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Eliminating unemployment: Attracting skilled professionals and employing the workforce to achieve sustainable development

Nagham H. Neama[1], Fryal M. Edan[2*]
[1] Economics of investment and business management department, college of business economics, Al-Nahrain university, Baghdad, Iraq
[2] Economics of banking management department, college of business economics, Al-Nahrain University, Baghdad, Iraq

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***Corresponding author:**
Fryal M. Edan
Fryal@nahrainuniv.edu.iq

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Abstract:

This research analyzes an important topic, namely how to address the phenomenon of unemployment and reduce its prevalence by attracting qualified individuals and raising the level of employment of the national workforce to appropriate productivity levels.

Unemployment has begun to affect important sectors within the country due to its various repercussions, but addressing it cannot be done quickly; rather, it requires time and gradual measures. Iraq needs to create new job opportunities and attract qualified individuals and graduates from technical, engineering, medical, and other colleges, in order to stimulate the national economy as a whole.

Today's world is witnessing many significant negative social impacts, including family disintegration and rising crime rates. To achieve economic balance and improve the quality of human life, sustained efforts should be made to create a supportive environment through education, continuous training, healthcare, and social protection networks. These measures can contribute to promoting economic growth and productivity, as well as innovation and creativity. This includes adopting strategic policies for talent management, harnessing the potential of young people, developing competencies, and aligning employees' skills to create coordination and coherence with the organization's objectives, while also improving the organizational environment.

Keywords: Unemployment, labor force, Iraq, sustainable development.

Introduction:

Analyzing and interpreting the issue of unemployment is considered one of the most important topics, as it is linked to the ability to manage and utilize resources in a way that benefits the national economy as a whole. Countries with a low level of technology and knowledge utilization, or a limited service sector, suffer from high unemployment rates. This is because the economy is, Moreover, the economy may have moved away from the traditional industrial model, which relies on conventional factors of production, and shifted toward knowledge- and technology-based work within production processes.

Unemployment affects young people of all ages and leads to multiple consequences that extend beyond the forced idleness of a portion of the workforce and available resources in the country: these consequences include the social repercussions of this forced idleness. Furthermore, unemployment reveals the fragility or shortcomings of the educational system, highlighting its failure to respond to the needs of the labor market or to participate in shaping it. Instead, it appears as a superficial, non-interactive, and unproductive system.

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The issue of creating an economic model capable of sustainably employing the existing workforce in the country, meaning an economy capable of sustaining its economic opportunities, is an ambitious project that requires a broader approach, the government sector, in all cases, is a limited and largely unproductive sector, and the more it expands, the greater its detrimental impact on the country's resources becomes, the situation in Iraq indicates that the educational system is geared towards building a system of employment adapted to expansion in the public sector, not the private sector. Furthermore, the educational system, in its current state, is not suitable for building a robust labor market; rather, it interacts with labor market outcomes in a limited way, and its responsiveness to the labor market and its needs is restricted, this is confirmed by the fact that university degrees are primarily sought for government employment rather than for sustainable private sector work.

Research problem and questions:

The problem raised in this regard is related to the following central question:

Why are there no radical solutions to the unemployment problem in Iraq? Where will this problem end? And is it possible to devise a sustainable solution and remedy for this issue?

This problem raises the need to answer a number of questions, namely:

- What are the indicators of unemployment in Iraq?
- What are the consequences of unemployment in Iraq?
- Is it possible to develop or provide a scientific methodology for sustainable development to sustain and create job opportunities for the unemployed, thereby eliminating the phenomenon without the need to expand employment in the public sector?

Importance and Objectives of the Research:

The importance of this research topic is underscored by the widespread and persistent problem of unemployment in Iraq, and the inadequacy of sustainable solutions. Existing approaches are only partial and fail to address the root cause of the problem: the weakness of the economy. The underlying issue is the interplay between politics and economics, and the weak political management of the economic file, which leads to the squandering of economic resources, and to find solutions to the problem of progressing towards a great economic capacity to influence political and security events, as well as welfare, and in dealing with others who are different.

