emphasizing the multifaceted impact of prolonged joblessness on young adults.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	24.6	3.4						
2. Gender	1.52	0.5	0.08					
3. Qualification	3.21	0.87	0.15*	-0.04				
4. Prolonged Unemployment	11.9	6.1	0.19*	0.07	0.09			
5. Self-Esteem	20.8	4.5	-0.13	-0.06	0.12	-0.49**		
6. Psychological Health	26.5	6.3	0.23*	0.02	-0.07	0.52**	-0.56**	
7. Social Effects	18.7	5.4	0.21*	0.01	-0.05	0.47**	-0.44**	0.61**
8. Family Support	21.3	4.1	-0.1	-0.05	0.14*	-0.39**	0.48**	

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and validity analysis for the study variables, confirming the robustness and consistency of the measurement scales used. Items in every construct show strong factor loadings, with numbers ranging from 0.74 to 0.87, proving they fit closely with their constructs. All of the variables Passing Time, Self-Worth, Personal Well-Being, Societal Results and Support System demonstrated high internal consistency because their composite reliability (CR) was 0.88, 0.91, 0.92, 0.89 and 0.90, all above the suggested threshold of 0.70. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values range from 0.87 to 0.91 across all scales, further affirming the high reliability of the items in capturing each construct consistently. Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables are above 0.60, confirming convergent validity by indicating that a substantial portion of the variance is captured by the constructs rather than measurement error. Specifically, AVE scores such as 0.68 for Psychological Health and 0.66 for Family Support highlight that these constructs are well-measured and conceptually sound. Collectively, these results provide strong evidence that the measurement model employed in the study is both reliable and valid, ensuring the credibility of the subsequent structural analysis and empirical findings.

**Table 2. Reliability and Validity Analysis**

Variable	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)



<b>Prolonged Unemployment</b>	PU1–PU4	0.76–0.84	0.88	0.87	0.62
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	SE1–SE10	0.77–0.86	0.91	0.9	0.65
<b>Psychological Health</b>	PH1–PH7	0.79–0.87	0.92	0.91	0.68
<b>Social Effects</b>	SOE1–SOE5	0.74–0.83	0.89	0.88	0.64
<b>Family Support</b>	FS1–FS4	0.78–0.86	0.9	0.89	0.66

Table 3 illustrates the model fit indices for the structural equation model, indicating an excellent overall fit between the proposed model and the observed data. The chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 198.67$ ) is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting that there is no substantial difference between the model and the sample data an ideal outcome in model fit assessment. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.035, well below the recommended threshold of 0.06, indicating a close and acceptable approximation of the model in the population. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.974 and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.969 both exceed the stringent criterion of 0.95, reflecting an outstanding fit and confirming the model's adequacy in explaining the covariance structure of the data. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.032, being significantly below the cutoff of 0.08, further supports the model's precision in replicating the observed relationships. Collectively, these fit indices provide strong evidence that the structural model is statistically sound, theoretically meaningful, and empirically well-supported.

**Table 3. Model Fit Indices**

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
<b>Chi-square (<math>\chi^2</math>)</b>	198.67	$p > 0.05$
<b>RMSEA</b>	0.035	$< 0.06$
<b>CFI</b>	0.974	$> 0.95$
<b>TLI</b>	0.969	$> 0.95$
<b>SRMR</b>	0.032	$< 0.08$

Table 4 presents the results of the mediation analysis conducted using bootstrapping to examine the indirect effect of self-esteem in the relationship between prolonged unemployment and the combined outcome of psychological health and social effects. The direct effect of prolonged unemployment on psychological health and social effects is significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 7$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval of  $[-0.54, -0.30]$ , indicating that longer periods of unemployment are associated with significantly poorer psychological and social outcomes. Additionally, prolonged unemployment significantly predicts lower self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.45$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t = 6.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that extended joblessness has a detrimental impact on individuals' self-worth. Importantly, the indirect effect of prolonged unemployment on psychological health and social effects via self-esteem is also significant ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with the bootstrapped confidence interval  $[-0.37, -0.15]$  not containing zero. This confirms the mediating role of self-esteem, suggesting that a substantial part of the adverse impact of unemployment on mental and social well-being is explained by its erosion of self-esteem. The total effect of prolonged unemployment on psychological and social outcomes ( $\beta = -0.68$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t = 8.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $CI = [-0.83, -0.53]$ ) reinforces the strong negative influence of unemployment on overall well-being. Collectively, these findings highlight that self-esteem is a significant psychological mechanism through which prolonged unemployment exacerbates mental health issues and social difficulties, underscoring the need for interventions that bolster self-esteem among the unemployed.

