

## **THE WAVE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTHS: BELONGING TO A POLITICAL ORGANISATION AS A WAY OF ESCAPE?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the rise of unemployment in South Africa, the youth has been looking for a way out, building up a stereotype that being part of a political movement would secure them an automatic employment. This research examines if this phenomenon proves valid, whilst assessing factors that have recently played a role in the increment of unemployment in South Africa, and more or less how the stereotype of political employment can be discredited; through both quantitative and qualitative research conducted in a small township of Esikhawini in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) of South Africa, the study looks at how political and non-political participants see belonging to a political organisation vis-à-vis unemployment amongst South African youths, concluding that South African government needs to create an enabling environment where the creation of employment opportunities will thrive.

**Keywords:** Apartheid, Unemployment, Political Participation, Politics and Political parties.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Unemployment has been a national crisis for the past two decades in South Africa; the tides have been vigorous and violent, thus making the South African youths to develop the idea that they can always escape unemployment by belonging to a political movement, though maybe problematic because as much as this may work for some; some may not really find it easy.

Unemployment statistics apply a definition that has progressively emerged as being the most appropriate for modern economies. It does not directly follow from a literal interpretation of the word, but rather from the concern with some social and political issues (Malinvaud, 1984). Unemployment is generally defined as the number of persons who are ready and willing to work but who cannot find a profitable job. The unemployment rate consists of those persons who are unemployed divided by the total labour force, which includes the unemployed (Janoski, Luke & Oliver, 2014).

Du Toit, De Witte, Rothmann & Van de Broeck (2018) sees unemployment as a global socio-political challenge; South Africa inclusive where it has become a major challenge, with its national unemployment rate of 26.7%. Hence, the need to address the proverbial killer of joy while pushing up the country's economic growth. Unemployment no doubt is mostly a negative experience for the majority of unemployed because of its negative impact on individuals' psychological well-being.

Bryne & Strobl (2001) believe that an individual is unemployed if they are not working, currently available for work and seeking employment. The reason why Mzizi (2017) sees

unemployment as the phenomena which occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find one.

Mzizi (2017) further argues that the concept of unemployment can mean different things to different people thus unemployment can be classified into four groups; frictional unemployment, which result from the time lag between the end of one job and the start of a new one. Cyclical unemployment, this occurs when the number of unemployed astronomically exceeds the number of vacant positions; that is where the supply of labour exceeds the demand for workers. The third category is structural unemployment; this occurs when there are availability of jobs as well as workers seeking employment, but the workers do not meet the demand of the job. The last one is seasonal unemployment, which result from seasonal fluctuations of services, production and unemployment in fields such as tourism, recreation and construction.

Further to this, Mzizi broke unemployment into two broadest categories voluntary, where an individual has willingly left his/her job in search of another one and involuntary, where an individual has been laid off and now must look for another job. Unarguably, unemployment has contributed to some of the challenges facing developing society and closely linked to a high crime rate, distasteful living conditions, psychological challenges as well as a low performance of the economy as a whole. Du Toit et al. (2018) notes that over 5.88 million South Africans or 10.2 % of its population are facing this monstrous phenomenon and has steadily increased year in year out over the past 10 years.

Unemployment is considered a serious issue thus Kingdon & Knight (2003:391) in Du Toit (2018) describe its widespread in South Africa as a beast, with grave effect on economic welfare, production, which have eroded human capital and encourage social exclusion, crime and social instability. Burger & Von Fintel (2009) mention that since the political transition of 1994, South Africa has witnessed the acceleration of its already high unemployment rate with which it's racially divided past impacted most facets of life, including the labour market and the education system.