This research aims to study the repercussions of unemployment in Iraq and the possibility of finding sustainable solutions within the framework of sustainable development that would enable the economy to manage its affairs automatically and absorb the number of young people entering the labor market annually.

Research Hypothesis:

We assume the following:

1. Addressing the causes of unemployment will lead to its reduction.
2. Sustainable development achieves sustainable employment without the need for expansion in public sector jobs.

Both of the above hypotheses represent different approaches, but they are complementary. The foundation is building a sustainable economy to achieve sustainable development, as it is the driving force that addresses the causes of unemployment in a way that prevents its accumulation in terms of level, size, and type within society.

Research Methodology:

The methodology used in this research is the descriptive analytical method.

Structure:

The research will be divided into the following sections:

Firstly: Unemployment indicators in Iraq.

Secondly: The consequences of unemployment.

Thirdly: The scientific methodology for sustainably creating job opportunities.

Firstly: Unemployment Indicators in Iraq

Unemployment is defined as a situation in which a percentage of individuals are looking for work, but the labor market and the economy do not provide them with a suitable opportunity. An individual is considered part of the labor force, but is unable to find a job despite actively searching for employment.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), an unemployed is "anyone who is able to work, willing to work, and actively seeking employment, but without success," while unemployment is an overall phenomenon indicating that a certain percentage of individuals are looking for job opportunities but the economy is unable to absorb them.

Numerous research studies and analyses have addressed the issue of unemployment in all its forms, classifying it and analyzing its causes, with the aim of finding solutions to it, considering it one of the most prominent consequences of today's world.

On the subject of the definition of unemployment, some have defined it as: "the incomplete utilization of available human economic resources despite the search for employment opportunities" (Rahim, Abdul Amir, 2020, 285). Others believe that unemployment is the cessation of work by a portion of the labor force or the inability to obtain employment despite having the ability and willingness to work (Naghman, 2023, 757). Still others view unemployment as a phenomenon of idle resources and the inability to utilize them in a way that achieves the purpose of those resources or benefits from them (Tariq, Ehab, 2017, 11-12).

Unemployment is not a single phenomenon, but rather encompasses several types. These include seasonal unemployment, which occurs in areas with seasonal production or during periods of seasonal fluctuations in demand for goods and services, there is also cyclical unemployment, which arises when there is a decrease in demand for goods and services within the economic system (particularly in capitalist systems, as it is inherent to them), i.e., during an economic recession, frictional unemployment is another type, linked to changes in production methods, the type of production, or the types of goods and services demanded by the consumer market. This leads to the temporary displacement of some workers whose skills are no longer suitable for the changes in productivity. Sometimes, these changes are accompanied by shifts in production, labor, and market conditions within a specific sector, resulting in the closure of some production units and the temporary layoff of workers; some refer to this as sectorial unemployment. Another type is disguised unemployment, which reflects an imbalance between the number of workers and their productivity due to the government's approach of addressing part of the unemployment problem by increasing employment rates. Finally, there is temporary unemployment, which results from the presence of unskilled labor that is laid off periodically or whenever production tools are upgraded, these types, or others that may emerge, all indicate the existence of unemployment, whether permanent, temporary, or even voluntary unemployment, which an adult individual chooses for reasons such as: some women's reluctance to work outside the home, some individuals' unwillingness to work due to having another source of income, or for any other reason (Rahim, Abdul Amir, 2020, 286).

In addition to the different types of unemployment, the phenomenon as a whole is unique, as evidenced by the fact that the causes of unemployment vary from one case to another and even from one age group to another, and from one type of job to another. An analysis of the underlying causes of this global phenomenon, in its nature and dimensions, reveals that the reasons behind it are numerous, including: an imbalance between the supply of labor and the demand for jobs that market forces can provide. Unemployment serves as an indicator of the extent of the imbalance in the national economy, in addition to the difficulty of financing some projects due to a lack of technical expertise, the absence of technology, insufficient funding, administrative difficulties and limitations, or even political and security conditions that

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prevent the establishment of such projects. Furthermore, economic projects in today's world lead employers to reduce their reliance on a large workforce and focus instead on quality, also, inflation is among the factors affecting the business sector, in the context of widespread inflation, national employers are less likely to hire local workers due to the high cost, and instead resort to cheaper labor, mostly from South and Southeast Asian countries (Faisal, Mustafa, 2014, 301).

