YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE
working to empower youth

The Question of

JOB RETENTION AND REJECTION IN JORDAN

Exploratory Paper

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Executive Summary

Literature on employability of youth and challenges to promoting youth participation, especially women, in economic activities and labor market is vast in Jordan. On the one hand, the studies emphasize the need for enabling macroeconomic policies that facilitate job creation and entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, they highlight the structural and cultural challenges in school to work transitions. The issues of concern that are frequently highlighted include but are not limited to the following:

- addressing the mismatch between outcome of education and market demands,
- lack of readiness of youth to engage in the market
- nature of jobs created
- the presence of expatriate workers, especially Syrian refugees
- stigmatization of unskilled jobs
- limited interest of youth to participate in entrepreneurial activities
- absence of an enabling working environment
- cultural factors that influence women's participation in the economy

There is little information with regards to in-market employment patterns and trends among Jordanian youth. Hardly any data is available on the length of tenure and the retention patterns for Jordanian new entrants into the market, especially youth and women.

The incentives framework does not encourage young people to enter the labor market in Jordan. Government strategies to accommodate and absorb youth in the public sector and or paid training programs have created a culture of reliance and dependency. Furthermore, parental financial support to the unemployed youth, the widespread notion of recruitment through social networks and Wasta and youth aspiration for acquiring prestigious jobs all affect their decisions about accepting jobs and or continuing in their current jobs. Additionally, practices of private sector companies, particularly medium and small organizations, further intensify the situation as employers fall short from providing a safe and enabling environment for work.

The International Youth Foundation's (IYF) Youth for the Future Program in Jordan (Y4F), in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) commissioned this exploratory paper to shed light on issues that contribute to the employment crisis.

Using the Y4F beneficiary database, available literature and group discussions, this paper set out to explore the reasons for youth to leave and reject jobs. While the paper findings provide insights on factors that influence youth retention patterns, it is recommended that a more focused study is undertaken to help bridge the limitations of the data and better understand the youth, male and female, employment trends, expectations and interests.

Altogether 859 records were used (642 men and 217 women) of which 116 (69 men and 47 women) replied to why they left jobs and 48 for why they refused jobs. Two group discussions were also held in Amman (Kherabt Al Souq) and Zarqa. The groups comprised of 12 persons (3 females and 9 males) randomly selected from Y4F training programs.

Economic reasons are most commonly stated as the reason for leaving work, personal skills and ambitions were second most important reason and working environment was the third most stated reason for leaving work. Nonetheless, in the group discussions working environment, especially treatment at work, was emphasized as the determining factor for youth's decision to leave and refuse jobs but participants also noted the financial aspects are equally important.

Youth coming from lower income families were likely to leave jobs for financial reasons more than those with higher income earning families. The latter noted long working hours and not being able to meet career ambitions as the reasons for leaving and refusing jobs. The cost of starting work e.g. covering transportation for the first month[1] was not frequently cited as a reason for refusing jobs but when it was, it originated from participants whose families are in the lower income brackets. For youth with lower income jobs were rejected for financial reasons and also the type and quality of work.

Men were more likely to leave jobs for financial reasons than women and women left jobs for reasons relating to working environment and logistical issues as well as social and family reasons more than men. In fact, no men mentioned social and family factors as reasons for leaving work and by far more men mentioned personal skills and ambition as reason to leave work than women. The gender related findings reiterate the social and legal assumptions that women have more restrictions on their work outside their homes while men have more breadwinning responsibilities.

Findings of the paper allude to recommendations at three levels: knowledge and research, policy implementation, and awareness raising. It is evident that more research to better understand patterns and trends of youth mobility in the market are needed for informing policy and also school to work transition programs. On a policy implementation level, it is suggested that the government activates controls for implementing minimum wages while improving current and new job opportunities for Jordanians. Equally important is raising awareness among youth to bridge the differences between their expectations and available job opportunities.

Introduction

In their study "Soft skills or Hard Cash?" the World Bank noted that employers tend to avoid hiring new graduates since they lack the required soft skills, work experience, work ethics and interpersonal skills to effectively produce results. Reluctance to hire young women is even higher as a result of cultural barriers and discouraging corporate perceptions of women's ability to perform jobs effectively.

Studies and discussions at conferences [2] have also highlighted the private sector's continued dissatisfaction with the level of youth readiness to work. Youth knowledge and soft skills, such as communication, social intelligence, cooperation, time management, work ethics and commitment[3] is said to fall short of enabling them to fulfil their working responsibilities. Despite all the reform efforts and programs introduced, the education system and the socialization process still fail to provide youth with sufficient exposure and knowledge about working environments, career guidance and /or work ethics and professional behaviour[4].

The purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons that lead youth to leave or refuse jobs and to analyze the factors that may have considerable impact on retention rates of both youth and women in the labor force. In particular the paper attempted to answer three questions:

[1] In explaining the "cost of starting work" youth gave an example of transportation costs that need to be paid, even when they do not have cash, in the first month of employment.
[2] Employer Perspective on the Jordanian Labor Force, Creative Associates International - Study Launch March 2014, Youth – Gender and Employability Conference, FHI 360 – GE Foundation, November 2013
[3] Employer Perspective on the Jordanian Labor Force, Creative Associates International, March 2014
[4] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Workforce Development Report: SABER Report, World Bank June 2013

- *Is refusing/leaving jobs related mainly to perceived insufficient salary and unacceptable working conditions? If so, what are the evidences backing these claims? Are they leaving for better jobs / self-employment?*
- *Is the opportunity cost simply too high for them to work? Are there trends between job leavers and rejecters practices, and their family income?*
- *Is refusing/leaving jobs related to an insufficient understanding of the occupation before joining a particular skills area?*

The paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 presents a contextual overview; chapter 2 discusses the methodology used to draft the paper. Chapter 3 presents the findings and observation, and chapter 4 includes the discussion of findings and concluding remarks.