Many solutions and interventions have been made to combat the menace of unemployment; according to Lannoy, Graham, Patel & Leibbrandt (2018), a wide range of policy efforts and a range of interventions have been implemented to deal with unemployment in South Africa since 1990. These include the fairly recently introduced Employment Tax Incentive (ETI), intending to stimulate the demand for young workers; however, massive investments into the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), with its large youth targets; and a variety of private sector and civil society-led training programmes, which, ultimately, aim at placing young people in employment are the most affected by this phenomenon. Lannoy et al. (2018) further notes that youth unemployment in South Africa is critical, with the latest figures confirming that one-half of young people 15-34 years are unemployed by the broad definition. Although several policy efforts and a range of interventions had been implemented to curtail the menace of unemployment in South Africa but never seems to be enough.

From observation, the South African youths are desperate to come out of the cold room of unemployment hence, the belief that participating in political activities will put them in a better position to acquiring the elusive employment. By implication, belonging to a political movements and the attendant benefits that come with it might be the motivational factor for which every youth are ever ready to engage in political activities having it at the back of their mind that only a few politically connected and privileged would make it to the top.

## **THEORETICAL EXPLANATION/REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Eisenhart (1991:35) defines a theoretical framework as the structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomenon relationships. In Keynes (1934) general theory of employment, interests and money; Keynes asserts that the outstanding faults of the economic society in which we live are its failure to provide for full employment and its arbitrary and inequitable distribution of wealth and incomes.

Within the context of the classical theory of unemployment Mouhammed (2011) asserts that the labour market comprises of demand and supply of labour by which the demand for labour is a derived demand, obtained from the declining portion of the marginal product of labour. Factored to the issue of unemployment in South Africa is the inequitable distribution of wealth and incomes in the former apartheid enclave. Debatably, the challenge of unemployment in South Africa has often been linked to the years of apartheid when the majority of black was denied of socio-economic inclusion in the polity. However, with the end of apartheid and the adoption of inclusive governance where the majority black South Africans have taken over the reins of power, every average black South African believe that been politically connected is a means of getting the desired job.

Democratic theorists; Hourdequin, Landres, Hanson, & Craig (2012) assert that public participation finds deep roots in the ideals of democratic theory which are central to the governance of most democracies around the world. Thus embracing the ideal of popular sovereignty or rule of the people. Democratic decisions typically reflect and incorporates the political philosophy of liberalism, which emphasizes the ideals of equality and autonomy.

Largely, the instrumental value of participation in politics regarding South African youths is based on the assumed socio-political benefits derived from the process. Within the context of individual interests versus the common good, the apprehension for the common good may sometimes obligate agencies to make inconsistent choices with individual participants' preferences; public involvement in politics, therefore, typify and elicits both broad-minded expressions and expressions of personal preferences. In a nutshell, participating in political activities is believed to be a means to an end amongst unemployed South African youths.

## **CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Burger & Fintel (2009) had argued that since the political transition of 1994, South Africa has witnessed the acceleration of its already high unemployment rate. Overtly, the rising unemployment is a source of considerable concern to both policymakers and labour market participants. Further to this, they argued that the divided South Africa past has been subjected to have an impact on most facets of life with the inclusion of the labour market and the system of education. These imbalances are said to have been tackled on the policy front, to equalise opportunities relating to labour market entry and access to similar education for all population groups, contrariwise, these policies have not had the desired impact. Undeniably and for the most recent time; while educational attainment is gradually converging across racial groups in the country, the previously disadvantaged remain the most severely affected by rising unemployment.

Debatably, one of the reasons unemployment has continue to rise could partly, be due to large numbers of new entrants into the labour market in the face of relatively slower absorption. An article written by Ranchhod (2019) and featured in GroundUp mentions that during the apartheid regime, state policy was used to remove black South Africans from cities while preventing them from acquiring skills that will enhance their opportunity of getting good jobs. The result of which is an oversupply of cheap black labour, which benefited the owners of business enterprises, particularly in agriculture and mining industries. Over time, these two industries have become more mechanised and capital-intensive, and less labour-intensive. Currently, it is evident that the onslaught of unemployment and the notion of cheap labour mostly affect black South Africans since they do not have sufficient education to get them fully skilled.