The spread of unemployment in Iraq is a thorny issue, despite its vast resources and economic diversity, the country has experienced contradictory phenomena, although resources are abundant, political factors have encouraged corruption, the squandering of resources, and a lack of proper planning for their expenditure, diverting them to inappropriate uses and depleting a significant portion. Most importantly, the security situation has drained many resources since the 1980s, at a time when infrastructure was deteriorating and economic facilities were becoming obsolete, there was also a lack of political protection and support for industrial and productive economic projects, resulting in the number of people entering the job market exceeding the number of available economic opportunities, furthermore, there was an encouragement of importing goods and flooding the country with consumer products, many of which could have been produced domestically, this has led to a yearly increase in the number of unemployed individuals. (Nabil, 2024, 44).

Estimating the unemployment rate in Iraq reveals that only estimates are available, and there is no accurate, reliable data on this subject. These estimates indicate a high unemployment rate, as illustrated in Table (1):

Table (1): Unemployment Rate in Iraq for Selected Years Since 2005

Year	Population in millions	Employment-to-population ratio (ages 15-64) %	Working-age population in millions*	Unemployment rate as a percentage of the labor force (according to World Bank data)	Unemployment rate as a percentage of the labor force (according to Ministry of Planning data)
2005	26.3	43.5%	19.9	8.6%	19%
2010	30.8	43%	13.2	8.3%	15.2%
2015	36.9	44.7%	16.49	10.8%	15%
2020	40.1	41.2%	16.4	15.8%	11.3%
2023	43.3	42.9%	18.57	15.5%	11.2%
2024	46.04	78.2%	39.5%	16.8%	13%

*The Central Agency for Statistics and Information Technology distinguishes between the following categories: the workforce in the public and private sectors, individuals outside the labor force (estimated at approximately 15.79 million people in 2021), the underemployed workforce (estimated at approximately 3.4 million), the underemployed workforce engaged in temporary work (estimated at approximately 683,000 people), the potential workforce (estimated at approximately 1.04 million people), and the unemployed (estimated at approximately 1.7 million people).

The agency's statistics excluded both Nineveh and Anbar governorates due to the difficulty in estimating the data. The table was prepared by the researcher based on:

Source:

1. Population and Labor Force Statistics, Central Statistical Organization and Information Technology, accessed September 22, 2024, at: https://cosit.gov.iq/documents/AAS2023/2.pdf
2. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) - Iraq, World Bank website, accessed September 2, 2024, at:

https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=IQ

3. Labor force participation rate, total (% of population ages 15-64) - Iraq, World Bank website, accessed September 2, 2024, at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.ZS?locations=IQ

There are other differing estimates of the unemployment rate in Iraq, provided by international and academic institutions. One study issued by the Iraqi Parliament estimated the unemployment rate at approximately 15.5% (Hanan, 2024, p. 4), while the World Bank puts the figure at around 15.5% of the total labor force (available at the following link: https://data.albankaldawli.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=IQ.

In any case, the percentage is high compared to the size of the resources available to the Iraqi state, most notably oil revenues. However, these revenues are depleted by the increase in the operational budget, specifically the budget for public sector employee salaries, as for the remaining portion of the budget allocated to investment, its utilization in government investments has not yielded the expected benefits, despite the size of this budget, which exceeds 36% of the country's total public expenditures, according to the 2023-2025 budget (Law No. 13 of 2023, the Federal General Budget of the Republic of Iraq for the fiscal years 2023-2024-2025).

Secondly: The repercussions of unemployment

Unemployment is not a separate and isolated phenomenon from the internal and external environment, but rather a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, due to its nature, characteristics, and consequences.

Iraq has suffered from this phenomenon since the 1980s, and it worsened in the 1990s, then reached critical stages after 2003, as a result of the private sector's inability to absorb the available workforce. the workforce in Iraq, although it is divided into:

- Employment of graduates
- Unskilled labor

However, their repercussions are similar, given that the size of each is considerable, and the private labor market, by its very nature, is still nascent and has not allowed for specialization in the demand for labor. The small and medium-sized enterprise sector has not grown significantly enough to attract the workforce and support the national economy.