Contextual overview

Jordan is an upper middle-income country with limited natural resources and high reliance on foreign assistance. Increasing investment, creating jobs and reducing poverty are among the most daunting economic challenges that the consecutive Jordanian governments encounter. Jordan's economy is more service oriented as opposed to industrially based. Government policies, for over a decade now, have been shifting to nurture a more liberal market based economy that provides a favorable foreign investment environment and opportunities.[5]

The impacts of investment policies, privatization of companies and liberalization of the market were felt during the period from 2000 – 2008. Economically, Jordan thrived but unemployment rates hardly changed; participation in the labor force, especially among women, remained low. Benefits of economic growth were not equitably distributed and the jobs created were mostly for non – Jordanians.[6] Based on the recommendation of the Call for Action from the International Labor Organization (ILO) with regards to the youth employment crisis, it is unmistakable that a more transformative, comprehensive and collaborative effort to address Jordan's low employment and unemployment rates is needed for more strategic solutions.

The **National Employment Strategy** (2011 – 2020, NES) derived its vision from the National Agenda but narrowed its focus to job generation. The NES highlighted unemployment as a structural problem that requires medium to long term solutions; short term solutions such as scaling up active labor market programs are merely addressing the symptoms and are falling short from generating quality long term sustainable jobs. Medium term goals emphasized the need to reform the educational and vocational training systems while expanding the school to work transition programs. The longer term goals highlighted the need to adopt a more transformative macroeconomic policy that will facilitate economic growth and job creation[7].

Despite predictions that Jordan's economic growth will accelerate in the coming two years, the current regional political and economic instabilities already undermined growth prospects and have exacerbated the challenges Jordan faces in promoting sustainable economic growth and reducing unemployment[8].

[5] Jordan Economic Monitor: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, World Bank Fall 2013
[6] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Workforce Development Report: SABER Report, World Bank June 2013
[7] International Labor Organization: The youth Employment Crisis A call for action, 2012
[8] Jordan Economic Monitor: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, World Bank Fall 2013

Demographic trend: the "Youth Bulge"

Table 1: Jordanian Population Age 15-24 Years by Activity status, Sex by Age - 2013[9]

Age Group and Sex	Not Economically Active (%)	Refined Economic Activity Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)
Total			
15-19	91.3	8.7	34.1
20-24	59.4	40.6	30.4
Male			
15-19	84	16	34.4
20-24	39.9	60.1	24.1
Female			
15-19	99.5	0.5	22.8
20-24	82.4	17.6	56.2

The country's population growth rate is estimated at 2.2% (2012) with a total number of 6.3 million persons excluding the Syrian refugees. Women constitute more than half of the population, and over one third of the population is under the age of 15. Approximately 30% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 29 years and the population median age is 20.3 years. The dependency ratio is (68.2%) with an average household size of 5.4[10].

While Jordan's "youth bulge" is potentially an opportunity for the investment of human capital in Jordan's economy, it is also a demanding challenge. In a knowledge driven economy, human resources, talents and capabilities are vital for enhancing productivity and strengthening prosperity. Nonetheless, the demands of such a group are relatively high, particularly given the need to absorb all of them in the labor force. In Jordan, job creation rates do not correspond to the volume of youth seeking employment and when opportunities arise, job conditions and environment are below youth's aspiration and expectations. The situation is further aggravated by the shortcoming of the academic and vocational educational environment to reinforce talent and satisfy the knowledge and skill demands of the market.

Youth Employment Trends

The youth employment trends highlighted in Table 1 emphasize both the elevated rate of non- economic activity among males and females aged of 20-24 as well as the discrepancy between them. Altogether, the Jordanian economy not only suffers from an unemployment rate of 12.2% but also from a relatively low participation rate of economically active persons (38%).[11] The bulk of working Jordanians are in public administration and defense work, followed by wholesale and retail trade (including motor repair) and education (25%, 15% and 12% respectively[12]). Only 9.7% are in manufacturing.

The majority of economically active Jordanians are public sector employees. Government employment is more attractive for women than men but still remains the preference for both[13], due to its job security, short working hours and benefits. Private sector employment is the less favorable option, especially for women[14].

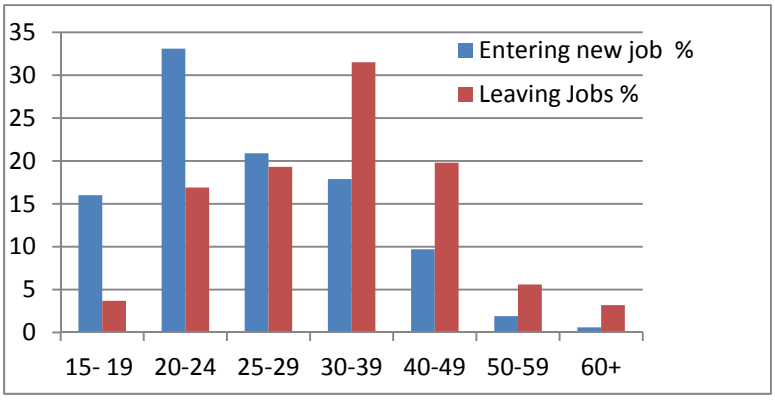
[9] Employment and unemployment Survey, Department of Statistics 2013
[10] Jordan in Figures – Department of Statistics 2012
[11] Jordan in Figures, Department of Statistics 2012.
[12] Jordan in Figures - Department of Statistics, 2012
[13] Investigating Factors that Structure Societal Perception of Gender Roles in Jordan, Ali,Y., Mohsen M., and Mashal,K., Hashemieh University with support from Gender and Social Fund, 2010
[14] Investigating Factors that Structure Societal Perception of Gender Roles in Jordan, Ali Y., Mohsen, M., and Mashal,K., Hashemieh University with support from Gender and Social Fund, 2010

