

The Theoretical Framework of Unemployment in Iraq

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Abstract

This study deals with the phenomenon of unemployment by discussing its general causes, its generation mechanisms, and its types in the economy related to the impact of those imbalances, which are a prominent feature of the Iraqi economy. This study used secondary Data from Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation which includes: the population and its growth rate, the domestic product except for oil and its growth rate, unemployment, and inflation. This is for the research years that start in 2003 and end in 2020. The result found that the unemployment rates began to decline gradually since 2004 until 2007. Unemployment rates have returned to a slight increase since 2015 until 2020, and this was due to the decrease in the overall activity rates, as evidenced by the low output growth rates during the period between 2015-2020, due to the effects of the Corona pandemic crisis.

Keywords: *Unemployment, GDP, Economy, Iraq*

Date of Submission: 14-06-2023

Date of acceptance: 28-06-2023

I. Introduction

Looking at the situation of the Iraqi economy shows us this economy is no different from other economies in developed countries. It is characterized by its abundance of material, human and natural resources. However, it suffers from structural imbalances, which came due to weak economic policies on the one hand, and the growing political nature of the economic decision on the other hand. Therefore, discussing the phenomenon of unemployment must be associated with an understanding of the reality of the economy and its basic features, the most important of which are: the imbalance of the productive structure, the imbalance of the structure of foreign trade, and the imbalance of the structure of the general budget. external indebtedness. Weak GDP growth rates (non-oil), weak human development indicators, coincided with high inflation and unemployment rates, widening phenomenon of financial and administrative corruption, waste of resources, high population growth rates, uncontrolled economic openness. Therefore, this research deals with the phenomenon of unemployment by discussing its general causes, its generation mechanisms, and its types in the economy related to the impact of those imbalances, which are a prominent feature of the Iraqi economy.

II. The Roots of Unemployment and its Generation Mechanisms in Iraq

Unemployment in Iraq is the result of the interaction of several factors, including those related to the nature of the Iraqi economy, and others related to the nature of the labor market, and it appears to the tracker that there are mechanisms in the environment of the Iraqi economy that caused unemployment and helped generate and sustain it. We will present and discuss below the most important economic mechanisms that generated unemployment in Iraq, Which :-

- **The Impact of Privatization on Unemployment**

The approach to changing the reality of the economy was considered to go through reducing the relative importance of the public sector and stimulating the opportunities of the private sector on the basis that the latter is the most efficient in allocating and rehabilitating resources, while the public sector is marred by many negative effects as stated in the directives of the International Monetary Fund, including that it is a source Fundamental waste of resources as a result of low investment efficiency as well as the submission of its decisions to government red tape, which makes the public sector responsible for imbalances in the government budget and the depletion of foreign revenues, unlike the private sector, which the neoclassical economic theory assumes that it achieves profits through the dominance of competition that leads to improving production efficiency over Considering that price flexibility determines who stays in the market. In the light of these principles, Iraq began to implement the economic reform program under the prescription of the International Monetary Fund in an attempt to restore balance and develop the national economy (Hilal, 2006, 201). It is located at the forefront of the mechanisms of transformation, privatization and trade liberalization. The policy of applying privatization after 2003 was put forward as a quick solution to the economic problems that the country

suffers from. For example, the Ministry of Industry rented a number of factories at the end of 2003 with little damage. It also proposed the method of participating in the rehabilitation and modernization of the factories of its subsidiaries. This was used For factories and laboratories with significant damage, and these two methods (rent and participation) were the beginning of the application of privatization. It should be noted in this regard that the private sector in Iraq is characterized by a number of features (Hilal, 2006).

- This sector is dominated by individual work and small enterprises, whether in terms of organization or investment, or in terms of production and marketing.

- The private sector tends to invest in activities with a guaranteed return. As we find that his contribution is limited to the ownership of housing and personal services, as well as transportation, individual and wholesale trade, and building and construction.

- This sector targets projects that have a short recovery period.

Several studies take into account the importance of profitability and economy of the countries (Alfadhel et al., 8 Alabdulah, 2018; ; Almashhadani and Almashhadani, 2020; Kanaaan et al., 2022; Alabdllah., 2022;; Alfadhel et al., 2016; Almashhadani and Almashhadani, 2020; Kanan et al., 2013). Organizations struggle greatly when attempting to integrate translation into their information systems and project management procedures, despite the growing importance of translation in global corporate operations (Al-Hashimy, 2022d; Al-Hashimy, Alabdullah, et al., 2022; Al-Hashimy, Said, et al., 2022; Al-HASHIMY & Al-hashimy, 2019). This is a result of the intricacy that translation brings. Terminological inconsistencies, time-consuming manual procedures, and challenges with quality control are just a few of the issues that have been identified as shortcomings in the translation systems currently in use (AL-HASHIMY, 2017; AL-HASHIMY, 2018, 2019, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