When examining the repercussions of unemployment, it is observed that these repercussions are distributed across multiple areas, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Political Implications

The political dimensions or implications of unemployment are linked, firstly, to the role of the state, and secondly, to how the unemployed individual behaves. Regarding the role of the state, it is clear that the state is responsible for stimulating the economy, not for providing direct job opportunities to citizens, given that the state no longer performs all economic and social functions, leaving market forces to determine the demand for jobs, growth in government employment should not reach a level that hinders the state's ability to function, as excessive hiring ultimately harms government efficiency. The fragmentation of the public sector does not achieve its intended goal of accelerating performance; rather, it causes a problem of dependency and consequently impairs the ability of government agencies to perform their assigned tasks, furthermore, the government's tendency towards disguised unemployment, i.e., funding unproductive jobs, negatively impacts government programs and its ability to fulfill its required functions by reducing spending on crucial sectors that require funding, such as health, education, development, and infrastructure (Najla, 2015, 99-100).

The unemployed individual will tend to be dissatisfied with the government and state institutions, which is among the dangerous factors, because it will create a base of popular rejection of political action and the government, at a time when government support in today's world is among the important factors that help the government implement its various programs (Tariq, Ehab, 2017, 24).

2. Security Implications

The security implications of unemployment are a serious issue, because

the unemployed person is subjected to abnormal pressures and may resort to (Malik: 2006, 293-295): Adopting aggressive behavior can lead to becoming a dangerous person, either by committing a crime, resorting to drug use, or supporting or failing to oppose the existence and actions of violent organizations. In all cases, this poses a threat to the national security of the state.

3. Economic Implications

The economic consequences of unemployment are also a serious matter. An unemployed person is a national asset that the government has failed to provide with a suitable job opportunity, they are transformed from being a potential contributor to the economy into a consumer rather than a producer, then into a burden, and finally into a loss, especially if they resort to emigration, joining criminal organizations, or adopting violent behavior.

The increase in unemployment negatively impacts economic growth, because production leads to increased growth and a higher GDP, while consumption has expanded the scope of imports in Iraq, and therefore has not resulted in an increase in domestic production, rather, the more the focus shifts to consumption instead of production, the more consumption will increase, and most of the consumed products and goods are imported. This is why unemployed individuals indirectly contribute to increasing the outflow of foreign currency from the country (the problem of unemployment in Iraq after 2003 is discussed at this link: https://www.bayancenter.org/2021/08/7408.

The economic repercussions are primarily linked to the fact that the unemployed represent an underutilized resource that could otherwise contribute to boosting domestic production; instead, they support consumption rather than production.

4. Social Implications

The repercussions of the unemployment problem in general are not limited to political, security, and economic dimensions, but also extend to cover social aspects.

Some societies do not accept that a person performs certain jobs, including those related to domestic service or cleaning work and these jobs are often left to migrant workers. This is part of the prevailing social customs in Eastern societies, including Iraqi society.

The social and cultural repercussions of unemployment are considered among the serious consequences or outcomes (Tariq, Ehab, 2023, 23-24), because the unemployed person is affected by the pressure of time and need, and family pressure, despite their academic qualifications or youthful energy, this results in the unemployed youth feeling frustrated, which will reflect on their relationship with their family, surroundings, and society. They may resort to difficult choices, including: the possibility of behavioral and criminal deviance, drug abuse, resorting to violence, or emigration (Ferial, 2016, 300).

Unemployment has been one of the important issues in Iraq for several decades, due to the following reasons:

A. The society is a young one, as the youth constitute the largest segment of the population, accounting for approximately 58.6% of the total population, while those under 15 years of age represent about 38.1%, according to 2021 data (Iraq Population Projections for the period (2015-2030), Central Statistical Organization, available at: https://cosit.gov.iq/ar/62arabic-cat/indicators/174-population-2?jsn_setmobile=no

B. Iraq does not suffer from a lack of financial resources or scientific capabilities. A significant portion of its financial resources is lost annually due to mismanagement, poor planning, waste for various reasons, and a lack of accountability in procurement and projects, as for scientific resources and expertise, despite the problems in the education system, they are abundant, but most of them have emigrated or are underutilized, and are not given a role in society, the business sector, or government jobs.