However, these reasons may not be sufficient to explain the high rate of unemployment as much as historical reasons. One important factor that needs to be considered is the mismatch between skills distribution in South Africa society and the skills distribution that South Africa's economy seems to need.

Burger & Fintel (2009) emphasised the role of the rapid increase in labour market participation in driving unemployment upwards, rather than the demand for labour, which remained comparatively stable over the same period. Whilst educational attainment explains the rise in labour supply, the literature has been relatively silent regarding the role of the educational policy environment in explaining this massive shift into the labour market. The strategy of reducing over age learners in schools proposed by Department of education shortly after the political transition, aimed at making a difference in the rate of unemployment rather pushed young black South Africans into the labour market without the education required to attain success in the workplace. Thus creating a large pool of illiterate from the younger generations who would by the historical trend, have remained in school.

As a result of the increases in the size of the labour force, the relatively slow post-transition growth in employment opportunities which can be linked to the endorsement of a very strict labour market legislation where trade unions are endowed with greater bargaining power which has resulted into pricing out of unskilled and semi-skilled off the market has made a considerable contribution to the increment of unemployment. This has been ascribed to changes in the structure of production and skill-biased technological change Burger & Fintel (2009) where the demand for abundant semiskilled workers decreased, whilst the demand for highly skilled workers increased. Hence, in post-apartheid South Africa, the increase in unemployment coincided with a decrease in the real wages of unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

As mentioned above many causes of unemployment in South Africa are due to its political transition and failure to come up with practical interventions to build a stable economy where job opportunities are created for everyone. It is evident, that black South Africans are the most affected, with the youth being categorised as age group suffering for the consequences of the system and women being the most unemployed gender because of inactivity.

Mzizi (2017) notes that South Africans are getting frustrated as a result of unemployment and that they continually dissatisfied with the lack of services despite their belief that inclusive governance would result in better living conditions. It's also evident that people have been looking for different ways of escaping unemployment, hence, their active involvement in unemployment-related protests to register their frustrations.

It is a fact that one of the causes of xenophobic attack on foreign nationals in South Africa is the rate of unemployment in the country. To this effect, South Africans have come to believe that foreign nationals are responsible for their inability to get employed because they (foreign nationals) can afford to work for low pay. Hence, the erroneous belief that these foreign nationals have taken their jobs. Mzizi (2017) indicates that unemployment manifests itself in communities at different levels, individual level, financial level and family level.

At the individual level, unemployed individuals are exposed to a lot of negative emotions that can be detrimental to their psychological well-being as a result of their inability to meet their needs or offer assistance to their immediate families; financially and based on the state of the economy in the country, the unemployed individual is faced with limited financial freedom thus making them dependent on others, at the family level unemployment can be life-threatening because it often leads to structural disorganisation in the family structure thus affecting the entire family negatively where the breadwinner is unemployed.

At the national level, Makaringe & Khobai (2018) emphasize that erosion of human capital, social exclusion, protests, increased crime rates and morbidity are some of the immediate effect of unemployment; they further mentioned that unemployment has contributed in no measure to the widespread of poverty and income inequality.

Caplan (2009) notes that the onslaught of unemployment often leads to social unrest and high crime rates on the premise that people do not have means of meeting their needs. He further argued that divorces are most likely to occur when there's a failure in resolving financial issues in the family, the resultant effect of which is the increase in the level of homelessness, risks of mental disability along with physical illness. The failure on the part of the government to combat this issue in South Africa has compromised the government's ability to adequately take care of its citizens, where the government is unable to generate funds through income taxes.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A systemic way of solving a research problem is commonly called research methodology. It is a plan according to which a researcher obtains research participants and a method of how to collect information from the participant, it is a set of specific techniques for selecting cases, measuring and observing aspects of social life, gathering and refining data and reporting the results, it is a method by which knowledge is gained (Welman & Kruger, 2005, Berg, 2011).