Approximately 84,367 jobs were created in both the public and private sector in 2012. Youth ages 20-24 had the highest share of joining new jobs (33.1%), followed by youth aged 25-29 years (20.9%). While youth aged 25-29 were more likely to leave jobs than those in the younger age groups, the significant proportion of persons leaving their jobs was between 30-39 years old. Altogether the figures indicate that the youth aged 20-24 are more likely to enter new jobs, whereas persons aged 30-39 have the highest rate in leaving jobs. This is not surprising as persons aged 30-39 are likely to have been working for a while and are in the midst of their career cycle and advancement.

Never married persons took a higher proportion of newly created jobs while the married persons were more likely to leave jobs. Married and non-married women have almost equal rates of leaving jobs but never married women secure a larger proportion of new jobs created[15].

An analysis of employment trends in Jordan shows that Jordanians are unlikely to change their jobs especially if they are in government positions. Job mobility is more likely to occur among workers in the informal sector as opposed to employed persons in the formal sector. In the latter case as well, mobility trends reflect a move from private to public sector work and from temporary to more permanent jobs.[16]

Figure 1: Distribution of Persons aged 15+ who joined new jobs and left it / DOS 2012



Youth Unemployment Trends

Women constitute half of the population but their economic participation rate has hardly reached 15%, despite their educational achievements. Approximately 40% of the Jordanian population has a secondary or higher degree (intermediate college, university or above). Only 6.7% are illiterate and the remaining has less than a secondary education. Unemployment is highest among female university graduates followed by men with less than secondary degrees. The trend is reinforced by the fact that the employment share for men and women with basic education is the highest share in the labor market.[17] While this highlights the mismatch between market demand and availability of jobs in the workforce, it also reflects the high demand for unskilled vs. professional and skilled jobs.

Methodology

A major portion of the Y4F program, running from 2009 to 2014, sought to support the successful transitions of young people to work by doing the following:

- Working with local community based organizations and training organizations to provide high quality life skills and technical training to Jordan's most vulnerable youth, along with career counseling and job placement support

[15] Job Creation Survey – Department of Statistics, 2012
[16] The School to Work Transition of Jordanian Youth (Working paper series # 686), Amer, M. - Economic Research Forum, 2012
[17] Employment and Unemployment survey – Department of Statistic, 2012

- Supporting the public sector in enhancing their employability programs and advocate for policy changes that would address some of the barriers to labor market entry and retention for young people.

Youth For the Future

Youth for the Future (Y4F), is a program of the International Youth Foundation (IYF) carried out in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development and the Government of Jordan. Its goal: to support youth at-risk in realizing productive and rewarding roles in society, while helping Jordanian society maximize the energy, talent, and enthusiasm of today's young generation. Y4F takes internationally-recognized best practices in the field of youth development and adapts them to address the needs of the nation's underserved youth. At the same time, it unites diverse segments of society – government entities, companies, civil society organizations, academic institutions, parents, and others – in a concerted effort to serve young people's needs.

As part of its program, Y4F collected extensive information from participating youth to understand both their demographic background as well as their post program participation outcomes. This paper relied on the Y4F database and used a selection of 859 records to ensure sufficient availability of data for analysis. Records were only selected from the past two years[18] and were purposely selected by the IYF team based on the criteria that responded to the job refusal/early job leaver questionnaire and or had completed the follow on questionnaires

The majority of the sample (79.5%) were between 17-22 years and 517 (60.2%) were working at the time of data collection (392 were males and 125 were females). Of the 859, 166 had changed work (152 men and 14 women). A total of 116 of those who changed jobs responded to reasons for leaving jobs and 48 of total population provided reasons for rejecting jobs. More than 25% of the respondents were from families with an average monthly income of 300- 499 JD (US$425 – US700) and 30% were from families with 299 JD (US$420) or less in monthly income. Furthermore, approximately 90% of respondents had not successfully completed their tawjihi, and 45% had finished school at the 10th grade or less.

Group discussions were also held to complement the numerical information and endorse some findings.[19] The discussions were conducted with youth in Amman (Khreibet al Souq) and Zarqa. A total of 12 youth (3 women and 9 men) participated. Each session discussed reasons for the youth to leave jobs and or reject jobs and their means of sustenance in-between jobs.

The data used had already been collected by IYF as part of its ongoing Y4F monitoring and evaluation activities and was not collected for the purpose of this study. Some of the data originated from Y4F tracking forms, which included questions on youth aspirations, employment status, reasons for leaving jobs and or rejecting them among other variables such as income, family, age etc. The other source of data used was a study undertaken by Y4F program on Analysis of Youth Reasons for Leaving or Refusing Jobs. The study was undertaken by the IYF team in December 2013 and as part of the study the participants were asked to highlight primary and secondary reasons for leaving jobs.