C. The political situation is the controlling factor and the cause of the misallocation of resources, preventing them from being productive. This is why working in the political sector opens up many economic opportunities, not because of its productivity, but because of the influence it provides and the access it grants to government resources, which are distributed

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under various headings: investment projects, subsidies, government contracts, tenders, and currently, easy access to foreign currency and import facilities, or the establishment of service projects, among others.

D. The education system has been politically manipulated to render it incapable of providing education that supports sustainable production. Instead, it remains a stagnant, traditional system, severely constrained by numerous laws, regulations, instructions, and bureaucratic procedures that contradict the ability of any natural system to be productive.

E. Humanities disciplines are the largest in society within the education system and outweigh vocational education in terms of numbers, which makes the system, despite all its shortcomings, incapable of production or interaction with the labor market.

F. The political situation has ultimately impacted the economic and cultural conditions, affecting broad sectors of society, many individuals have opted to abandon education and work in non-productive service sectors or those that do not require advanced levels of technology and knowledge application, meanwhile, the application of knowledge in the education sector is limited. Despite the increasing number of medical and computer science colleges, among others, Iraq remains a consumer of these services rather than a producer. Consequently, graduates seek government employment instead of creating their own job opportunities; one reason for this is that obtaining a license for a graduate to start their own business requires prior government work experience, which reflects a state of legal disarray.

Thirdly: The Scientific Methodology for Sustaining Job opportunities

The government has implemented several development strategies and a poverty reduction strategy, but none of these have achieved their objectives. The growth in the labor force or labor supply has continued to outpace the growth in both public and private sector jobs.

This research will present preliminary proposals that can be strengthened and built upon, and which can contribute to halting the growth of unemployment and working towards reducing its level.

The methodology proposed by the research is based on dividing these solutions into two simultaneous approaches: addressing the causes of unemployment, and addressing the problem of structural imbalances in the Iraqi economy. It is not possible to address the problem of unemployment without addressing both of these issues, which can be explained as follows:

1. Addressing unemployment by tackling its root causes: There are many reasons that have led to the growth of unemployment in Iraq, including:

A. Reliance on oil revenues at rates that have caused significant imbalances and distortions in the economy, diverting it from productivity and fostering dependence on oil rents since the 1970s, leading to increased consumption and imports, decreased production, and an inflated public sector. Correcting this course requires three important steps (Noghom, Tabarak, 2022, p. 295):

1. Increase taxes and fees to enable the government to obtain sufficient revenue.
2. Allocate a percentage of oil revenues, for example 25% annually, to build a sovereign wealth fund for the country.
3. Sell a portion of the oil to major companies and transfer the resulting revenue to the sovereign wealth fund.

B. Weakness in small and medium-sized productive projects: For the most part, citizens, with the exception of a period in the 1990s, have remained primarily interested in government jobs, this coupled with the inability to accumulate capital, which has consistently fled the country due to instability, has prevented Iraq from developing its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). According to data from the Ministry of Planning, there were 26,772 small projects in Iraq in 2021, with an annual growth rate of no more than 2%, these projects employ only 90,800 people, a small percentage of the total workforce, they operate in various sectors, including food and beverage processing, textiles, paper and printing, plastics, electrical industries, furniture manufacturing, and water

treatment, among others (Statistics of Small Industrial Establishments in the Private Sector for 2021, available at: https://cosit.gov.iq/documents/industrial/small/2022/%D8202021%20.pdf. Expanding these projects and industries could significantly stimulate the job market.

2. The limited access to financing, coupled with restricted income levels, means that even those who manage to accumulate capital cannot operate within the country unless they have security protection, this was one of the reasons that led to increased unemployment rates due to the outflow of capital and the inability to establish industrial and productive projects.