This work dwells on the interpretive research paradigm to unpack the actuality of the opinions and experiences of the participant's experiences with unemployment and its link to political participation. Owing to the composition of the research question, the study used purposive sampling, which falls under the non-probability sampling method. This method affords the researchers the opportunity of collecting data from the unemployed as well as employed youths that take interest in political participation. Maree & Pietersen (2016) affirm that purposive sampling has been used by those researchers with a specific purpose in mind.

Politically active participants were chosen from Esikhawini (Kwazulu-Natal Province of South Africa). Semi-structure interviews were used to collect data. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are pre-planned before the interview and the interviewee is granted the opportunity to elaborate and explain specific issues through the use of open-ended questions (Alsaawi, 2014). Thus making it easy to gain insight on the issue of unemployment and how the notion of

transactional political participation came about. Specifically, Esikhawini was choosing owing to the high rate of crime as a result of unemployment and its attendant negative effects on the members of the community as well as the increase in youth political participation over the years.

## **EXISTING SOUTH AFRICAN INTERVENTIONS IN CURTAILING UNEMPLOYMENT**

From Business Tech (2016) South Africa's unemployment rate for the third quarter of 2016 climbed to 27%. Globally, various governments have proposed and adopted various policies to help people enter jobs and acquire skills while curtailing the menace of employment (Mzizi 2017). South African government has created countless policies to fight employment; of which some have been successful and some till date have not. Thus making the issue of unemployment a question without a feasible solution.

Lannoy et al. (2018) has argued that there are various ways by which policy has shaped and responded to youth unemployment such that implemented policies have been deep-rooted in a deep understanding of the four issues South Africa has consistently been facing namely; the need for economic growth, skills development, redistribution, and employment creation. Conversely, the emphasis on policy objectives have been changing continuously; the government has been failing to correctly implement proposed policy; a distorted focus on youth development as well as specific institutional weakness mainly in the revised post-apartheid educational system.

Figure 1: A Representation of Post-apartheid South Africa’s Policy Development

EARLY 1990s	1994–1995	1996–2003	2004–2007	2008–2016
Policy debates on overcoming apartheid legacies	Reconstruction and development	Focus on macroeconomic instability	First and second economy; War on Poverty	Overcoming triple threat of unemployment, poverty and inequality
Discussion Document on Economic Policy; Ready to Govern, RDP	RDP White Paper Special Poverty Relief Allocation	GEAR Jobs Summit	AsgiSA, JIPSA Growth and Development Summit	National Growth Path, National Development Plan
				Employment Tax Incentive Jobs Fund
Special employment creation programmes	National Public Works Programme, Working for Water		EPWP	
			National Youth Service Policy Framework	Kh Ri Gude, Masupatsela, NARYSEC
National Training Strategy	South African Qualifications Authority Act	National Skills Act, Skills Development Act	Department of Higher Education and Training; Department of Basic Education	Green and white papers on post-school education and training
Education Renewal Strategy and Curriculum Model for South Africa	White Paper on Education and Training	Further Education and Training Act	Revised National Curriculum Statement	Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
	South African Schools Act, National Education Policy Act	Outcomes-based education/Curriculum 2005		National Skills Accord, Basic Education Accord, Youth Employment Accord
	Labour Relations Act (LRA)	Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Employment Equity Act	Employment Services of South Africa	Amendments to BCEA, LRA, EE; Public Employment Services Act
		BEE Commission Report	B-BBEE Act	B-BBEE Amendment Act
National Youth Development Forum		Umsobomvu Youth Fund		National Youth Development Agency
		National Youth Commission		
Small Business Development Corporation	White Paper on a National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business in South Africa	Nstika Enterprise Promotion Agency, Khula Enterprise Finance	Small Enterprise Development Agency, Small Enterprise Finance Agency	Department of Small Business Development; Youth Enterprise Development Strategy

Source: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-outputs/ktree-doc/986>

Above is the illustrative overview of government policies over the years to deal with unemployment in South Africa. It indicates how hard South Africa’s government has tried to develop policies towards solving the problem of unemployment.

