

The Impact of the Unemployment Grant on Professional Identity Confusion and the Growth of Work Reluctance among Algerian Youth (A Field Study on a Sample of Youth in Djelfa Province)

Naouri Eloued¹, Tarek Touati², Zahra chouchane³, Asma Khiri⁴, Mustapha Khaldi⁵

¹Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Khemis Miliana Algeria. Email: n.elouid@univ-dbk.m.dz

²University of bouira, .laboratory of individual family and society –a psychological, social approach/ faculty of social sciences and humanities/10000. Algeria. Email: t.touati@univ-bouira.dz

³University of bouira. faculty of social sciences and humanities/10000. Algeria. Email: z.chouchane@univ-bouira.dz

⁴University of bouira .faculty of social sciences and humanities/10000. Algeria. Email: a.khiri@univ-bouira.dz

⁵Laboratory of Individual, Family, and Society-a Psychological, Social Approach, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Bouira, 10000, Algeria. Email: mustapha.khaldi@univ-bouira.dz

Received: 02/06/2025 ; Accepted: 11/09/2025 ; Published: 26/09/2025

Abstract

This field study, conducted on a representative sample of 150 young beneficiaries of the *unemployment grant* established by the Algerian government to promote professional integration, create employment opportunities, and reduce the specter of unemployment, aimed to analyze the socio-psychological repercussions of this social policy on youth professional identity. The findings revealed that the grant contributes to *professional identity confusion* and an increase in *work reluctance*. The study emphasized the importance of expanding future research by diversifying methodologies, dimensions, and indicators to enable the social and human sciences to provide solutions to pressing social issues. It concluded with a set of recommendations to mitigate the effects of the unemployment grant on youth professional identity, with the aim of consolidating regulatory reforms and addressing potential imbalances resulting from financial aid policies intended to support youth employment.

Keywords: Unemployment grant – Work reluctance – Professional identity – Professional confusion.

Introduction

Algeria has sought to give special attention to youth, a vital group that represents the cornerstone of society. In recent years, the state introduced the *unemployment grant* as a social mechanism to support unemployed youth, including university graduates, institute alumni, and individuals at different educational levels. This initiative emerged in the context of rising unemployment and declining job opportunities. Despite the humanitarian and social dimensions of this grant, it has also produced *social, psychological, and socio-professional implications* for youth. Recently, indicators have surfaced pointing to *professional identity confusion* and increasing disengagement from the labor market. This study therefore addresses the phenomenon from a socio-psychological perspective, examining the deeper dimensions and indicators of the unemployment grant's impact on professional identity. The study aims to explore the following central problem:

I. Problem Statement:

<http://jier.org>

The unemployment grant in Algeria has created a dilemma between *social protection* and *economic motivation*. While the grant seeks to shield young people from poverty and exclusion, it may also foster dependency, social withdrawal, and disengagement from the labor market, particularly in the absence of adequate social, psychological, and professional support. Field observations by the researchers revealed that a significant number of youth beneficiaries show little enthusiasm for engaging in vocational training or self-employment initiatives. This situation raises critical questions regarding the long-term impact of such policies, prompting the following research questions:

- Is the unemployment grant a mechanism of social protection, or does it act as an obstacle to the professional development of Algerian youth?
- To what extent has the grant weakened motivation to work, and has it contributed to professional identity confusion, dependency, and work reluctance?

To address these issues, the following hypotheses were formulated:

II. Research Hypotheses

- There is a significant positive correlation between benefiting from the unemployment grant and the increase in work reluctance.
- The unemployment grant affects youth perceptions of their professional identity and reduces their willingness to pursue permanent employment.
- The effects of the grant on professional identity confusion vary according to gender, educational level, and social environment.

III. Study Concepts

1. Professional Identity:

Professional identity emerges from the individual's relationship with work, becoming a key dimension of personal identity. It represents a means of contributing to society's development, a foundation for social relations, a source of self-realization, and a factor in personal balance (Keltoum Touba, 1999, p.196). Work is considered a "spiritual activity through which the mind reflects external realities to understand the self" (Bruno Flacher, 2008, p.202). The notion has been widely discussed in sociology, notably in Claude Dubar's *Constructing Identities* and Philippe d'Iribarne's work on the logic of honor in professional contexts. Operationally, professional identity is defined in this study as the individual's self-concept in relation to work, shaped by experiences, professional realities, and societal values that either enhance or diminish it.

2. Unemployment Grant:

Work is closely linked to a set of social and economic concepts, most notably **unemployment**, which has become one of the most pressing issues today. Unemployment can be attributed to several factors, including labor market saturation or government policies aimed at regulating and controlling the market. It is important to note that unemployment does not affect only the unqualified workforce but also impacts skilled and capable individuals who are willing to work. According to **Nasser Qasimi (2011, p. 25)**, unemployment is defined as "*the condition of a person who is willing and able to work, has declared their willingness to work, but has not found employment.*" Similarly, **Ahmed Shafiq Al-Kadi (2000, p. 545)** defines it as "*the absence of engagement in any mental or physical work or any productive activity, regardless of the reasons—whether personal, voluntary, or involuntary.*"

In this context, the **unemployment grant** can be viewed as a financial allowance that falls within the framework of social assistance provided by the Algerian state to young people between the ages of 19 and 40. Beneficiaries must be registered with employment agencies, actively seeking work, and not employed or engaged in any profit-making or commercial

activity of any kind. Moreover, recipients are often required to undergo vocational training designed to facilitate their integration into the labor market.