3. Reviewing the educational system and its outcomes (Naghham, Luay, 2016, 126–127).

A. This is one of the most important reasons for the delay in launching sustainable development: the education system is unsuitable for initiating innovative initiatives, and most of its specializations do not align with the scale of transformation in the labor market. The education system needs a comprehensive review of both its specializations and curricula to make it relevant to the job market. Only then can the education sector supply a larger number of graduates to various sectors of the workforce.

B. Providing support and training for human capital and increasing its level of competence is crucial, as entering the current business sector requires a certain level of training and skills to enable individuals to establish their own business or work in an existing one, and thus become a productive member in various business sectors.

Providing business incubators and support for entrepreneurial projects is crucial, because despite the existence of some successful small and medium-sized enterprises, the country needs many more of these projects to enable it to reach a suitable level of production to meet the needs of the labor market, prevent the outflow of foreign currency, and thus contribute to solving part of the unemployment problem (Ngham, Ali, 2023, 246-247).

C. The previous approaches can contribute to stimulating the business sector by addressing the underlying causes of unemployment.

D. Dealing with unemployment through correcting development and making it sustainable to automatically stimulate demand for labor. Another approach to reducing the level of unemployment is that the country needs to review the legacy of accumulated structural economic crises. This will then create suitable economic opportunities, but the economic problems are significant, and the trend to support a shift away from economic problems is still limited (Ferial, 2016, 164). At this point, several important topics will be addressed that require review to correct part of the legacy of accumulated structural problems of the economy, as follows:

1. Attracting investments and capital, and simplifying financing and repayment procedures, are crucial aspects of promoting the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises. Iraq suffers from a significant deficiency in the planning and implementation of these initiatives, despite their abundance, particularly since 2016, aimed at stimulating the national economy. However, these initiatives have failed to achieve their objectives because funds are often given to undeserving individuals due to favoritism and personal connections, while those with viable projects find the financing methods and procedures complex and difficult. Furthermore, financing procedures require review, and plans should be developed to fund projects in a way that addresses the country's developmental needs and fosters innovation. For example, funding could focus on implementing projects based on university theses and dissertations in scientific, engineering, and medical fields, which would lead to a revolution in technological advancement in the coming years, not to mention other service-oriented projects (Nahla, Sadiq, 2019, 29-30).

2. Attracting scientific talents from abroad and discussing with them ways to maximize job opportunities is crucial. Iraq possesses significant scientific and financial resources abroad, and it is possible to hold meaningful conferences where expatriate Iraqis are invited to finance the establishment

of important projects. If this is achieved, it would be a step towards enhancing knowledge transfer in the business sector, for example, by establishing modern hospitals, pharmaceutical factories, or any other project whose products meet the country's consumer needs.

3. Encouraging graduates of colleges and technical and vocational institutes to design and implement small and medium-sized projects is crucial. Technical and technological institutes and universities are among the most important educational institutions that can lay the foundation for a scientific and technological renaissance and economic progress in the country. However, it is noticeable that these institutions are still small compared to the size of humanities studies in the country. The country needs to provide support to the graduates of these institutions and to reform their educational system to enable them to adapt to the requirements of the labor market. Furthermore, these graduates should be given priority or preferential treatment in obtaining loans and facilities to establish their economic and industrial enterprises, thereby contributing to stimulating the national economy (Huda, 2015, 101-102).

4. Encouraging, financing, and supporting projects that obtain licenses from international companies to implement them and open branches in Iraq is an important step towards achieving a synergy between local production and licensing of international commercial and industrial brands. This requires simplifying administrative procedures to allow the opening of production branches, for example, for the production of cars, electrical equipment, or food products, and so on.

5. Expanding the scope of the entities responsible for financing economic projects included in government investment budgets, tenders, and government procurement, and making government purchases from local markets, will prevent manipulation of tenders and the implementation of investment budgets under political pretexts, thus achieving significant benefits for the entire society.

6. Providing government guarantees involves offering support and protection to economic projects, and this is not related to insurance, but rather to preventing illegal pressures from various parties on capital owners. This has caused numerous instances of national capital leaving the country. Therefore, it requires providing more support and greater protection for these projects to enable them to operate and produce under the protection of the state (Ahmed, 2008, 181).