- It depends a lot on government subsidies, and therefore it is weak in competition with regard to imported goods. As for employment, the private sector is characterized by being less profitable and less secure than the public sector. This was helped by the absence of laws regulating his work. As there is no legal legislation that protects workers and regulates their relationship with employers. Those who lay them off at any time they want, especially in contracting projects. As well as the lack of pension rights and other social guarantees. Therefore, work in the private sector must be encouraged through a comprehensive modernization of labor laws related to end-of-service compensation, vacation benefits, social security suspensions, and others (Abdul Redha, 2012). Accordingly, the effects of privatization on the employment of the workforce will have multiple directions that can be summarized as follows (Abu Amiriya, Faleh, 2010):

- Immediate loss of jobs due to the need to deepen capital and technology which causes reduced demand for manpower.

- The emergence of a labor negotiating force and the emergence of political problems and professional demands with the privatization administration and the government administration.

- The limited impact on economic activity in general in the short term, with the possibility of achieving growth in output and use in the long term due to achieving profitability. Based on the foregoing, privatization decisions should not be rushed and the principle of gradual adoption should be adopted according to economic and social criteria, as the diversification of wealth sources in Iraq opens the doors for the state to participate in many economic activities with a mature, long-term vision. The mixed sector in this field has a good experience that can be developed to absorb an additional labor force and make this an alternative to full privatization (Abu Amiriya, Faleh, 2010). Especially in light of the conditions of the transitional phase represented in the absence of a stable and appropriate environment with the absence of developed financial markets and a well-developed private sector that will lead to many problems, foremost of which is unemployment, as the public sector owns about 192 projects in which (500,000) people work. Work to transfer ownership of these projects to the private sector would undoubtedly increase unemployment rates (Kamel, 2011).

- **The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Unemployment**

The objective of liberalizing foreign trade is to increase the interaction and intertwining of the national economy with the global economy, eliminate distortions in domestic prices of goods and services, and enhance competitiveness in order to increase the efficiency of economic performance. Based on those principles, work began after April 2003 with the mechanism of trade liberalization in Iraq, represented by lifting restrictions that were imposed on financial transfers, as well as reducing customs duties on imports. The liberalization of foreign trade, in light of the reality of the Iraqi economy, led to a reduction in competitiveness, which was dependent on customs tariffs and other measures and quantitative restrictions that represented a policy of protection for the national product (Abdul-Razzaq, Muhammad Salih., 2008). With regard to the agricultural sector, it is known that it suffers in Iraq from poor productivity due to its reliance on traditional work methods, represented in the underdevelopment of production factors, low level of management and high production costs due to problems related to agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, fuel, electricity and water scarcity, which was reflected

negatively on the inability of the local product to compete with the foreign product (Hassan Basma Kazzar, 2009).

As for the industrial sector, the policy of trade openness led to the entry of many commodities without conforming to the qualitative specifications, which led to the depletion of a lot of foreign exchange resources and their use in financing the import of consumer goods instead of moving to the import of capital goods in order to achieve new additions to production capacities (Judge, 2006). As a result, the industrial sector suffered from weak competitiveness, which led to a decrease in the number of large industrial establishments from (418) in 2002 to (411) in 2006: as for medium establishments, their number decreased from (156) in 2000 to (79), establishment in 2003, then to (52) in 2006. This led to a decrease in the number of workers in these two types of establishments from (2276) workers in 2000 to (1397) workers in 2005 (Ministry of Planning 2007: 3-2). The same applies to small industrial establishments, as their number decreased from (77167) in 2000 to (11620) establishments in 2006, which led to a decrease in the number of workers in them from (164579) workers in 2000 to (36379) workers in 2006 (Ministry of Planning, 2007). From the foregoing, it is clear that trade liberalization policies led to the bankruptcy and suspension of many industrial establishments, especially in the private sector, especially small ones, due to the inability to compete with the foreign product at a price due to the lack of protectionist measures. And qualitatively because of the lack of experience and competence on the one hand. And the high value of the dinar in relation to foreign currencies on the other hand (the policy of supporting the exchange rate), in addition to the technological backwardness of the national industry, which it inherited from the period of the economic blockade, which led to the inability of this sector to play its role in absorbing the surplus of labor and thus exacerbating the problem of unemployment.

