

Graduate Unemployment in Buguju Village: A Snapshot of Challenges and Perspectives

Abiko Resty M25B13/044 (B33453)

Miracle Musiime M25B38/012

MacGregor Gabriel M25B23/079 (B31790)

Robert Semwanga M25B23/034

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Abstract

This report presents findings from interviews with eight unemployed graduates in Buguju Village, together with perspectives from a youth interviewee. The document highlights individual experiences, common barriers such as nepotism and job scams, and the emotional toll of prolonged unemployment. Recommendations grounded in respondent input are also provided.

1 Introduction

Youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge in Uganda, particularly among recent graduates. This report collates information from residents of Buguju Village, capturing the lived realities of job seekers who hold degrees and diplomas yet face protracted unemployment or underemployment. The accounts reveal systemic issues in recruitment practices, a shortage of entry-level opportunities, and the absence of platforms connecting graduates to gig work.

2 Illustrative Case: Sarah

The following profile exemplifies the situation of many young graduates in the region:

Name: Sarah

Age: 23

Degree: Information Technology

Status: Unemployed for 10 months

Daily Routine:

- Applies to 5–10 jobs per week
- Attends occasional interviews
- Learns online courses using free resources

Pain Points:

- Employers demand 2–3 years of experience
- Internships are unpaid
- Feels her degree was too theoretical

Emotional Impact:

- Anxiety



Figure 1: Mobile money and airtime services – a common informal occupation for graduates like Mulokole Shina (see profile H).

- Reduced confidence
- Pressure from family

Sarah’s story echoes the systemic hurdles detailed by other respondents throughout this report.

3 Perspectives from a Youth Advocate: Katusiime Gift

Katusiime Gift, aged 21, shared her observations on the unemployment situation among her peers. Her views provide context for the individual experiences documented later.

3.1 Perceived Problems

- **Skills mismatch:** Graduates are trained in areas that do not align with available jobs.
- **Inadequate opportunities:** The number of vacancies is far too small.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** Some young people wait for high-paying, prestigious jobs without considering alternative paths.
- **Lack of responsiveness:** Applicants remain waiting for callbacks that never come.

3.2 Proposed Solutions

- **Start from what is available:** Graduates should take any legitimate work, even if it is below their qualification level.
- **Open communication:** Job seekers need to actively express their availability and willingness to work.
- **Self-employment:** Setting up small enterprises or freelance work can provide income while searching.

3.3 External and Internal Factors Contributing to Unemployment

- **Family interference:** Some relatives discourage youth from taking jobs perceived as low-status.
- **Workplace harassment:** Poor treatment by supervisors discourages job retention.
- **Low wages:** Offered salaries are often insufficient to cover basic needs.
- **Unfavourable work environment:** Conditions in some workplaces are demotivating.

4 Respondent Profiles

The following eight individuals, all residents of Buguju Village, were interviewed about their employment status and challenges. Their accounts illustrate the multifaceted nature of graduate unemployment.

A. Joseph Musasizi

- **Age:** 27
- **Education:** Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
- **Status:** Unemployed for 1 year
- **Challenges:**
 - Nepotism — jobs are often pre-allocated to candidates with connections.
 - No feedback after interviews.
 - High competition for few openings.
 - *"Sometimes interviews are done, but the job is already given to someone with connections."*

B. Nalwooga Shadia

- **Age:** 25
- **Education:** Diploma in IT
- **Status:** Unemployed for 2 years
- **Challenges:**
 - Job scams — fraudulent online advertisements requesting payment.
 - No internship opportunities.
 - No gig/freelance connection platforms.
 - *"I once applied online and was asked to pay money. It turned out to be a scam."*

C. Opio Musinguzi Derrick

- **Age:** 29
- **Education:** Bachelor's in Procurement
- **Status:** Unemployed for 2 years
- **Challenges:**
 - Nepotism limits shortlisting to those with connections.
 - No gig/freelance connections.
 - Limited vacancies in procurement.
 - “*Without connections, it is hard to even be shortlisted.*”

D. Rehema Namuddu

- **Age:** 24
- **Education:** Bachelor's in Education
- **Status:** Unemployed for 6 months
- **Challenges:**
 - Limited vacancies in schools.
 - No feedback after interviews.
 - Preponderance of temporary contracts.
 - “*You attend interviews but never hear back.*”

E. Krunga Emma

- **Age:** 26
- **Education:** Bachelor's in Nursing
- **Status:** Unemployed for 10 months
- **Challenges:**
 - Limited hospital openings.
 - Short-term unpaid volunteering is the only available experience.
 - Lack of transparency in government recruitment.
 - “*Most health centers say they are not recruiting, yet many nurses are unemployed.*”

F. Musoke James

- **Age:** 28
- **Education:** Diploma in Electrical Engineering
- **Status:** Underemployed (casual work)
- **Challenges:**
 - No stable contracts.
 - No gig connection platforms.
 - Low pay.
 - “*I get small technical jobs occasionally, but there is no stable income.*”

G. Naluweso Gladys

- **Age:** 23
- **Education:** Bachelor's in Social Work
- **Status:** Unemployed for 5 months
- **Challenges:**
 - Few NGO openings.
 - High competition.
 - No internship placements.
 - “*Many NGOs want experience, but they don't give fresh graduates a chance.*”

H. Mulokole Shina

- **Age:** 30
- **Occupation:** Mobile money agent
- **Education:** Bachelor's in Computer Science
- **Status:** Unemployed in the tech sector for 1.5 years (working informally)
- **Challenges:**
 - Lack of local tech industry opportunities.
 - No freelance/gig platforms.
 - No employer response to applications.
 - “*There are very few tech companies here. Most opportunities are in the city.*”

5 Cross-Cutting Issues Identified

Analysis of the eight testimonies reveals recurring barriers that transcend individual fields of study:

- **Nepotism and favouritism** in recruitment.
- **Job scams** exploiting desperate applicants.
- **Absence of feedback** after interviews, leaving candidates in limbo.
- **Limited job openings** relative to the number of graduates.
- **No dedicated platforms** for gig or freelance work connections.
- **Intense competition** for every advertised position.
- **Short-term or unstable contracts** that offer no security.

These problems are further reinforced by the lack of transparent hiring processes and the reluctance of employers to invest in fresh graduates.



Figure 2: Example of a community-focused service advertisement. Such local initiatives could be leveraged to connect graduates with families, schools, and communities.

6 Conclusion and Way Forward

The findings from Buguju Village underscore that graduate unemployment is not solely a matter of individual inadequacy; it is deeply embedded in structural deficiencies. Nepotism, opaque recruitment, and the absence of intermediary platforms block access to the labour market. The emotional toll—anxiety, diminished confidence, family pressure—compounds the economic strain.

Respondents and observers alike propose pragmatic first steps: accepting available work, openly communicating one’s availability, and creating small self-employed ventures. However, these individual efforts must be complemented by broader interventions.

Recommendations

1. **Establish transparent recruitment systems** that mandate feedback to all applicants.
2. **Create local freelance/gig platforms** to connect graduates with short-term tasks.
3. **Encourage apprenticeship schemes** where recent graduates can gain supervised experience.
4. **Regulate online job advertisements** to curb scams.
5. **Foster entrepreneurship training** and micro-grant programmes to support self-employment.

Without systemic change, the cycle of prolonged unemployment and underemployment will persist, depriving both the individual and the community of the benefits of their hard-earned qualifications.