In the analysis process however, there were some evident data flaws that generated some gaps in the analysis. This was expected since the data was not collected purposefully for the paper. Nonetheless, to complement the missing information additional research was used. Moreover, and to facilitate analysis,

[18] The Y4F program began collecting data on participant job refusal and leaving starting in 2012.
[19] The study originally intended to conduct 15-20 in-depth individual interviews but was unable to do so given time constraints on the period of the study.

reasons for leaving jobs and or rejecting them were merged under thematic categories for significance. For the purpose of this paper, the categories used are[20]:

- *Economic/Financial Reasons: merged youth replies to answers such as: "improving my income", "current pay is too low", "cannot cover my starting cost";*
- *Working environment and logistical reasons: merged replies in relation to "distance from work", "long working hours"; and nature of job included replies such as "physically demanding work" and "socially inappropriate";*
- *Personal skills and ambitions: merged replies relating to "skills are questionable for the labor market", "does not satisfy work ambition", "boring work", "no opportunity of advancement", "got a better job";*
- *Family and social reasons: merged replies to "parental refusal" and "having to care for family".*
- *Back to school remained as is and*
- *Others merged replies relating to "religious reasons" and "disability".*

Annex 1 presents the complete list of variables that were used as a reference while Annex 2 outlines the issues and themes that guided the facilitation of the group discussion.

Findings and observations

This section summarizes the findings and observations from the literature review, data analysis and group discussions. As shown, in Table 2, financial reasons were most commonly cited by respondents as the reason for leaving work; personal skills and ambitions followed, with work environment and logistics following.

Table 2: Reasons for leaving work according to respondents of Y4F program

Reason for Leaving job	Frequency	Percent
Financial reasons (improve income, current pay is too low, does not cover my financial needs, cannot cover my starting cost)	41	35
Personal skills and ambitions (skills are questionable for labor market, does not satisfy work ambition, boring work, no opportunity for advancement, got a better job)	26	22
Work environment and logistical issues related to the job (distance from work, long working hours)	16	14
Other reasons (religion, disability, others)	14	12
Family and social reasons (parental refusal, have to care of family)	10	9
Back to school	7	6
Nature of Job (Physically demanding and socially inappropriate)	2	2
Total	116	100

[20] Merging replies concentrated the data and enhanced its meaning, especially in the analysis. Replies are stated as presented in the questionnaire/forms used by IYF.

Table 3: Reasons for refusing jobs work according to respondents of Y4F program

Reasons for refusing jobs	Frequency	Percentage
Financial reasons (improve my income, salary package does not meet financial demands, cannot cover starting cost)	21	44
Personal skills and ambitions (skills are questionable, does not satisfy work ambition)	17	35
Working environment Logistical issues related to the job (distance from work, long working hours)	3	6
Nature of Job (Physically demanding and socially inappropriate)	3	6
Family and social reasons (have to care for family)	3	6
Back to school	1	2
Total	48	100

Table 3 shows that youth rationale for rejecting jobs is similar to the reasons for leaving them. Respondents to reasons for rejecting jobs indicated that financial and personal skills and ambitions reasons are the most cited for rejecting jobs.

Both men and women indicated that financial reasons are core to their decision to leave their work. However, women tend to leave jobs for more family and social related reasons than men. Distance and working hours are equally important for them. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the frequency of men and women replying to reasons for leaving jobs (total replies were 116). The table also provides insights as to reasons why women's participation in the labor market remains below expectations. Women's home and family obligations are considered a priority and the fact that financial compensation is not necessarily rewarding discourages them further.

Table 4: Reasons for leaving work by sex of respondent

Reasons for leaving work	Male	Female
Financial reasons (improve my income, current pay is too low, pay does not cover needs)	28 41%	13 27%
Working environment and logistical issues related to the job (distance from work, long working hours)	6 8%	10 21%
Personal skills and ambitions (my skills are questionable, does not satisfy my work ambition, boring work, no opportunity for advancement, got a better job)	16 23%	4 9%
Family and social reasons (parental refusal, have to care for family)	0 0	10 21%
Nature of Job (Physically demanding, socially inappropriate)	6 9%	2 4%
Back to school	3 4%	4 9%
Other reasons (religion, disability, others)	10 15%	4 9%
Total	69 100%	47 100%

The findings and observations made can be categorized into three categories: economic, working environment, and social and personal factors.

Economic and Financial Factors

Youth, both males and females, indicated that financial reasons are generally the reasons for which they leave or reject jobs. Of the 116 respondents to the reasons for leaving the job, 35% cited financial reasons as the primary cause of their decision, and 17.1% mentioned it as a secondary reason. When compared to national statistics produced as part of the Job Creation Survey (2012), the overall average of stating economic reasons[21] as a cause for leaving work was relatively high. Only 15% of the Job Creation survey noted economic reasons as a cause for leaving their jobs. However the frequency of responses is not provided within an age group breakdown and hence can be skewed since the majority of those leaving jobs in the national survey fall within the age of 30-39 years, an age group that is not represented in this study. Further investigation is needed to better understand the trends for reasons of changing working across age groups.

- *Low salaries offered discourages youth from accepting jobs and staying in jobs*

Of the total sample, 23.2% reported having salaries between 190-250 JDs, 35% reported having less than 190 JD (268 US$) salaries, 7.1% had more than 250 JDs (350 US$), and 45% provided no answer. Of those who responded to reasons for leaving their work 56.5% had salaries lower than 190 JDs and 7.8% had salaries more than 250 JDs. 26.1% had salaries between 190-250 JD, while 9.6% did not answer. The difference between the total sample and those who responded to reasons for leaving highlights a probable correlation between low salaries and leaving work especially that 35.4% reported leaving jobs for financial reasons. Within that, "low pay" and " pay does not cover financial needs "earned the highest responses (16.4% and 11.2% respectively). Male respondents were also more likely to mention financial reasons than females. Of those stating financial reasons for leaving work, 41% were male compared to 27% females.