- **The Impact of the Rentier Nature of the Economy on Unemployment**

The Iraqi economy is a rentier economy in which oil revenues account for more than half of its gross domestic product. more than (98%) of its exports; It is the main source of financing the budget by more than (90%) of the total public revenues, and despite that, we find that the oil sector absorbs only about (2.5%) of the total customer force. This means that the growth in the oil sector does not affect the development process of the country, which is supposed to grow the other three sectors (agriculture, industry, services), three times the growth in the oil sector until it absorbs the workforce. This confirms the opinion that rentier economies, by their nature, do not generate job opportunities (Kazem, 2011). Which exacerbated the problem of unemployment in Iraq.

- **The impact of the loss of harmony between education outcomes and the labor market**

The main objectives of education are achieved when the learner is able to obtain a job consistent with his academic qualifications, but it is noted that in the case of Iraq there is an imbalance between the type of demand for the workforce and the educational system; This is due to the stagnation of educational institutions and the failure to meet the requirements of the labor market with the required quality of employment. Therefore, we find an increase in the number of unemployment among graduates, who can be classified in terms of their ability to obtain work into three categories.

1. Graduates whom the state is obligated to employ because they represent an urgent need, such as medical specialties.
2. Graduates who form part of the state and the private sector's need for employment, such as engineering specializations and some scientific specializations.
3. Graduates whom the state is not obligated to appoint due to the weak need for their services, due to their weak academic qualifications suitable for the labor market. And because that market suffers mainly from structural imbalances. This forces them to work in some marginal activities in the services and distribution sectors, which means that incomplete and disguised unemployment is generated because of their practice of work that does not correspond to their specialties. This explains the tendency of the Iraqi economy to operate in non-commodity activities (non-productive services sector).

- **The Impact of Corruption (Financial and Administrative) on Unemployment**

The impact of corruption in state agencies and institutions on unemployment comes from limiting economic growth. As it affects the volume of domestic and foreign investments because investment avoids the environment in which corruption is rampant, as the latter causes waste of resources, lack of optimal allocation and inability to integrated economic planning, as a result of the shortage of resources directed to confront poverty and generate new jobs in the economy. In addition, it leads to distortion of the social fabric and class structures in society. According to the classification of Transparency International. Iraq ranked 175th out of a total of 178 countries based on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI Index Prediction Corruption) for the year 2010 (Transparency International, 2010), and 166th place out of a total of 167 for the same index for the year 2016 (Abdul Salah Hamza, 2017).

- **The Impact of Contradictory Fiscal and Monetary Policies on Unemployment**

The expansionary trend of fiscal policy during the study period is represented in the growth of government spending, and it is characterized by two basic features; They are: the unilateralism of the source of funding, with its dependence on oil rents almost entirely, and the dominance of the operational side over the investment in public budgets. This made government spending a source of increasing the growth rates of the money supply in a way that is not commensurate with the growth rates of aggregate activity. Which led to continuous inflationary pressures; This forced monetary policy to follow a deflationary approach to target inflation and maintain price stability. This contradiction between the fiscal and monetary policies led to the monetary policy continuing to curb the expansion of the monetary mass, which reflected positively on the drop in prices without being able to transfer the impact of the policy (The Monetary Transmission Effect) to the real sector.

Thus, the public sector remained dominant through rentier spending, with a local level of supply confined to the output of the service sector. This means that monetary tightening led to curbing the effect of financial expansion, which negatively affected the overall activity structure with the continued uniqueness of the oil sector and the continued presence of high rates of unemployment, which reinforced the phenomenon of stagflation, which means the presence of both inflation and unemployment at high rates.

III. Types of Unemployment in the Iraqi Economy

After we got to know the unemployment situation in Iraq. Which shows its close connection with the reality of the Iraqi economy and the confusion it suffers from, foremost of which is the general structural imbalance. In this requirement, we will discuss the most important forms (types) of unemployment in the economy, and to facilitate the presentation of these types, we will discuss them within certain divisions shown in the following figure, and then we list the details.

- **Apparent Unemployment**

This type expresses (lack of work), and the method of measuring it is one of the easiest ways, and several types fall under this heading:

- **Structural Unemployment**

This type was mainly caused by the inefficiency of employment policies, the irregularity of the labor markets, and the weak absorptive capacity of economic activity (Brihi, 2009), which caused a shortage in the demand for labor. It is the result of the inflexibility of the productive apparatus and the weak sector diversification in the economy, which led to a disproportionate growth between the structure of production and the structure of the labor market. In other words, the rate of increase of the labor force was much greater than the rate of job opportunities created. Here, the reason cannot be attributed to the structure of the labor market only. Because that is related to the natural development of societies. But the reason is in the presence of this structural disproportion is the stagnation and unilateral growth in the economy, which in turn led to the deepening of imbalances and structural distortions. This came as a result of all the causes and repercussions that were discussed in detail during the chapters and paragraphs of the research, especially the economic policies that were followed after 2003. Therefore, the researcher believes that this type of unemployment is the most common in the Iraqi economy among the types of apparent unemployment.