Lannoy et al. (2018) further notes that there has been a shifting focus on job growth, various programs were created such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which focused on poverty alleviation making an assumption that the redistribution, as well as basic service delivery, would drive economic growth; this programme succeeded in some of its goals, however, it was insufficient for job creation and optimal growth on time. After recognising the shortcomings of the RDP a new policy referred to as the Growth Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) was formulated and prioritised, economic stability and trade

liberalisation with the assumption that growth would drive job creation and improve social outcomes especially if it would be incorporated with the improvement of Education and training.

Thabo Mbeki (former South African president, 1999 -2008) while in office; also tried implementing a few policies to drive job creation of which the key policies comprised of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA), the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), the EPWP and the National Youth Service (NYS); these policies addressed constraints on growth such as a shortage of certain skills consequently aiming to reduce poverty and unemployment.

The immediate past president of South Africa (Jacob Zuma, 2009-2018) also created seemingly working institutions to fight the menace of unemployment; these includes such institutions as the Economic Development Department, National Planning Commission, and Department of Higher Education and Training (Lannoy et al; 2018). To some extent, it is evident that there has been no shortage of policy attention on the issue of unemployment or the clear definition of national issues thus resulting to the notion that the challenge is not the absence of policies but the absence of a strong, coordinating government body and the duplication of policies.

## **SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

Politics as a concept is considered to be very deep even into the existence of humanity. Thus driven by the perception that humans needed to be progressively controlled while ensuring law and order. Gradually, the concept of acquiring political power and territory steadily incorporated itself owing to the reality that humans need to survive, expand and accumulate (socio-economic and political power) more than what they have had. To this end Mohammed (2010) posits that political parties are voluntary association, voluntary organisations or common law corporations; that can essentially do what it wants, and can pretty much declare whatever it wishes in its constitution. He further argued that it is the political party itself that determines its organisation, internal operations, membership criteria, its vision and mission and its disciplinary codes and proceedings.

South African politics is largely linked to its landslide ‘deliverance’ from the jaws of oppression, racial discrimination and segregation orchestrated by the minority whites; to Rainbow nation characterised by non-racialism and non-sexist democracy. The democratic order that ushered South Africa into its present democratic status was the result of a political settlement between the ANC and other liberation forces on the one hand, and the apartheid regime led by the National Party (which ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994) on the other. The main agenda for this negotiated settlement was the abolition of the apartheid system and its replacement with a new constitutional democracy marked by values, ideals and principles that recognized humanity and sought to reconcile the nation (The Presidency Republic of South Africa, 2019).

Evidently, South Africans have benefited solely from political activism while fighting for their rights in as such they have developed a very deep love for political participation because of what it means to them. Merten (2019) mentions that political parties are centrally part of South Africa’s constitutional democracy in the founding provisions that set out the founding values of

human dignity, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism. In most modern-day democracies, political parties provide the links between the society and the state (Daadler, 1984). Nonetheless, political participation for a South African is more or less perceived as a way of escape from the market of uncertainty anchored by unemployment.

This is quite evident given the growing number of political movements in South Africa and the level of their participation at local and national elections respectively. Thus justifying the various reasons for which individual (young South Africans) joins a political movement.

Political parties are considered a centre of ideological spectrum, by interpretation, they develop positions for every issue and provide support for those positions. In South Africa, belonging to a political party is considered an opportunity to voice out the concerned of and engage communities in their ideologies and create supportive structures. It is seen as a means to an end which is growing personal and professional networks. This process does more than create friendships but also results in the foundation of a meaningful and potential profitable network of professionals who want to work together. These networks are the building blocks of big businesses and tenderpreneurship. It is also seen as a means of creating a balance within South African society through socio-political provisioning for societies, but most importantly, gets people employed and or either serves as the bridge between the society and the government.