Most of the discussion group participants' salary ranged between 200-350 JDs (5 persons, i.e. 282 – 494 US$) and they all, with the exception of two (one that became unemployed another who moved to family business), had lower salaries in previous work.

- *Salaries are the most common reasons for which youth refuse jobs*

A significant percent of respondents refused jobs for financial reasons (44%) and within that low pay was the most important factor. The findings were also confirmed by the discussion group participants' action. During the group discussions, the youth noted that the financial package to any job is important, one participant said: "*youth will leave jobs for an increase of 30 JD (42$)*". Another noted: "*Anyone that tells you salary is not important is not telling the truth*". Similar findings were highlighted in IYF Focus Group Discussion with Youth: Work participants and stakeholders[22] as youth participants frequently noted that the salaries offered to them were relatively low for covering their work and transportation costs. The IYF study on transportation also indicated that the cost of transportation and its quality, reliability, safety are factors that influence youths', especially women, continuation and acceptance of jobs.

Furthermore, in trying to measure the urgency of job search among the unemployed, the Labor Market Transition Report[23] noted that 16.8% of its unemployed youth respondents had refused a job. Of them

[21] Economic reasons are not clearly defined in Job Creation Survey.
[22] Focus Group Discussion with Youth: Work participants and Stakeholders, Rania Sabbah and Mais Thweib – April 2013, International Youth Foundation
[23] Labor market Transition of young women and men in Jordan, V. Barrucci and N. Mryyan – 2014, Work 4 Youth Publication Series 14 – International Labour Office and Master Card

40.7% had turned down the jobs for low pay reasons. The survey also showed that twice as much men turn jobs for low pay than women. Women tend to accept lower pay considering the limitations to the opportunities they have, also since their salaries are considered complementary to that of the men.

- *Salaries barely meet the needs of youth*

In total the average salary of the youth participants in discussion group was 245 JD (346 US$), with the highest salary being 600 JD (850 US$) and the lowest being 190 JD (268 US$). The average is lower than the average reported by Labor Market Transition Report (266JD for men i.e. 375 US$)[24].

Even though the discussion group sample size is small, it was apparent that the youth salaries barely meet their needs. The analysis shows that youth participating in the discussion groups reported that on average they spend 239 JD (337 US$) per month but their average salary was 245 JD (346 US$). The data also showed that youth with lower salaries are more likely to spend more than youth with higher salaries. Although further investigation is needed to explore patterns of expenditure of youth compared to their earning, the current information indicates that offered wages do not necessary meet the youth commitments and needs. Indeed, the second most commonly reported reasons for leaving work was that "pay did not meet financial needs" of respondents (11.2%). Although expenditure averages were not tracked as part of IYF database, a significant portion of respondents (35%) had salaries below 190 JD which based on the group discussion youth average expenditure will render youth with much less money than they need.

- *Additional benefits offered, including social security, are not considered determining factors in the younger groups decision to accept or leave a job*

During the discussion groups, youth were asked as to whether job benefits (social security, health insurance) affected their decision to stay or leave a job. There was evident recognition of its importance but was not considered a determining factor in the decision to stay or reject a job at least for the younger group. The older youth noted, "*It is important to have a social security; I have even joined as part of the optional program. You know this also protects you as companies cannot reduce your salary*". Another confirmed, "*Some companies tell you it is included but you have to pay it. Others deceive you and report reduced salaries to social security under the premise that you are benefiting because you get more cash. Reality is you are not on the long term*". In one of the group discussions youth alluded to the fact that they hardly know the social security system since it is not introduced to them at any point of time. On that note the youth who knew explained, "*we got to learn about it through experience, hearing others and our families*".

- *There is a correlation between family income and choosing economic reasons for leaving jobs.*

The statistics show that the proportion of youth from families with less than 200 JDs (282 US$) are more likely to be currently working than those in other income brackets. However, of those in the lower income brackets, economic reasons were more commonly cited as the primary reason for leaving their jobs. Indeed, 33.3% of those who stated low pay as a reason for leaving work were from families with 200-299 JD (282 – 422 US$) average monthly income. Youth from higher income brackets cited long work hours as the primary reasons for leaving work, the secondary reasons related to career advancement. While the findings allude to a potential link between family income and youth reasons for leaving jobs, further investigation is needed to help understand the trends and patterns of mobility among youth whose families have lower income brackets.

The discussion groups indicated that the family income does not necessarily influence the youth decision to leave or refuse a job. One male youth participant said "*I provide for my family since my father passed away, and although I need the money, I am not willing to stay in a job that does not satisfy me – or am*

[24] Labor market Transition of young women and men in Jordan, V. Barrucci and N. Mryyan – 2014, Work 4 Youth Publication Series 14 – International Labour Office and Master Card.

not treated well". Upon further questioning it was apparent that the same youth earns some money from his occasional work in carpentry. Nonetheless, another one said: *"I left my work. I was sure I will get a better job."* Another said "*My family needs the money but the job was not what I want so I left it"*.