**Table 4. Mediation Analysis through Bootstrapping**

Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p-value	Bootstrapped 95% CI
<b>Direct Effects</b>					
Prolonged Unemployment → Psychological Health and Social Effects	-0.42	0.06	7	<0.001	[-0.54, -0.30]
Prolonged Unemployment → Self-Esteem	-0.45	0.07	6.43	<0.001	[-0.59, -0.31]
<b>Indirect Effects via Self-Esteem</b>					
Prolonged Unemployment → Self-Esteem → Psychological Health and Social Effects	-0.26	0.05		<0.001	[-0.37, -0.15]
<b>Total Effects</b>					
Prolonged Unemployment → Psychological Health and Social Effects	-0.68	0.08	8.5	<0.001	[-0.83, -0.53]

Table 5 illustrates the moderation analysis results, examining whether family support buffers the negative impact of prolonged unemployment on psychological health and social effects. The main effect of prolonged unemployment is significantly negative ( $\beta = -0.48$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 4.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that extended unemployment strongly worsens psychological and social well-being. Conversely, self-esteem shows a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that higher self-esteem is associated with better psychological and social outcomes. Crucially, the interaction term between prolonged unemployment and family support ( $PU \times FS$ ) is significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t = 3.14$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), with a bootstrapped 95% confidence interval of [0.08, 0.36], indicating a moderating effect. This means that the detrimental effect of unemployment on psychological health and social functioning is less severe when family support is high. The conditional effects further highlight this buffering role of family support. When family support is low, the negative impact of prolonged unemployment is strongest ( $\beta = -0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the effect weakens at medium levels of support ( $\beta = -0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and is least severe when family support is high ( $\beta = -0.32$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). These findings underscore the protective function of family support, which significantly mitigates the adverse psychological and social consequences of prolonged unemployment. This suggests that strengthening familial bonds and support systems could serve as a vital coping mechanism for unemployed individuals, enhancing their resilience and mental well-being during periods of economic hardship.

**Table 5. Moderation Analysis through Bootstrapping**

Path	Coefficient	SE	T	p-value	Bootstrapped 95% CI
<b>Main Effects</b>					
Prolonged Unemployment (PU)	-0.48	0.1	4.8	<0.001	[-0.68, -0.28]
Self-Esteem (SE)	0.36	0.09	4	<0.001	[0.18, 0.54]
<b>Interaction Effect (PU × Family Support)</b>					
PU × Family Support (FS)	0.22	0.07	3.14	0.002	[0.08, 0.36]
<b>Conditional Effects of Prolonged Unemployment on Psychological Health &amp; Social Effects at Values of Family Support</b>					

<b>Family Support (Low)</b>	−0.58	0.1 1	5.2 7	<0.001	[−0.80, − 0.36]
<b>Family Support (Medium)</b>	−0.48	0.1	4.8	<0.001	[−0.68, − 0.28]
<b>Family Support (High)</b>	−0.32	0.1 2	2.6 7	0.008	[−0.56, − 0.08]

### Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the psychological and social consequences of prolonged unemployment among educated youth in Pakistan, and to explore the mediating role of self-esteem and the moderating effect of family support. The results align with the theoretical framework of Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory, confirming that unemployment not only deprives individuals of financial resources but also of non-monetary benefits such as status, routine, and social connectedness. The findings provide empirical evidence that prolonged unemployment significantly impairs the mental well-being and social engagement of educated young adults. Specifically, hypothesis one (H1), which posited that prolonged unemployment negatively affects psychological health and social outcomes, was strongly supported. The correlation analysis showed a robust positive relationship between the duration of unemployment and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Prolonged unemployment was also directly linked with a deterioration in psychological and social functioning ( $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings are consistent with existing literature reported similar mental health declines among unemployed individuals that prolonged joblessness leads to social withdrawal and reduced community involvement among youth (Bartelink et al., 2020).

