ABSTRACT

The right to work is a fundamental human right enshrined in the constitution. Each aspect of life depends on world of work to the extent that now to live is to work and to work is to live, has become a reality. But rise in unemployment poses acute problems for educated young people. An increasing mismatch between the size of the labour market and labour demand might have an impact on the perception of being employed. The quality of their experiences, prior to entering into employment market would have significant effect on their social behaviour. It was with this objective that the present study examined the different socio-psychological co-variates of perceptions and attributions of unemployment among graduates.

Some of the research questions were :- Do the graduates from different context of education, course type and gender have differential perceptions and attributions of unemployment ? Are there any differences in personal and social characteristics of graduates from different contexts, courses and gender ? Are there any significant relationships between perceptions and attributions of unemployment ? and Do attributions affect the students' perceptions of unemployment ? Which factor is chosen more frequently for explaining unemployment ? Are the various types of attributions of unemployment interrelated ? Do the personal and social variables differentially facilitate or reduce the access to certain categories of experience and relate to the perceptions and attributions of unemployment ? To
what extent the perceptions and attributions of unemployment are determined by personal and social variables?

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be significant main and interaction effects of context, course and gender on perceptions and attributions of unemployment.

2. There will be significant main and interaction effects of context, course and gender on alienation and locus of control.

3. There will be significant differences between metro and non-metro, professional and non-professional and male and female graduates in terms of personal and social characteristics.

4. Perceptions and attributions of unemployment will be significantly related, and perceptions of unemployment will be differentially predicted by using attributions of unemployment.

5. Socio-Psychological variables of age, alienation, locus of control, socio-economic status, caste, academic performance and job search will be significantly related to each other.

6. Perceptions and attributions of unemployment will be significantly related to socio-psychological variables of age, alienation, locus of control, socio-economic status, caste, academic performance, job search etc., and will be differentially predicted for various groups by using socio-psychological variables.

Data were obtained on the final year graduates selected from two contexts - metro (Delhi) and non-metro (Western Orissa); and two courses - Professional (Medical and Engineering) and non-Professional (Biology and Non-biology). The rationale for choosing final year
graduates was that they were close to the job market and had knowledge of the constraints. Adopting an expost factorial research design, a total of 640 students were selected - 320 from metro and 320 from non-metro. Out of 320 metro 160 were from professional courses and 160 from non-Professional courses. A similar procedure was followed for the non-metro. An equal number of males and females were selected in all courses.

Data were collected by using the questionnaire technique. In order to measure the perceptions and attributions of unemployment, scales were constructed. The scales to measure alienation and locus of control had been adapted from previous researchers. In addition to these, the information on demographic and personal characteristics were collected through a proforma in which all the possible options were precoded.

A pilot study was conducted on a small sample to test the reliability and factor structure of newly formulated scales and applicability of adopted scales. Minor alterations were made in the scales based on the findings of the pilot study. The questionnaires were administered individually. The data collected were scored, coded and factor analysed to find out the factorial dimensions of each scale. Later each factor of the major variables was treated as one variable.

Data were analysed by using the statistical techniques of t-test, analysis of variance, correlations and regression analysis. The important findings were as follows:

It was found that course had significant main effect on perceptions of unemployment indicating that professionals had
more positive perceptions of unemployment than the non-professionals. In otherwords, professionals feel relatively less threatened by unemployment situations, and, their subjective well-being is more positive compared to the non-professional graduates. Course also exerted significant effect on attributions of unemployment. Non professional graduates ascribe significantly greater importance to external and fatalistic factors than the professional graduates. On different factors of internal and external attributions they used ability, educational and economic factors more than the professional graduates.

The main effect of context was not significant on perceptions of unemployment; implying that the metro and non-metro graduates have similar experiences of unemployment and similar job prospects. The non-metro graduates attributed their unemployment both to external and internal factors more frequently than the metro graduates. Among the factors of attributions, effort, education and economic attributions are frequently used by the non-metro graduates.