- *The youth rely on their family and friends for financial support to sustain themselves during unemployment periods.*

As part of the study undertaken in preparation of the Youth, Gender and Employability, it became evident that youth sustain their living during unemployment periods through asking their mothers and fathers for money. One of the participants of that study said, *"Our brothers will only take work seriously if they are thrown out of the house and have to earn a living – so long as they get a pocket money, why should they work?"* Although hardly any studies have been undertaken to explore the relation between family financial provision for working age youth and their eagerness to work, multiple indicators suggest that the reliance on family finance may well be a factor in youth decision not to work. Statistics show that 38% of the unemployed have been unemployed for more than one year.[25]

Participants from the group discussion had an average unemployment of 6 months and when asked about the sources of their income they said self-financing, family members and fathers as the three main supporters. In investigating the issue more, one youth said, "*We all go through this period; you just live off others. You see a friend – you tell him – let us go for coffee, and of course he pays. You see another and it is lunch – this continues. Also, you also take a few JDs from your mother, father etc*." When challenged as to how long youth can sustain living this way, two male participants mentioned that eventually some revert to "petty crime" as a resort. One said, *"You see another friend like you and convince him to go rob a person walking out of a bank….youth think of that and some do it."* Female participants noted that they have less money to spend. One said: *"We have less to worry about. We do not smoke; we do not go out – so no expenditure."*

Social and Personal Factors

Social perceptions tend to affect youth decision to leave and or reject jobs. However, social perceptions of jobs tend to affect women more than men. More women stated that they left and/or refused jobs because they were socially inappropriate for them. Nonetheless, youth aspirations and expectations of their careers and jobs were more important for both men and women. Youth have high expectations from the job market and are subsequently disillusioned by the reality of jobs offered[26].

- *Youth job expectations are high and perception of their success is age related*

Of the 859 cases, 84% of youth believed that they have the ability to assume an "important job". Women were slightly more optimistic than men (89% vs. 85% respectively) and older youth were more hopeful than the younger ones. Considerable numbers of youth tend to seek an ideal job to start working[27] and accordingly, await it. When asked about the potential of being offered a "good work opportunity," 86.3% of youth believed that they will would be offered a "good opportunity." Although the youth did not define a "good" or 'important" job, their replies is reflective of their aspirations.

Of the total respondents to reasons for leaving work, 89% believed that they will receive an "important position" and 88% indicated that they "will be provided with a good work opportunity". It is evident from the data that youth tend to have high aspiration of the type of jobs they will hold and accordingly it is not surprising that personal skills and ambition is the second most commonly stated reason for leaving

[25] Jordan in Figures – 2012
[26] Focus Group Discussion with Youth: Work participants and Stakeholders, Rania Sabbah and Mais Thweib – April 2013, International Youth Foundation
[27] Omar Razzaz presentation during the Youth, Gender and Employability conference November 2013.

jobs since their expectations, and sometimes qualifications, are higher than what the market may offer them.

Personal ambition was also the second most stated reason for refusing jobs (35%). Youth aspirations of the job market combined with social expectations of having well paid prestigious jobs raises youths own hopes of the nature and quality of jobs they seek. They are more likely to continue to refuse jobs until the "ideal job" emerges. Youth do not consider any opportunity a "good opportunity" to build their experience; instead they prefer to wait.[28] A recent World Bank study showed that youth "*are unwilling to take on certain jobs*" [29] which are primary "low prestige jobs". According to the study youth are reluctant to apply to low prestige jobs and even when they do, they are likely not to accept them.

- *Youth perceive personal advancement and potential for growth as a reason for leaving work*

Out of the responses to the reasons for leaving work, 22% noted personal skills and ambition as a reason for leaving work. Within that most respondents noted that they left their jobs primarily because the jobs were either "not meeting their ambitions" or had "limited advancement opportunity"; 26.8% mentioned personal skills and ambition as a secondary reason for leaving work. During the in depth discussions, more than one participant noted that they left their work because they saw no potential in it. One participant said, *"At most, in that restaurant – I can advance to be a branch manager…but that is not what I want."* Another said, *"I did not see a future in that organization."*

- *Youth recognize their ability to access jobs but understand that they can only secure a job with wasta*

The majority of responding youth noted that there are no reasons for "failing to attain a job". However, in another survey 85% of youth noted that knowing people in high positions is critical to getting a job and 22% indicated that jobs were available for those with personal connections (Wasta). Only 33% said the lack of availability in jobs was an obstacle.[30]

Youth perception of needing social connections for employment was reiterated in a number of studies and conferences. One youth participant in a conference on employability said, *"We need wasta, and if we don't have a wasta, we will never get hired"*[31], and he was supported by others. When private sector companies were asked as to how they search for new candidates, 67% of respondents confirmed that it was through personal connections[32]. In the two discussion groups held for this paper, youth confirmed that jobs are available but the most common way of knowing about them is through contacts. One male participant said *"we learn about jobs from our friends, people who work in the organization."* Another female participant confirmed "*I know someone in the organization and they told me about the job*". This perception of the job market may affect the young people's beliefs about staying in a job and opportunities for promotion within a given job where that "wasta" does not exist for them.

Work environment and logistical issues

Working conditions was also the second most reported on reason for leaving and refusing jobs. More women than men tend to cite working conditions as a reason for leaving and or refusing work but both

[28] This concept was extensively discussed during the Youth, Gender and Employability conference in November 2013 and was highlighted by Dr. Omar Razzaz in his opening speech when he said "youth wait for a good job opportunity, but all opportunities are good" they do not perceive an opportunity to work as a good one".
[29] "Testing the importance of search Frictions, matching, and reservation prestige through randomized experiments in Jordan", Policy Research Working Paper 7030, M Groh, D. McKenzie, N. Shammout and T. Vishwanath, World Bank Group, September 2014 (Page 3)
[30] Jordan Country Report – Gallup, 2009
[31] Youth, Gender and Employability Conference – FHI 360 with support from GE foundation, November 2013
[32] Employer Perspective on the Jordanian Labor Force, Creative Associates International, March 2014

men and women emphasize the importance of "working environment," "treatment," and "job nature" in making their decision to leave or refuse a job.