- **Frictional Unemployment**

This type is produced by the mismatch between vacant jobs and unemployed individuals, and it has existed in Iraq for a long time, due to the poor distribution of the labor force (Abdul Khader et al., 2010).

- **Underemployment**

This type of apparent unemployment is included in unemployment and employment surveys. It has already been defined in the first requirement of this research. The unemployment survey for the years 2005, 2004, and 2003 indicates that underemployment rates amounted to (23.5%) (31%) (30.3%), respectively, while the unemployment survey for the year 2006 indicated that they amounted to (10.38%), and then rose to (28.27%) in 2008, according to the survey in which it was conducted (Al-Shammari, 2013).

- **Hidden Unemployment**

The concept of invisible unemployment, as mentioned above, is determined by the case of individuals who are in a state of apparent employment with no exploitation: (i.e., in a state of non-optimal employment), as they cannot be classified in the category of the unemployed, nor does it apply to being in (a state of employment). It is not considered among the unemployed in surveys conducted to calculate unemployment rates. In the Iraqi

economy, there are many types of invisible unemployment, such as: (hidden unemployment and unproductive employment), and one of the most important cases of invisible unemployment is Disguised Unemployment, they are the category of workers who work without any additional productivity. That is, they do not provide anything for production, just like the unemployed; This type of unemployment is the result of unplanned employment policies; Especially in the government sector. It is worth noting that it is difficult to determine an approved and approved method for measuring disguised unemployment rates in a particular economy, and the fact that Iraq is going through a transitional period after 2003 at the level of the economic system, it is very difficult to determine a method for measuring disguised unemployment, especially for the period under discussion.

IV. Discussion

The traditional concept of unemployment, as mentioned above, depends on the concept of the unemployed person (meaning the person who is able, willing, and looking for work without finding it). It has been proven that this concept leads to obtaining low and unreal estimates of the reality of unemployment, in addition to that it is unable to estimate the types of unemployment that are not visible, foremost of which is disguised unemployment. There are several reasons for the lack of real estimates of unemployment. Including that some of the unemployed may decline to search for a job because of the low salaries, which are sometimes less than the transportation costs and the living arrangements necessary to fill the job; Or because of desperation from the possibility of obtaining a job in the first place, such people do not appear in the records of the unemployed. Another shortcoming of unemployment statistics is that it calculates the number of unemployed people at a specific point in time without taking into account the period of time during which unemployment continued. It is known that this period is longer in times of recession compared to times of economic prosperity (Hussain, 2012).

In Iraq, there is no accurate data on unemployment that can be relied upon in the economic analysis before 2003 because of the political conditions the country was going through and the weakness of the statistical effort. However, after the aforementioned date, the Ministry of Planning issued surveys on employment and unemployment on a quarterly and annual basis. The definitions used in these surveys varied. Which left its impact in estimating the real size of unemployment in the country. However, the aforementioned definition of the International Labor Organization (ILO) remains the one used in most surveys. According to the standard concepts of that organization. The population is classified into four categories: The unemployed, the economically inactive, and below the working age) (Kazem, 2011), as in Figure (1). In addition to the standard definition, the concept of under-unemployment appears in the surveys, which means individuals who perform paid work or work for their own account, whose working hours are less than the usual rates (35) hours per week, or individuals who receive low wages compared to the level of work or the exerted effort, or individuals who work in jobs that are not commensurate with their scientific or technical qualification (Iraqi Ministry of Planning, 2008). In order to form a clear idea of the reality of unemployment and its reality in Iraq some of the main indicators associated with it, the researcher prepared the following table, which includes: the population and its growth rate, the domestic product except for oil and its growth rate, unemployment, and inflation. This is for the research years that start in 2003 and end in 2020.

Table 1. Unemployment* rates, inflation, government spending and GDP in Iraq for the period 2003-2020

the year	GDP growth rate	Unemployment rate	Growth rate of government spending	Inflation
2003		28.1	4.2	32.6
2004	80.1	26.8	28.2	26.9
2005	38.4	17.9	4.6	37.0
2006	30.2	17.5	44.6	53.2
2007	17.2	11.7	1.5	30.8
2008	40.8	15.3	15.7	13.0
2009	-16.8	18.1	15.5	7.1
2010	24.1	15.2	22.4	6.1
2011	34.1	15.2	14.2	5.6
2012	16.9	11.9	21.2	6.1
2013	1.1	15.3	18.2	1.9
2014	-2.1	10.6	18	2.2
2015	-21.9	15.0	- 26.9	1.4
2016	-5.5	10.8	- 11.4	1.2
2017	14.9	14.8	- 4.9	0.2
2018	-29.5	12.9	3.5	0.4

2019	65.1	12.8	7.3	-0.2
2020	-23.9	13.7	- 31.9	0.6

Source: Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation __ Central Statistical Organization, Employment and Unemployment Surveys, different years.