The effect of gender on perceptions of unemployment revealed that males and females do not differ significantly, indicating similar consequences for their psychological functioning. In contrast, the females had higher tendency to make internal, external and fatalistic attributions than the males. Among the factors of external attributions they attach more importance to support factor than males.
The interaction effects of context, course and gender on perceptions and attributions of unemployment revealed that context and course significantly interact to influence the perceptions of unemployment, internal and fatalistic attributions. Context and gender have significant interaction effects on internal and fatalistic attributions, whereas course and gender have significant interaction effects on fatalistic attributions. Context, course and gender together influenced the external attributions of unemployment.

The context, course and gender have significant main as well as interaction effects on alienation. The non-metro, non-professional and female graduates felt more alienated than the metro, professional and male graduates. The professional and non-professional graduates in non-metro felt more alienated than their counterparts in metro areas. The males and females in the non-metro felt more alienated than their counterparts in metro areas. The males and females in the professional course felt more alienated than their counterparts in professional course. On dimensions of alienation, the non-metro, non-professional and female graduates had higher feeling of normlessness and powerlessness than the metro, professional and male graduates.

On locus of control only gender had significant main effect, showing higher externality among females than males. Neither the main effect of context nor interaction effects of context, course and gender on locus of control were significant.

The between group differences in personal and social characteristics revealed that the metro, professional and female
graduates come from higher socio-economic background than the metro, non-professional and male graduates. The non-metro graduates have higher job need and start job search earlier than metro graduates. On the other hand, metro graduates try for jobs more number of times and anticipate shorter waiting period. The professional graduates and older, have more extra experiences and anticipate shorter waiting period than the non-professional graduates. Males are more active in their job search and are older than the females.

The relationship between perceptions and attributions of unemployment showed that the perceptions are significantly related to external attributions of unemployment indicating that those who perceive no opportunities blamed external factors. External attributions of unemployment predicted to a great extent the perceptions of unemployment. Among the factors of external attributions, education emerged on important predictor of perceptions of unemployment. The internal and external attributions are positively related indicating that both factors can be responsible for the unemployment.

Among the socio-psychological variables, only alienation related significantly to perceptions of unemployment in various groups. It is seen that more alienated students perceive unemployment less positively. While perceptions of unemployment are positively related to the age of the metro, non-metro, male and female graduates these are related positively with academic performance for the non-metro and male graduates. The socio-economic status of the non-professional graduates facilitates
their career aspirations. While for males the perceptions of unemployment have positive relation with fathers' education, females perception of unemployment correlate with mothers' education.

The external locus of control as well as alienation are positively related to external and fatalistic attributions of unemployment. The age and external attributions are found negatively correlated for non-metro, non-professional and female graduates. Among the metro graduates those who have lower academic performance made more luck attributions.

The relationships among social and personal variables indicated that alienation and external locus of control are positively related. Those who anticipate longer waiting period feel more alienated. Socio-economic status and academic performance are positively related showing better academic performance among students of higher socio-economic background. The females and general caste students academically outperform males, and scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students respectively. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students are older and have low socio-economic status. The older metro, professional and male graduates come from low socio-economic background. The older non-metro, professional and non-professional graduates show lower academic performance.

The social factors have higher predictability for the perceptions of unemployment, while the personal factors have higher predictability for attributions. Course emerges as an important social predictor, and alienation a personal predictor
of perceptions of unemployment. Among the social factors context and course are important predictors of attributions. Among the personal factors, alienation and gender are important predictors of attributions of unemployment.

The following conclusions were drawn:

(1) The non-professional students are threatened more by unemployment situation than the professionals. But their negative experiences vary depending their socio-economic status. Those who come from higher socio-economic status have fewer negative experiences of unemployment.

(2) Being in metro or non-metro have little consequence for graduates' perceptions of unemployment. The severity of unemployment is equally experienced by metro and non-metro graduates. They use different strategies to cope with the unemployment situation. For the non-metro, academic performance acts as a facilitator of positive perceptions of employment prospects.