- *Working environment and conditions were emphasized as reasons for leaving jobs*

A total of 16% of respondents to reasons for leaving jobs noted that that they left because of working conditions. Although statistically this was the third ranking reasons for youth to leave jobs, the national statistics from the Job Creation Survey (2012) shows that 36% of those who left their jobs, left because of the working conditions and work environment. This was reinforced through the group discussions as participants highlighted the working environment as a determining factor to their decision to remain, leave and or refuse a job. Interestingly as well, youth emphasized "treatment at work by supervisors" as the fundamental aspect of working environment that matters to them. Both in Amman and Zarqa, the issue of treatment was flagged as the one of the most important factors that influenced the group's decisions to leave their work. Almost every participant had a story to share. The stories differed but one participants said, "*I was simply bossed around by other colleagues and was spoken to in rude way… not to mention the bad words used.*" Another said, "*I can accept many things, but I cannot tolerate being disrespected*". Another said, "*We are there to work not to be slaves. The supervisor wants to always show us that he is in charge.*" Another youth said, "*I left my job because they were not treating me right. They really belittled the job that I was doing and never appreciated it. I left and went back to my old job. They pay less, but at least they respect and appreciate you.*"

There were also repeated indications, during the group discussions, that the demands supervisors have stretch beyond the scope of the job, thus, increasing the youth disappointment and frustration with work to an extent that may lead them to leave. As one of the youth noted, "*I know my job; I clean the restaurant and scrub the bathrooms but when they start asking you to sparkle shine the connecting cement on the bathroom floors, you realize that this is far and beyond what is possible.*" Another said, "*They go crazy if they see you stand still for a second. They will ask you to keep on wiping the same table on and on – simply to ensure that you do not stand.*" Another said, "*I am really lucky; where I work all those who are around me are helpful; I do not have to deal with these situations.*"

- *Distance from work and the inefficiency and cost of transportation were both mentioned as reasons for leaving work*

Although only 5.2% of respondents indicated that the long distance between their work and home was the primary reason for leaving their jobs, 9.2% noted it as a secondary reason. The IYF study on transportation indicated that the unreliability and high cost of transportation deters youth, especially females, to join employment and training. The average round trip for the study respondents was 115 minutes for five areas (Amman, Mafraq, Sahab, Shouneh Al Janobyeh and Rassifeh).[33]

Participants of the group discussion in Zarqa mentioned transportation as a reason for leaving jobs. A male youth participant said, "*When they offer you a job in Amman for 400 JD it is still better to take a job in Zarqa for less. The cost of going to Amman – 4 JDs each day and the four hour drive (round trip)- are enough to tell me it is not worth it. I stay here, commute easier and still have time to go out with friends.*" Similarly a female participant said, "*My parents will not allow me to go back and forth to Amman every day. Even if they accept, I am expected to be back home before 5. So really, it is impossible for me to think about it.*" The concern in Amman (Kherabt Al Souq) was not only inefficiency and cost of transportation but safety issues, especially at night. One participant said, "*I do not take night shifts – it is troublesome.*" Another noted that commuting at night is difficult. "*We have to take private cars that are used as taxis. It is not the best deal – but there is little night transportation.*" During the discussion,

[33] International Youth Foundation: Transportation services and their impact on youth choices, 2013

another youth pointed out the danger of riding in such cars. He said, *"Aren't you scared when you ride with strangers – what if they had drugs, weapons etc., we are seeing more of such cases."*

- *Family and social reasons that influence youth decision to leave a job, especially for women*

National statistics show that 2%[34] of those who leave work do so for social reasons while 4.8% respondents in the IYF data base indicated that they left work for family refusal and or taking care of family. While 38% of the national figures were men and 62% were women, women constituted 100% of the respondent rate to both parental refusal of the job and social inappropriate jobs in the IYF data. Of the respondents 6% indicated that they left their jobs for caring for the family and another 6% went back to studying. More women left to go back studying than men and for taking care of their families. Studies have also indicated that women tend to leave jobs due to the absence of support mechanisms such as reliable and affordable day care services, transportation, and long working hours. Although stipulated by law, private sector companies evade the establishment of day care services and avoid compensating women for it. Moreover, the discrepancy in pay between men and women discourages women from continuing in the market.[35]

Jordanians are also more costly to hire than non-Jordanian workers who tend to be more committed and adherent to the demands of the employers. In one of the discussion groups a young man said, "*They are driving us out…for every Jordanian you hire, you can hire two non-Jordanians, so employers are pushing us out from our jobs to get Syrians"*. Another said, "*A Syrian can live with low salaries, they even offer to sleep at the location and do other things, we cannot afford to do that*".

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The paper set out to respond to three questions and while some answers have been provided, there were limitations as to answering the different aspects of the questions primarily because the information is not available through the IYF database and other literature. The three questions were:

- *Is refusing/leaving jobs related mainly to perceived insufficient salary and unacceptable working conditions? If so, what are the evidences backing these claims? Are they leaving for better jobs / self-employment?*
- *Is the opportunity cost simply too high for them to work? Are there trends between job leavers and rejecters practices, and their family income?*
- *Is refusing/leaving jobs related to an insufficient understanding of the occupation before joining a particular skills area?*

According to the study, financial reasons are the most cited reasons for leaving jobs and rejecting jobs; however, considering the economic situation of the youth and their families it is clear that Jordanian youth and their families, even at the poorest levels, have a more nuanced value system for evaluating jobs and their potential to help their future than simply salaries. Findings suggest that youth stability at work and even their transition to work is highly influenced by the salaries paid, personal ambitions and working environment. Reasons given for leaving work are influenced by gender and family income.