Debatably, the rise in political activism is influenced by the rise in the country's unemployment rate. One might, therefore, be tempted to ask the question the connectivity of unemployment and politics? The link is in society, the society represents the government and the government is politics. To an unemployed South African, politics is considered a gateway to a better life with employment security as a benefit. Participants, argue that a voting stamp on your ID book is one of the hurdles to pass to get a job. This is a widespread belief in South African communities and it has been deemed true rather than an opinion in many cases. This is why some will vote in the hope that they will impress the right people and secure a job. One of the participants, however, asserted that if getting the IEC stamp on peoples' ID book is considered the fastest way of getting a job, it means that people may somewhat vote for the wrong party/candidate and by implication a wrong leader may likely appear.

In modern-day South Africa, there is a high growth of political parties and affiliations. Starting from the tertiary institutions, over 70% of university students are politically active. The reason for which most of them join politics is and with a bit of luck secure employment after their tertiary education. Hence the increase in youths' participation in South Africa's politics.

Mohammed Amin (2010), in his article 'The Benefits and Costs of Joining a Political Party', conducted in the KZN Province in Richards Bay stated that the society is motivated by the phrase 'Vote, Impress & Get a job'. This supports the claim that politics is a gateway to securing employment as long as that particular individual votes or is politically active. One twist to political involvement in South Africa amongst its youths is the politics of cadre deployment.

Twala (2014) explains that economic benefaction is dispensed to individuals, companies and agencies, by the government, which sometimes may not be on merit but the basis, of their connection to some political party as well as their connection to the governing party. In the parlance of South Africa's political system, the terminology is known as Cadre Employment. Cadre deployment is generally more deliberate, under cadre policies; every level of government often acts to reward loyalists with tenders, government contracts and ultimately, a better. The African National Congress (ANC) led government in South Africa commonly practises this form of tenderpreneurship. Observably, one can argue that with the new Black Economic

Empowerment programme in South Africa, cadre policy can be used to address the injustices of the former apartheid system.

Twala (2014) suggests that for the cadre deployment policy to be productive and not to be viewed as another form of job reservation, members of the political party and society at large should demand that it should ensure that in deploying cadres there must be a systematic, balanced and lucid way in which these cadres are deployed. Such mechanisms must include the strategic deployment of individuals who will ensure that the democratically determined vision of the party is attained. This is evidence that there are employment opportunities in belonging to a political organisation.

## **POLITICAL EMPLOYMENT AND ITS TRAJECTORY**

For quite some time, joining a political organisation for personal gain has long been in existence, therefore, joining politics for political employment in South Africa is not basically for cadre employment but also based on the promises made by these political organisations that once in power significant efforts towards reducing unemployment would be made. Merten (2019) however states that members of these political organisation often pledge “that I am joining the Organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain”

An article by the Freedom House (2019) mentions that the most common reasons for political participation are hoping for further change, earning the right to criticize, while defending the victory over apartheid. Participants mentioned how having a voting stamp on their ID book increased one’s chances of employment, while refusing to vote may be a stumbling block to getting employment hence the notion “vote, impress, get a job is a thing”. By interpretation, voting or political participation is perceived to be a down payment for a job; a transactional to gaining the benefit of employment.

Booyesen (2015) asserts that the South African youth is living in a time of extremely high unemployment; though many have managed to get educated but they haven’t been able to get equal access to opportunities or utilize attained qualifications to get appropriate employment. There is a notion that the older youth appears to have filled the post-liberation spaces that have become available for young people, such that the jobs are taken and the new jobs are taken by those with political connections, and the connected ones become the new upper-middle classes, which are integrated into the political class.