In addressing hypothesis two (H2), which proposed that self-esteem mediates the relationship between prolonged unemployment and psychological/social effects, the results provide strong support. The mediation analysis revealed that prolonged unemployment significantly lowers self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.45$ ), and this reduced self-worth partially explains the negative psychological and social outcomes (indirect effect  $\beta = -0.26$ ). This suggests that the mental and social toll of unemployment is not merely due to the lack of income or routine, but also due to a damaged self-concept and perceived failure. These findings resonate with the study which state that self-esteem is a key mechanism linking unemployment to anxiety and depression (Peláez-Fernández et al., 2021). Moreover, this study addresses a significant gap in the literature by demonstrating the mediating role of self-esteem specifically in the context of educated youth in a rural Pakistani district an area that has received limited scholarly attention. The loss of self-worth among unemployed graduates who invested years in education but see no return in terms of employment likely intensifies feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and social inadequacy.

The moderating effect of family support, proposed in hypothesis three (H3), was also confirmed. The results indicate that strong family support significantly reduces the negative psychological and social impact of prolonged unemployment. The interaction between unemployment and family support ( $PU \times FS$ ) was significant ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), with the buffering effect becoming more prominent at higher levels of familial support. Conditional effects analysis further showed that at low levels of family support, the negative impact of unemployment was most severe ( $\beta = -0.58$ ), whereas at high levels of support, the effect was notably weaker ( $\beta = -0.32$ ). These findings are in line with a study which emphasized that strong familial ties can help youth maintain emotional stability during economic distress (Lee et al., 2024). Since families are central in Pakistan, their support in emotional, moral and sometimes financial ways can provide a source of protection against depression caused by being jobless.

The research found solutions for multiple unanswered questions. First of all, the findings come from a rural part of Pakistan, where many young people are unemployed and not much

research exists. Prior studies have mainly considered how cities and not rural regions are affected and even then, do not look at educated youth's challenges in Pakistan. Additionally, the study shows an approach including both the immediate effects of unemployment and the factors of self-esteem and family support that add to our knowledge of the psychological changes. This way of thinking is rarely found in current research. Next, the study uses reliable tools and approaches called structural equation modeling which makes the results trustworthy.

The unemployment can cause people to become emotionally distressed and detached from their communities. In addition, the study looks at how rural Pakistani society deals with such issues in a culturally specific way (Tufail & Hussain, 2023). For example, earlier research talked about the impact of social support, but this study points out that family support is especially important and useful in Pakistan. Additionally, the results show that self-esteem is vital for well-being and it depends a lot on someone's accomplishments in society and their work (Jiang, 2024). Those who are well educated but unemployed may start to feel bad about themselves which leads to emotional problems and makes them less likely to interact with others.

It was confirmed in this study that spending a long period without work can be very damaging to the minds and social lives of educated youth in rural zones. Well-being suffers from unemployment mainly because of low self-esteem, yet family support helps to shield oneself from these effects. This research affects our thinking and can be used in the real world. According to the study, Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory is confirmed and, in addition, modern concepts like self-esteem and social support are included to provide a more focused explanation. In short, the study proposes that interventions should address job creation as well as carry out counseling, enhancing self-esteem and improving family support systems. Support services that take into account the feelings and culture of rural youth are good for their well-being and social connections.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed to understand the psychological and social outcomes suffered by educated young people who have experienced long-term unemployment in the in Pakistan. Based on quantitative research and Latent Deprivation Theory from Jahoda, the research explored how self-esteem impacted things, while family support acted as a moderator in the process. It was shown through these findings that suffering from unemployment over a long period of time greatly affects people's mental and social health. The impact of these problems is higher for well-educated youth whose dreams are shattered and sense of purpose fades away when they see their qualifications do not get them good jobs. According to the research, self-esteem acts as a mediator between prolonged unemployment and bad psychological and social consequences. When unemployment persists, self-esteem tends to decline, which in turn exacerbates mental health issues and impairs social functioning. This relationship highlights the importance of addressing internal perceptions of self-worth in interventions aimed at supporting the unemployed. The study established that family support plays a critical moderating role. Youths with strong family support systems experienced less severe psychological and social damage, indicating that emotional and moral support from close relationships can buffer the distress caused by economic hardship. This research contributes to the academic literature by addressing notable gaps. Unlike many previous studies that have focused on urban populations or economic consequences alone, this study provides empirical insights specific to the psychological and social dynamics of unemployment in a rural Pakistani setting. It introduces a comprehensive analytical model that integrates both individual-level psychological processes (self-esteem) and contextual protective factors (family support), offering a nuanced understanding of how various forces interact to shape the experience of joblessness. The study underscores the urgent need for multi-level interventions. Policymakers must not only focus on creating employment opportunities but