7. mposing restrictions on imports is necessary to stimulate domestic production. Imported products are often subsidized and produced at lower costs, allowing them to reach the local market at prices that discourage most local producers from manufacturing. Therefore, the authorities must implement certain restrictions and limitations to enable local products to compete. Furthermore, it is advisable to refrain from importing food products from countries upstream of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as this represents an indirect theft of Iraq's water rights and causes double losses for the country. Encouraging Iraqis to adopt innovative agricultural practices, such as those that require minimal water use and drip irrigation, can help achieve self-sufficiency and food security.

8. Reconsidering the system of financing support for marginalized and unemployed social groups, and shifting funds from being spent as cash payments to implementing productive projects and granting beneficiaries shares in those projects.

9. Developing and supporting family-owned productive businesses, especially in tourist and heritage areas.

10. Developing export industries in which Iraq has advantages, including dates and seasonal products such as food items.

All of the above represent mechanisms that can be developed to provide a suitable environment for the growth of the business sector and, consequently, the growth of demand for jobs in the private sector.

Conclusion and Results:

The Iraqi economy has suffered from significant structural problems in recent decades, transforming from a productive economy to one that relies on imports to cover most of its domestic consumption needs. This

has led to a heavy dependence on oil for the majority of government revenues, making it an economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil demand.

The national economy has been unable to achieve an adequate level of productivity. Despite the efforts of successive governments to stimulate the national economy across various sectors, the plans have failed to achieve their intended objectives, and the economy continues to suffer, remaining primarily dependent on a single resource.

This imbalance in the national economy has resulted in another problem: a growing population coupled with a shrinking role and functions of the state. Consequently, the workforce entering the job market annually finds itself facing unemployment, as the business sector is not growing at the same rate as the labor force. This has led to a widespread unemployment problem, and the education sector has failed to drive development or provide effective solutions to this issue.

Political and security instability has led to the problem being masked for several decades, specifically since the 1980s. This has resulted in the growth of negative phenomena, such as the pursuit of academic degrees solely to secure suitable employment opportunities and the exertion of pressure on governments to obtain jobs in the public sector. This latter option, resorted to by governments on multiple occasions, has caused significant overstaffing in the public sector and burdened annual budgets with high costs, preventing them from undertaking most of the necessary activities, including expanding health, education, and development services. Instead of focusing on the root of the problem—stimulating development as a means of absorbing unemployment—the solution became employing the workforce under the guise of disguised unemployment, leading to increased consumption due to the resulting income levels. This consumption is addressed not by increasing national production but by expanding imports. And so the problem of unemployment persists.

The issue of unemployment is one of the most important issues in Iraq for several reasons, including:

1. The consequences of its continuation, including social problems, the possibility of resorting to crime, drugs, or violence, and political pressure on the government to find solutions to the problem, among others.
2. The magnitude of unemployment, as unemployment is increasing annually. Unemployment depends on the size of the segment of society that enters the labor market annually (15 years old), minus the segments that leave the workforce and labor market due to age (65 years old).
3. The accumulation of unemployment, and the most dangerous aspect of unemployment is its annual accumulation, as well as disguised unemployment. Iraq suffers from the growth of this phenomenon, requiring difficult solutions to address it.
4. The mismatch between the educational systems and employment or development. The current educational system is based on rote learning and often produces graduates who are incapable of innovation or even productivity, and are primarily prepared for work in the government sector. This is compounded by a significant expansion in humanities education at the expense of vocational training. Furthermore, the administrative system is unresponsive to making changes to existing specializations, which are difficult to modify or replace with others according to the requirements of the labor market except after a long series of complex administrative procedures. Consequently, the needs of the labor market do not align with the outputs of the educational system.
5. Inadequate government policies: The adopted procedures encourage prioritizing political considerations over economic and productive factors as a source of adequate income. Furthermore, investment budgets, which are supposed to meet infrastructure requirements and serve as a government tool to stimulate the local market, fail to achieve this objective. The same applies to government tenders. In addition, there is an inability to combat or reduce corruption, and there is no real support for productive sectors capable of driving development or absorbing unemployment. The lending procedures for projects are also inappropriate. Most

importantly, the government resorts to stimulating the job market through appointments in the public sector, which causes significant problems by inflating the number of employees in government sectors without a corresponding increase in production. Instead, there is an increase in unproductive spending at the expense of spending on the health sector and other vital areas.