3. Work Reluctance:

Work is a vital human necessity, both for material survival and for social belonging. Alain Touraine (1997, p.25) emphasized that “work is a vital necessity for human beings, a means of fulfilling needs, and an ethical and social obligation, without which one is excluded from society.” Work reluctance refers to the withdrawal from, or lack of interest in, seeking employment. From a sociological perspective, it may not only reflect a lack of opportunities but also shifts in social values and representations of work. For some youth, the unemployment grant creates a false sense of security, leading to delayed or selective entry into the labor market. This phenomenon is reinforced by various factors such as loss of hope in decent job opportunities, lack of trust in public policies, societal devaluation of certain professions, and unfavorable comparisons with peers abroad. Thus, operationally, work reluctance is defined here as the decline in motivation to seek or engage in employment, rooted in both social and psychological factors.

4. Professional Confusion:

Individuals seek to build their identity as active members of society through professional roles. However, declining job security has led to what is termed *employment precariousness* (la précarité de travail), characterized by unstable contracts and insufficient guarantees (Adrian Smith, 2010, p.9). This instability fosters a state of *professional confusion*, where individuals experience psychological and social imbalance, exclusion, and uncertainty regarding career trajectories. Operationally, in this study, professional confusion is defined as a psychosocial state marked by instability, insecurity, and difficulty in maintaining a coherent professional identity in the face of precarious labor market conditions.

IV. Importance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its focus on one of the *indirect social consequences* of public policies, specifically those aimed at reducing unemployment through financial support. It addresses their impact on youth personality development and future professional trajectories. By doing so, it provides a deeper understanding for stakeholders of the outcomes of such mechanisms, through the combined sociological and psychological analysis of the phenomenon.

V. Objectives of the Study

- To identify Algerian youths' perceptions of the unemployment grant.
- To analyze the relationship between receiving the unemployment grant and professional identity confusion.
- To uncover indicators of work reluctance among beneficiaries of this grant.
- To provide recommendations for promoting a culture of work among youth.

VI. Methodological Procedures

- **Research Method:** The study relied on the descriptive-analytical method.
- **Population:** Youth aged 19–39, as this age group is eligible for the unemployment grant.
- **Sample:** A simple random sample of 150 beneficiaries of the unemployment grant in Djelfa Province.
- **Instrument:** A questionnaire directed at youth.

- **Analytical Tools:** Statistical analysis using percentages, frequencies, T-test, and ANOVA.

VII. Previous Studies

- *Study 1:* Ben Issa, N. (2022, pp. 40–55) examined the impact of the unemployment grant on the psychological and social condition of youth in Algiers, recommending that the grant be tied to compulsory vocational training.
- *Study 2:* Qashi (2019, pp. 118–130) focused on the crisis of professional identity among university graduates, linking it to ineffective employment policies.
- *Study 3:* Bouthelja, K. (2021, pp. 84–98) explored the relationship between professional frustration and refusal to integrate into the labor market in southern provinces.
- *Study 4:* Massoud, S. (2023, pp. 25–40) highlighted that professional withdrawal is tied to a sense of “false sufficiency” resulting from government subsidies.

VIII. Field Methodology and Hypotheses Testing

1. Reliability Test:

Cronbach’s Alpha was initially $\alpha = 0.56$, indicating weak internal consistency. This necessitated revising and expanding the number of items per dimension (6–10 per scale). After adjustments, Cronbach’s Alpha improved to $\alpha = 0.88$, confirming the instrument’s reliability.

2. Testing Hypothesis 1:

There is a significant positive correlation between youth benefiting from the unemployment grant and increased work reluctance.

Table 1

Criterion	Value
Correlation coefficient	$r = 0.576$
Significance	$p < 0.001$

The results demonstrate a positive, statistically significant relationship, confirming Hypothesis 1. This suggests that reluctance to work, as explained by several sociological and psychological theories, does not solely mean unwillingness to work but also reflects non-acceptance of the professional reality and employment policies in place, as highlighted by respondents’ statements.

3. Testing Hypothesis 2:

The unemployment grant influences youth perceptions of their professional identity and weakens their willingness to seek permanent employment.

Table 2

Criterion	Value
Correlation coefficient	$r = 0.544$
Significance	$p < 0.001$
Negative correlation	$r = -0.388, p < 0.001$

Findings reveal a significant association between receiving the grant and heightened professional identity confusion, along with diminished motivation to pursue permanent

employment. Beneficiaries tend to postpone their professional projects, perceiving the grant as a source of psychological and material satisfaction. Social acceptance of this situation further legitimizes the delay in professional identity development.

4. Testing Hypothesis 3:

The effects of the unemployment grant on professional identity confusion differ according to gender, educational level, and social environment.