also develop mental health programs, family counseling, and community-based support networks to protect the well-being of unemployed youth. Strengthening individual resilience and reinforcing social support systems will be essential in mitigating the harmful impacts of prolonged unemployment. By addressing both the internal and external dimensions of this crisis, it is possible to foster healthier, more empowered, and socially connected youth populations, even in economically constrained environments.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study makes a valuable contribution to the theoretical understanding of youth unemployment by reinforcing and extending Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory within a rural, culturally specific context. The research confirms that the loss of employment deprives individuals not only of financial income but also of latent psychological functions such as social contact, status, and time structure. These deprivations lead to increased psychological distress and social withdrawal, particularly among educated youth whose expectations of career success are unmet. The study introduces self-esteem as a mediating variable, offering a psychological explanation for how unemployment transforms into psychological and social harm. This advances existing theory by linking structural unemployment with individual-level internal processes. The role of family support as a moderator also expands the theory by highlighting the importance of contextual and cultural variables that can buffer negative outcomes. This integrated framework combining macro (unemployment), meso (family support), and micro (self-esteem) levels offers a more holistic theoretical lens to explain youth vulnerability in the face of joblessness. By applying these constructs to a rural Pakistani setting, the research contributes to the cross-cultural validation of Western psychological theories, demonstrating that these dynamics are relevant and observable in non-Western, collectivist societies as well. It opens the door for future theoretical models to more explicitly account for cultural, familial, and regional dimensions of unemployment and mental health.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of this study carry several practical implications for policymakers, social workers, mental health professionals, and educators.

1. Prolonged unemployment severely affects psychological health. There is an urgent need for accessible and affordable mental health services in rural regions. Community-based mental health programs that focus on building resilience and managing anxiety and depression can be crucial for unemployed youth.
2. Since self-esteem mediates the psychological effects of unemployment, interventions such as workshops on personal development, skill enhancement, and career counseling can help restore confidence and reduce mental distress among jobless graduates.
3. Families play a significant role in either alleviating or worsening the psychological impact of unemployment. Counseling programs for parents and siblings can equip them with the tools to provide effective emotional support and reduce unrealistic expectations.
4. It points out the main problems that educated youth face in rural areas. Developing programs that relate to the economy in the region, offering computer skills, job programs or remote job opportunities, helps tackle issues in work and state of mind.
5. The government and NGOs should set up programs that offer job services, psychological counseling and help based on families. This approach would do more to counteract all the issues related to unemployment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite its valuable insights, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

1. The research employed a cross-sectional survey design, which captures data at a single point in time. This limits the ability to draw causal inferences or observe changes in psychological and social effects over time. Longitudinal studies would

provide a more dynamic understanding of how unemployment impacts individuals across different stages.

2. The study was limited to Pakistan. While this focus offers in-depth insight into a specific context, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions, especially urban areas or provinces with differing socioeconomic conditions.
3. All variables were measured through self-report questionnaires, which are subject to social desirability bias and may not fully capture the respondents' internal psychological states. Respondents might have underreported or exaggerated their experiences due to stigma or personal expectations.
4. While the study explored self-esteem and family support, other potentially influential factors such as peer influence, social media exposure, coping strategies, or governmental support were not considered. This limits the scope of interpretation.
5. The sample was relatively moderate (n=242) and may not have included diverse subgroups (e.g., gender, education level, family income). A larger and more varied sample would enhance the robustness of the results.

### **Suggestions**

Based on these limitations, several suggestions are recommended.