(3) The males and females have similar experiences of unemployment and employment has equal meaning for them. While mother's educational and occupational status influences females' career aspirations, father's educational and occupational status influences males' career aspirations. Females more than males perceived lack of social support as a cause of unemployment. They are also more fatalistic than males.

(4) Scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and general caste graduates have similar perceptions and attributions of unemployment. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe graduates are older and have
lower socio-economic status and academic performance than the
general caste graduates.

(5) Perceptions of unemployment are determined more by social
factors than personal factors whereas attributions of
unemployment are determined more by personal than social
factors. Alienation determined one's perception and attribution
of unemployment to a greater extent.

(6) The attributional bias, that success is attributed to
internal factors and failure to external factors' may not always
happen. One becomes a biased processor of attributions, when
attributions involve 'ego-evaluation'. One would not be so if
used as a naive judge, in an imaginary or a hypothetical
situation.

(7) The non-metro, non-professional and female graduates blamed
external factors more for unemployment and felt more alienated
than the metro, professional, and male graduates.

(8) Non metro graduates and males have higher job need and start
their job search earlier than the metro graduates and females.

(9) Socio-economic status has positive effect on academic
performance.

The significant implications were :-

Firstly, the motivational factors may not always operate
in the attribution process. As such, person may not necessarily
be a biased processor of causal information. So the basic
concept of attributional theory that attribution bias' is
fundamental may not always be true. Not only motivation and ego-
evaluation but also input to the inference process influences attribution process.

Secondly the deprivation theory stated that the unemployed have negative experiences because they are deprived of the experiences of employment. It is true for unemployed and also for the students who are yet to enter the labour market. A non-significant difference between metro and non-metro on perceptions of unemployment implies that differential labour market composition may not have always differential effects on the functioning of individuals. It interacts with other social and cognitive factors.

The ineffective link between education and employment frustrates and dampens the expectations of several students. In this regard the implementation of proposed vocational plan under National Policy on Education systematically seems unavoidable. The institutional training system which has been recently introduced in various universities and colleges in Southern part of India may be appreciated. Though, labour market requires skilled manpower, the lack of availability and accessibility of knowledge, salience and perceived applicability of information adversely affects the labour force. It is therefore, necessary that the efforts are made to assess the emerging needs of the Indian economy for educated persons on a fairly long term basis and the needed manpower of the requisite calibre produced. The educational programmes need to be updated from time to time.

The Employment policy should focus on opening of the job information centers in rural and small city areas and should
look into the functioning of present employment exchanges so that non metro/rural students would not be deprived of timely information about the job opportunity. When employment has similar meaning for males and females the gender based policies should be discouraged. A time bound 30% reservation in employment for females may be appreciated. Similarly, the SC, ST graduates seem to have psychologically attained the status of equality. They perceive the unemployment similar to general caste students. It seems that the policy relating to reservation of jobs for SC & ST has helped them.

From the career development point of view, it would be useful for the counsellors to understand the problems of different groups and to identify probable strategies and interventions that would facilitate positive behaviours. Interventions can be planned to teach job seeking skills to the youths. There is need of introducing counselling system/orientation programme for various students to provide career guidance. In this respect youth opportunity programmes can be useful in giving feedback exercises about their skills.

To mention a few limitations, the results of this study are sample specific. The subjects are final year graduates looking for job. The results, therefore may not be applicable to other groups like school children, post graduates and unemployed. The measure of experiences and explanation and their relationships with other variables are situation specific, associated with conditions of unemployment. It may be advantageous to obtain data from a longitudinal study. Since the
number of SCandST graduates was small the results relating to them are thus limited. The study is also limited to one metropolis and that too the capital. The present findings may be limited to professional and non-professional and constituting medical engineering and science graduates.

Future researches should observe graduates before being graduate and after leaving college and entering the labour market. The efficacy of the newly formulated scales should be further tested. The dynamics of the family environment educational system and context factors in relation to expectancy and career aspirations should be investigated. The study of attribution processes based on a hypothetical situation, which does not show attribution bias may be replicated using different sets of causes, different population and cognitive tasks. The theory of labour market should be examined in terms of types of experiences of individuals.