However, this has proven to be unsustainable since it doesn’t prove correct for every individual that decides to be part of a political movement, Merten and Mofokeng (2012) mention that while there is an increase in the number of political party membership, the trust in political movements or the government is in serious decline, owing to the failure of these political movements to fulfil most of the promises made to the public as well as the failure of correctly implementing proposed interventions that are supposed to cushion the effect of unemployment.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Of importance to note is the fact that South African youths; through several means have been trying to fight and curtail the menace of unemployment. It’s quite evident that they are aware of the government’s continuous failure to solve the problem of unemployment, therefore, trying to

find ways out of it on their own. One of the participant remarks . . . *looking for almost none existing job has become a big challenge to me, I have always been severally told that I am overqualified for the ones I saw this situation has resulted in being a street vendor. I and my friends have resulted to stokvels as a way out of unemployment.* People, South African youths, in particular, have opted to join politics to keep away from crime on one hand and on the other hand for the benefits that come with it as well as an alternative route of escaping unemployment.

To fight the upsurge of unemployment in South Africa, the Progressive Youth Alliance – which comprises of the ANC Youth League, Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and young workers in 2019 embarked on a march calling for the scrapping of the unrealistic requirement for several years of experience for entry-level jobs (Ntsaluba, 2019). A participant lament . . . *I am already 28 years with no job. When I graduated 6 years ago; I tried looking for a job but each organisation keep asking for experience I never had even after my Honour and Master degree they still tell me that I don't have the experience required . . . this is frustrating, I've got parents at home.*

According to Goldberg (2019), the South African youth is fed up and taking the fight into their own hands apparently with continuous protests over their inability to be gainfully employed while trying to get government's attention, some even stand in the streets with boards to try to get attention with hopes of getting employment. Further to this, Goldberg mentions that various student organisations have formulated various organisations like the SAUJS, Amnesty International Students, South African Chapter and Rethinking Economics for Africa trying to find ways to lead without the political element.

From the findings of this work, most people believe that political participation is vital in changing the world and it also seems South Africans have a close relationship with politics because of the freedom and liberation it entitled them to; moreover, it seems the older generation has made sure that the youth believes in political participation, *I am born from a politically active family and they have taught me the importance of political activity because it directly connects us to the choices that government makes for the country and we get a chance to voice out our cries*".

Another participant voiced out that *"political activism teaches us more about our country and we get to meet a lot of interesting and influential people through which we can easily climb to top in our career"*, this is a clear indication that most people see political activism as a way of expanding their networks and a connection to getting their dream job. *I can confidently say that I got my present job through our ward counsellor, he did promise me that as long as I remain faithful to the political party, he will again get my younger brother a job once he graduates from the university.*

Most participants from this study show that they have a lot of faith in political parties when it comes to enhancing their chances of employment, one of the participants remarked *I have lost hope of getting employment because I haven't been able to make my way up to the hierarchy like some of my friends did.* It is, therefore, clear that the notion of political employment comes from cadre deployment, the counsellors recruiting from their circles and the opportunities that are made available to only politically active, privileged and the connected; where their political godfathers have connections such as the corporate world.

Responding to one of our questions, a participant remarked . . . *though I stayed at home for close to a year before I got my present job and as I speak there is another job waiting for at the municipal office.* When asked how he got his first job, his response was . . . *my mother was a*

*former employee of the department and a member of the ANC, she was the one that counselled me to join politics while on campus as a student. During my days in school, I was very active in politics, it was through this that I got connected to a counselor who recommended me for the job. Because of this, I will always vote for the party and I believe one day I will climb the ladder to where I can contest for a political position.* He, however, avowed that if he's given the opportunity; his goal will be to fight for the rights of the youths in the area and ensure the creation of job opportunities for them.