1. **Adopt Longitudinal Designs:** Future researchers should consider longitudinal methodologies to track the psychological and social trajectories of unemployed youth over time. This would provide a better understanding of how the impact of unemployment evolves and whether interventions are effective.
2. **Broaden the Geographical Scope:** Replicating the study in other rural and urban areas across Pakistan will enhance the external validity of findings and help policymakers understand regional differences in unemployment's impact.
3. **Use Mixed Methods:** Combining quantitative data with qualitative interviews or focus groups would offer deeper insights into the lived experiences, emotional narratives, and coping strategies of unemployed youth.
4. **Include Additional Variables:** Future research should integrate other mediating and moderating variables such as financial stress, peer support, religiosity, and digital engagement to create a more comprehensive understanding of youth well-being.
5. **Expand Target Groups:** Future studies could focus on different demographic groups such as women, marginalized communities, or youth with vocational training rather than formal education to explore diverse experiences of unemployment.

### **Future Research Directions**

This study opens several avenues for future exploration.

1. **Gender-Based Comparative Studies:** Future research could examine how prolonged unemployment affects male and female youth differently, particularly in relation to societal expectations and family dynamics in Pakistan.
2. **Intervention-Based Studies:** Researchers should assess the effectiveness of psychological counseling, self-esteem training, and family-based support programs in reducing unemployment-related distress.
3. **Digital Skills and Employment Readiness:** Investigating how digital literacy, online freelancing, and remote job opportunities influence the psychological well-being of unemployed youth could provide actionable insights for policy design.
4. **Post-Pandemic Unemployment:** Given the evolving labor market due to COVID-19 and economic disruptions, future studies could explore how perceptions of job security and mental health are changing among graduates post-pandemic.
5. **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Comparative studies between rural youth in different countries or regions could reveal universal versus culture-specific impacts of prolonged unemployment.

## Reference

- Ahmed, O., Siddiqua, S. J. N., Alam, N., & Griffiths, M. D. (2021). The mediating role of problematic social media use in the relationship between social avoidance/distress and self-esteem. *Technology in Society*, 64, 101485.
- Asplund, S., Åhlin, J., Åström, S., & Lindgren, B.-M. (2022). Experiences of work-related stress among highly stressed municipal employees in rural northern Sweden. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 17(1), 2056957.
- Banks, M. H., & Ullah, P. (2024). *Youth unemployment in the 1980s: Its psychological effects*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bartelink, V. H., Zay Ya, K., Guldbrandsson, K., & Bremberg, S. (2020). Unemployment among young people and mental health: A systematic review. *Scandinavian journal of public health*, 48(5), 544-558.
- Cieslik, K., Barford, A., & Vira, B. (2022). Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Sub-Saharan Africa: Sustainable development target 8.6 missed and reset. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25(8), 1126-1147.
- Engbersen, G. (2019). *Cultures of unemployment: A comparative look at long-term unemployment and urban poverty*. Routledge.
- Faroa, B. D., & Mwaba, K. (2023). Self-Reported Intra-Personal Causal Factors of Anti-Social Offending Behaviour Among a Group of South African Emerging Adults. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, 36(1), 56-92.
- Filosa, L., Alessandri, G., Robins, R. W., & Pastorelli, C. (2022). Self-esteem development during the transition to work: A 14-year longitudinal study from adolescence to young adulthood. *Journal of personality*, 90(6), 1039-1056.
- Godinić, D., & Obrenovic, B. (2020). Effects of economic uncertainty on mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic context: social identity disturbance, job uncertainty and psychological well-being model.
- Jahoda, M. (1982). Employment and unemployment. *Cambridge books*.
- Jiang, J. (2024). Impact of music learning on students' psychological development with mediating role of self-efficacy and self-esteem. *PloS one*, 19(9), e0309601.
- Lawes, M., Hetschko, C., Schöb, R., Stephan, G., & Eid, M. (2023). The impact of unemployment on cognitive, affective, and eudaimonic well-being facets: Investigating immediate effects and short-term adaptation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 124(3), 659.
- Lee, J., Neppl, T. K., Russell, D. W., & Lohman, B. J. (2024). The role of resilience in the impact of family economic adversity on youth emotional distress over time. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53(2), 374-385.
- Li, Z.-H., Wang, J., Cheng, X., Mao, Y.-C., Zhang, K.-D., Yu, W.-J., Li, Y.-Q., Huang, K., Ding, K., & Yang, X.-J. (2023). The role of self-esteem in the relationship between psychological capital and anxiety of left-behind experience college students during COVID-19 pandemic: an online study. *Psychology research and behavior management*, 727-737.
- Maitoza, R. (2019). Family challenges created by unemployment. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 22(2), 187-205.
- Mayer, D., & Holleder, A. (2022). What helps the unemployed to stay healthy? A qualitative study of coping with the negative effects of job loss. *Journal of Public Health Research*, 11(1), jphr. 2021.2492.
- Mokona, H., Yohannes, K., & Ayano, G. (2020). Youth unemployment and mental health: prevalence and associated factors of depression among unemployed young adults in Gedeo zone, Southern Ethiopia. *International journal of mental health systems*, 14, 1-11.
- Mule, P. D. M. (2018). *Relationship between Harmful Alcohol Use and Low Self-esteem among Emerging Adults Employees in Kathonzwi Location, Makueni County Tangaza University College*.