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[34] Job Creation Survey, Department of Statistics 2012

[35] Factors that affect women's employment in the Private sector Peebles, D. Darwazeh, N. Ghosheh, H and bbagh A.: Al Manar Project/ CIDA: 2006

Both men and women noted financial reasons as the main cause for elevating or refusing jobs but their secondary reasons differed. Women tend to leave due to working environment and family responsibilities more than men. Men on the other hand, indicated personal skills and ambitions and working environment more than women. Indeed, this reiterates that women are more influenced by social pressures and family responsibilities to leave work especially that the stress increases with having low pay.

Youth coming from families with lower income brackets were more likely to leave their jobs for financial reasons than those who come from higher income brackets. Youth from higher income brackets leave work for long work hours and career advancement. While the data did not explore how youth who left jobs for better opportunities sustained themselves while being temporarily unemployed, it is noted that family financial support and also friend support tend to sustain youth during periods of unemployment, arguably reducing the urgency for youth to accept and/or sustain a job.

Reasons for leaving and rejecting jobs are also reflective of the structural challenges the Jordanian government has to deal with at a legislative, macroeconomic and social policy level. This paper's findings suggest action in three areas: knowledge and research, policy implementation, and youth/societal awareness, to facilitate and enhance youth potential to accept and retain jobs.

Knowledge and research: Due to the limited availability of information on patterns and trends of youth mobility within the market it is worth expanding this study to a national level study that will enable further analysis and better understanding of youth practices in relation to entering the market and staying there. Smaller studies are also recommended to facilitate a more accurate understanding of the youth perspective, and how young people define such value terms as "good work opportunities," "important jobs," "low salaries," "work environment" etc. In particularly, qualitative exploratory research is needed to determine youth and private sector definitions of "work environment" and the respective value and ethical standards that should prevail within a working environment from each stakeholder's perspective (code of conduct). The study should focus on small and medium enterprises within the formal and informal economies and should help educators and/or those serving youth better understand the beliefs, values, and needs youth face when making employment decisions, and can thus better design soft skills, career guidance, and other school to work programs to address those concerns. Outcomes of the study would also help policy makers, HR managers, and other employment stakeholders determine priority actions that can be taken to encourage the retention of young workers in the labor market

Policy implementation level: The study highlights the issue of low pay as well as poor working conditions as primary factors in refusing jobs and/or leaving them. 35% of total population earned less than the minimum wage (190 JD – 265US$). More controls are needed to ensure that the minimum wage set is enforced, along with other policies designed to protect vulnerable members of the labor force. Also, the government's commitment to creating jobs and prioritizing Jordanian employment over expatriates are measures that not only need strengthening but also acceleration.

Awareness level: Youth are disheartened by the reality of the labor market offering and jobs they are offered since they fall short from meeting their aspirations and expectations. While effort is needed to reinforce the value and importance of all jobs, campaigns to reflect the reality of jobs should be undertaken not only nationally but most importantly within schools. Youth's image of jobs, their nature, and work commitments should be drawn from reality as opposed to only highlighting success stories - as past practices have done. Moreover, awareness sessions should be held with youth entering the labor market to introduce and enhance their understanding of labor rights and associated laws, such as social security.

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Annex 1

Listed Reasons for Leaving and Refusing Jobs[36]

Designed by IYF

The questions regarding Youth Reasons for leaving or refusing jobs listed 26 variables for youth to choose from. However, the replies were concentrated to the presented list below which also constituted the basis of the data and respective analysis for this paper.

Reason for Leaving Jobs
Improve my income
My current pay does not cover my financial needs
Pay is too low
Too far from my home
Long working hours
My work does not satisfy my professional ambitions
Boring Work
It is socially inappropriate
I have to take care of the house and family
Physically demanding
Sickness /Disability
Religious reasons
There is not opportunity to advance
My skills are questionable for the labor market
I got a better job offer
Back to school
Parental refusal
Others
Reason for Refusing Job
Pay is too low
My work does not stratify my professional ambitions
I cannot cover the costs to start working
It is social inappropriate
Too far from my home
I have to take care of house and family
Physically demanding
Long working hours
Back to school
My skills do not fit this job
Salary package announced does not match the offer provided
Other

[36] Language as used by IYF

Annex 2

Guiding Questions for Group Discussions

The group discussions were thematically based. They were conducted at the respective IYF partners in the locality of Zarqa and Kherabt Al Souq. The discussion evolved around 6 themes with guiding questions and constant recognition of gender issues. Hereunder is the guideline used for the group discussion:

Theme: Reasons for Leaving work	
Issues discussed within this theme	
• *Financial matters* • *Amount* • *Regularity of payment* • *Transportation* • *Distance* • *Cost* • *Social benefits* • *Entitlements* • *Commitment of Private sector to pay* • *Dynamics within work* • *Relations with supervisors* • *Relations with co-workers*	• *Type of Job* • *Working hours* • *Effort required of job* • *Harassment* • *Abuse at work* • *Verbal violence* • *Working environment* • *Facilities at work* • *Provisions at work*
Theme: Factors that influence youth decision to stay in jobs	
Issues discussed within this theme	
• *Financial packages – including benefits* • *Amount* • *Transport* • *Medical health* • *Social security* • *Privileges given* • *Training* • *Cars* • *Title*	• *Career advancement* • *Growth potential* • *Nature of job and type* • *Job demand* • *Working hours* • *Skills requirement* • *Contractual set up* • *Formal written contract* • *Type of contract and employment*
Theme: Income and maintenance of youth during unemployment periods	
Issues discussed within this theme	
• *Sources of income during these periods* • *Family perception about leaving work*	• *Financial practices during employment (saving)* • *Expenditure patterns*