Table 3

Independent Variable	df	F	p	Conclusion
Gender	(1,148)	4.21	0.041	Significant difference in favor of males (higher identity confusion)
Educational level	(2,147)	5.37	0.009	Significant difference: Less-educated youth show greater confusion
Social environment	(2,147)	3.84	0.048	Significant difference: Youth from disadvantaged settings show greater confusion

These findings support Hypothesis 3. Gender-related differences reflect cultural expectations in Algerian society, where men are often seen as primary providers. Failure to fulfill this role may foster greater professional identity confusion. For less-educated youth, limited career alternatives make dependency on the grant more stable, reinforcing what Pierre Bourdieu terms the “habitus” of poverty, reproducing socio-economic stagnation. Social environment also plays a role: youth from marginalized areas with weak professional networks use the grant as compensatory support rather than a springboard into the labor market.

IX. General Findings and Recommendations

- Results confirm that receiving the unemployment grant is positively associated with increased work reluctance and professional identity confusion, while negatively affecting professional motivation.
- Reliance on the grant slows the development of professional identity among Algerian youth, leaving them unprepared to confront labor market challenges. As Claude Dubar’s *Crisis of Professional Identities* suggests, structural instability and declining permanent employment opportunities breed distrust in employment policies.
- Many youth perceive the costs of job-seeking (time, effort, uncertainty) as outweighing potential benefits, aligning with *Social Exchange Theory*, which posits that individuals seek to maximize rewards while minimizing costs. For some, the grant offers a more rational choice than precarious jobs.
- Social perceptions of work and unemployment, as explained by Max Weber’s *Social Action Theory*, shape youth decisions. If society values only certain jobs (e.g., public sector or high-paying positions), youth may reject other opportunities as socially devalued.

- Prolonged reliance on the grant fosters adaptation to non-employment as a socially acceptable state. This normalization may reinforce dependency, further reducing willingness to re-enter the labor market.

Study Recommendations:

- Link the unemployment allowance to actual professional accompaniment, training, and capacity-building programs. The allowance should be conditional on attending training sessions, engaging in professional internships, or completing fieldwork hours, in order to reduce dependency. This requires establishing individualized follow-up mechanisms for each beneficiary with clear career plans, meaning that the unemployment allowance must be tied to a genuine and ongoing professional integration program.
- Provide additional incentives and grants to beneficiaries who secure employment or enroll in training programs, such as a bonus upon signing a work contract, or support for youth who launch innovative projects or start-ups. This could be achieved by facilitating access to various forms of financial support from institutions such as ANSEJ and others, and by allocating part of the allowance as initial funding for entrepreneurial projects.
- Establish career guidance and counseling centers to provide psychological and social support for youth in achieving their professional projects and strengthening their professional identity. This should be complemented by intensifying training programs through universities, activating entrepreneurship centers, start-up incubators, and business hubs.
- Reinforce awareness campaigns via media outlets and civil society organizations to promote the value of work and volunteering. Such efforts would serve to provide psychological and social motivation for meaningful work and career achievement. For instance, social initiatives such as the “M’zab Community Professional Identity Project” support all social groups in building their career paths through policies that foster professional socialization and integration of youth into the labor market.
- Expand academic research in universities on issues related to youth employment and labor, in order to contribute to practical solutions and public policies that effectively serve young people and enhance their professional identity.

Conclusion of the Study:

This study, within the boundaries of its research community, variables, research problem, and hypotheses, concluded that the unemployment allowance may turn into a mechanism that hinders youth integration into the labor market if not coupled with effective and sustainable employment and professional incentive policies. Addressing the challenges of professional identity confusion and work disengagement therefore requires a comprehensive strategy that combines social support, training, and professional motivation. It also highlights the necessity of incorporating a set of recommendations for future research that delves deeper into this phenomenon, which significantly affects youth and their professional future. Such future studies should be broader, more comprehensive of research variables and populations, and interdisciplinary in nature to better address these critical issues.

References

1. Al-Kaddi, A. S. (2000). *Dictionary of social work and social services*. Dar Al-Ma'rifa Al-Jami'iyya, Cairo.
2. Ben Issa, N. (2022). Unemployment allowance and its social implications on youth. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(2).

3. Bouthelja, K. (2021). The phenomenon of youth disengagement from work: A field study in southern Algeria. *Journal of Sociological Studies*, 9(3).
4. Kashi, F. (2019). Professional identity among university youth in Algeria. *Algerian Journal of Sociology*, 12(1).
5. Massoud, S. (2023). Employment policies and unemployment allowance: An analytical critical view. *Journal of Social Policies*, 10(1).
6. Kassimi, N. (2011). *Glossary of sociology of organization and work* (n.ed.). University Publications Office, Algiers.
7. Smith, A. (2010, December). *Vulnerable workers and precarious work* (Background paper). Law Commission of Ontario, York University, Canada.
8. Touba, K. (1999). *Work in monotheistic cultures*. La Découverte, Paris.
9. Pillon, T. (1997). *Work in the history of Western thought* (3rd ed.). Octares Editions, Paris.