In view of the numbers in Table (1), the unemployment rate reached (28,190) in the survey conducted in 2003, but the estimates of the United Nations for the same year were (50%), (United Nations and World Bank, 2006); Which could explain that the unemployment survey did not include frustrated people who were not looking for work as a result of the country's conditions at that time, or for the reasons mentioned above. It is noticeable that the unemployment rates began to decline gradually since 2004 until it reached (11.7%) in 2007, then it increased slightly in 2008 to reach (15.3%). The reason for this decrease is due to the relative improvement in the security situation and to the state's employment of many unemployed people in government institutions, especially in the security services (Ministry of Interior and Defense). Unemployment rates continued to decline, reaching their lowest value (10.6%) in 2014, and this is due, in addition to the reasons mentioned, to a remarkable relative improvement in sectoral growth, as indicated by the GDP growth rates, as a result of the increase in international oil prices in that period, which caused an increase in the distribution of income as a result of openness in government business; This led to a relative recovery, especially in the services sector. As well as the growing rates of government employment. 2015: Unemployment rates have returned to a slight increase since 2015, reaching (15%), and this was due to the decrease in the overall activity rates, as evidenced by the low output growth rates during the period between 2012-2015, due to the effects of the global oil price crisis, which It also led to a reduction in government employment. In addition to the possibilities of inaccuracy surrounding them for many reasons, including technical and procedural; It represents only visible or explicit unemployment (Unemployment Visible), i.e. it does not include the types of unemployment that are not visible and widespread in the Iraqi economy, foremost of which is disguised unemployment. Unemployment in Iraq has taken a social and economic dimension that illustrates the collapse of the economy and the deterioration of social balance at the level of Iraq. Referring to Iraq's economic history, we see that its economy is no different from the economy of developed countries with large financial and human resources. It suffers from underlying fragility due to weak economic policies. These economic policies to reduce unemployment have had few successes and many failures. The policy of expansion in the public sector and the presence of large percentages of workers should lead to a decline in this sector and an increase in the phenomenon of disguised unemployment. Unemployment is one of the biggest economic problems affecting the Iraqi economy in wasting energy and human resources. Al-Bakri, 2020_. The social, political and economic consequences of unemployment are profound. And when the economy is unable to find sufficient job opportunities for those who wish, this accumulates exorbitant costs. The idleness of a large percentage of the labor force in society leads to instability and problems.

V. Conclusion

Iraq's dependence on the oil sector has increased since the eighties, and the temporary expansion of limited production sectors, in addition to the neglect of productive sectors such as agriculture and industry. With the decline in sufficient investment in civilian activities, immediately after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the problem of unemployment worsened, with the demobilization of nearly a million recruits, leaving them in the labor market without the skills that qualify them to obtain profitable jobs. In addition to the economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council that accompanied the Kuwait war and the destruction of infrastructure in Iraq and Kuwait, estimated at 448 billion dollars (E. Woertz, 2019). After the widening circle of unemployment and poverty, and the low rates of development in all its indicators, and during those years, despite the difficulties of coexistence in the economy, there were two distinct sectors. There was a private sector alongside the public sector that employed two-thirds of the unemployed, most of whom were in the shadow economy, which accelerated the pace of growth during the 1990s. After the change in Iraq in 2003, the problem of unemployment arose due to the deterioration of agricultural, industrial and service production (Jadaan & Anis, 2021). The lack of quick and radical measures to address unemployment, poverty and high prices in exchange for weak monetary and fiscal policies addresses this problem due to the low security situation and political and economic instability. After 2003, due to insufficient domestic supply and increased demand for goods and services (Levitt, 2021). Iraq has turned to the undisciplined policy of economic openness to the world to increase imports. Due to the high levels of income resulting from the improvement in salaries and wages, imports increased by 65.6% in 2004 compared to 2002. There was no increase in domestic production, especially industrial production. Which, due to destruction, looting, and the inability to compete, continued to be disrupted due to the aging of production lines, the destruction of facilities, and the lack of security and stability. The scarcity of electricity has made the country unsuitable for investment, whether domestic or foreign.

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