6. The problem is not the size of the workforce but rather the management of the economy. The country's resources are vast, but their planning and management are carried out in an inappropriate and politically driven manner. The country receives substantial annual revenues from oil sales and has a large consumer market, yet there are no suitable plans. Those who develop and implement the adopted plans have not been reviewed or held accountable for decades, and therefore, their existence and failure do not entail any responsibility, resulting in significant waste of resources annually.

7. Political factors are the most prominent in perpetuating the problem of unemployment and the structural problems in the economy. This is because political and security conditions lead, firstly, to the flight of capital, and secondly, to affecting the educational system, causing it to deviate from achieving its goals of having its graduates form the basis of development. Even more dangerous is when political positions, or those supporting or backing them, become the primary means of obtaining adequate income levels compared to employment in the public and private sectors. Most dangerous of all is when politics becomes a means of securing resources from the government through: influencing competition, facilitating access to tenders or loans, awarding projects, supporting import capabilities, or securing contracts with government entities, and so on. Thus, politics becomes a non-neutral party in economic activities.

The widespread unemployment despite the abundance of available resources indicates a complex socio-political problem, requiring a multifaceted solution: political and educational. The political aspect of the problem stems from the fact that political factors are not neutral in managing competition in a way that appropriately stimulates sustainable economic growth. The social aspect lies in a societal tendency that does not prioritize modernizing the educational system to effectively impact the labor market. The political dimension of the solution is crucial because government resources and plans are among the most significant challenges to enhancing market competitiveness and stimulating the local market. Furthermore, if the educational system is reformed and improved, its graduates can contribute to building the market and absorbing unemployment, provided that the educational systems are not based on rote learning but rather on innovation.

All of the above problems afflict Iraq and its local market, making it impossible to expect a solution to the unemployment problem without fundamental changes, beginning with the withdrawal of political influence from the business sector and development.

The research examined unemployment indicators in Iraq and their repercussions, considering unemployment one of the most important challenges facing society, given its associated political, security, economic, and social consequences.

Addressing the problem of unemployment in society requires developing an appropriate methodology. Here, we see two approaches to dealing with and reducing unemployment, which are as follows:

- The first approach involves addressing the causes of unemployment, and these causes are numerous. They are not limited to population growth, as population growth actually leads to an increase in the size of the local consumer market. Rather, the causes lie in the mismatch between the educational system and the requirements of the labor market. Consequently, most of those entering the workforce are unskilled laborers, only capable of performing simple tasks, or they are prepared for work in the government sector and are unable to create businesses that meet market needs. It also requires reducing the impact of political factors on competitiveness in local markets, whether through referrals, tenders, access to loans and

credit facilities, or other means; or in the establishment and implementation of projects within investment budgets and other areas; or in the failure to provide support for national production. Addressing these issues can lay the groundwork for supporting development.

- The second approach is that the scientific methodology for sustainably creating job opportunities involves focusing on the labor market itself and stimulating it through sustainable growth. Iraq possesses abundant resources, but they are misused through waste, corruption, or poor planning and distribution. The allocation of resources to support the sustainability of the non-oil economy is very limited, and the government's approach is through expanding consumption and increasing public sector employment. Therefore, promoting sustainability requires providing support to every project that is innovative and capable of production.

In conclusion, the following recommendations were reached:

1. It is essential to reform the education system so that it is capable of reshaping human resources and producing knowledge, as this is crucial for sustainable economic growth. It also requires a gradual and rapid reduction in the emphasis on humanities studies and an increase in the proportion of vocational, technical, and scientific education.
2. Iraq needs to support genuine research, development, and innovation sectors that can significantly increase productive capacity.
3. It is necessary to review and reduce the size of the oil sector's presence in the economy and allocate a portion of oil revenues to support the transition towards a diversified and productive economy.

Data Availability:

The data used to support the results of this study has been included in the article.

Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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