- Noor, R., Sultan, S., & Salman, R. (2024). Psychological health of unemployed young jobseekers: Roles of financial hardship, economic threat, and parental pressure. *Bulletin of Business and Economics (BBE)*, 13(2), 595-598.
- Oxenham, J. (2024). *Education versus qualifications?: A study of relationships between education, selection for employment and the productivity of labour*. Taylor & Francis.
- Peláez-Fernández, M. A., Rey, L., & Extremera, N. (2021). A sequential path model testing: Emotional intelligence, resilient coping and self-esteem as predictors of depressive symptoms during unemployment. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(2), 697.
- Pimienta, A. O. (2023). Healthy Self Esteem and Mental Health. *Asian Social Science*, 19(3), 1-45.
- Shah, R., Jafeer, Q.-U.-A., Saeed, S., Aslam, S., & Ali, I. (2020). Unemployment and social stigma: naming, blaming and shaming of educated youth in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 40(7/8), 543-558.
- Triana, R., Keliat, B. A., & Sulistiowati, N. M. D. (2019). The relationship between self-esteem, family relationships and social support as the protective factors and adolescent mental health. *Humanities & social sciences reviews*, 7(1), 41-47.
- Tufail, M., & Hussain, M. (2023). SOWING SEEDS OF RESILIENCE: CULTURAL TRANSITIONS, ECONOMIC STRAINS, AND FEARFUL REALITIES: A DEEP DIVE INTO PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AMONG RURAL WOMEN. *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT*, 2(2), 286-296.
- Wang, H., Wang, X., Geng, J., Zeng, P., Gu, X., & Lei, L. (2021). Does peer alienation accelerate cyber deviant behaviors of adolescents? The mediating role of core self-evaluation and the moderating role of parent-child relationship and gender. *Current Psychology*, 1-14.
- Yang, Y., Niu, L., Amin, S., & Yasin, I. (2024). Unemployment and mental health: a global study of unemployment's influence on diverse mental disorders. *Frontiers in public health*, 12, 1440403.
- Zahid, F., Durrani, K., Shah, S., Ahmed, S., & Muhammad, B. (2023). Youth Unemployment and Social Stability: Investigating the Linkages and Possible Solutions in the Context of Pakistan. *Bulletin of Business and Economics (BBE)*, 12(4), 477-484.
- Zechmann, A., & Paul, K. I. (2019). Why do individuals suffer during unemployment? Analyzing the role of deprived psychological needs in a six-wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 24(6), 641.
- Zhang, H., Tang, L., Ye, Z., Zou, P., Shao, J., Wu, M., Zhang, Q., Qiao, G., & Mu, S. (2020). The role of social support and emotional exhaustion in the association between work-family conflict and anxiety symptoms among female medical staff: a moderated mediation model. *BMC psychiatry*, 20, 1-9.
- Zhou, W. (2023). *Improving well-being, academic achievement, and social emotional skills in Chinese adolescents: from latent profile analysis and intervention evaluation*