The above justify why South Africans, particularly the youths will prefer belonging to and voting for a particular political party during election. A participant adduced that as far as he is concerned he will always vote for the African National Congress because the party liberated the blacks and handed them democracy apart from being the largest political organization in South Africa and there is no way other smaller political parties can have a say when it comes to job creation and service delivery. When asked if she is not being sentimental in her political judgement of other political parties, she replied that *as long as ANC is in control the black South Africans will always be the first when it comes to employment of the youths.*

Further to this, it was discovered that South Africans wants more political parties to contest for political offices. One of the participants remarked that if there are more political parties in South Africa, there will be openings of job opportunities for the youths in that they will be employed by these political parties as secretaries, officers at national, provincial and local government levels. He further reiterates that *at least engaging them will keep them busy and away from drugs.*

One dimension that is closely linked to belonging to a political organisation to get a [good] job is belonging to a union affiliated to one's profession to maintain the job. Across the world, it has become the norm for employees to belong to a particular union that is associated with their profession, workers in South Africa are not left out. Owing to its historical past; South Africans believe that the unions are there to promote and protect the interest of their members. It is a fact that these unions are structured in such a way that they look like a political organisation. These unions are affiliated to COSATU. One of the participants reiterate that after her graduation and upon getting a job as a teacher, the first thing on her agenda is to register as a member of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). When asked the reason, she answered that *apart from the fact that I have the right to belong to any organisation of my choice, SADTU will always be there for me whenever my employer attempt to treat me unlawfully and also protect my interest as a teacher.*

During the transition to political freedom in South Africa, there were two opposing groups. One group believes that socio-political and economic integration should be done gradually while the other group believes in immediate socio-political and economic integration. However, 26 years after achieving inclusive governance, the South African youths believe that the ANC led government does not believe in radical transformation of the socio-economic system and hence the reason why some of the youths are not gainfully employed.

Overtly, one political party that has stood by the South African youths and has promised to turn things around is the Economic Freedom Fighters led by a former ANC youth leader who believes in a revolutionary transformation of South Africa's economy where the youths will be fully accommodated. A young member of EFF remarked that . . . *although I am yet to get a job after my graduation in 2018, but being a member of EFF has opened my eyes to the fact that all that we need to do in South Africa is to embrace a revolutionary idea that will open up the*

*economy and allow investors to come in and thereby create jobs for the teaming South African youths.* The EFF, more than any other political party in South Africa has more youths owing to its vociferous stance on expanding the role of South Africans in state-owned enterprises in the country's economy with the belief that this will open up the South Africa's economy while creating more employment opportunities, particularly for the youths. By implication, the idea of political employment does not come from the youths only but also supported by political parties.

## CONCLUSION

After attaining inclusive governance in 1994, the ANC led government promised South African the proverbial heaven and earth but has not been able to bring this to fulfilment. This has led to several protests across the country. Unemployment has always been one of the major problem facing South Africans particularly, the younger generations. South Africa is a country where everyone is politically conscious, an avenue through which South Africans use to fight for their socio-political and economic rights.

At the forefront of this struggle are the unemployed younger generations, who believe that belonging to a political organisation will save them of the ordeal of job hunting. A participant has this to say; I never thought of been a member of any political party while on campus but having discovered that there are some graduates outside without a job, I thought of belonging to a political movement, where I have been promised that as long as I remain loyal to my political movement I will get a job after my graduation. I believe this and that is why I am actively involved in my organisation's activities. Although one can argue that politics as a means to escaping unemployment is an unsustainable solution, because one has to be consistent in his/her participation; arguably, the [political] puppets of the Cadres, charismatic, connected, are likely to qualify for political employment. Hence not all the political activists get to enjoy the benefits. This work has found out that some manage to escape unemployment by belonging to a political organisation why unemployment still stare in the face of some despite their participation in politics.

Eliminating the mentality that belonging to a political movement is a means to an end among South Africans would be an uphill task amid non-availability of jobs while creating more is becoming too difficult for the government. If this must be done, it means every political organisation must review its programmes where the benefits of belonging to a political organisation will be made available to members and non-members. Further to this, Political parties should be held liable for making empty promises. A participant remarked that; I thought voting for my political organisation will end my agony of joblessness, I have been out of job since May 2016, when they came to our district, we were promised that job will be created but till date nothing has happened . . . you can see how many of us (pointing to his friends, about 7 of them) that are here roaming around aimlessly.

There have been several accusations that South Africa government is not making efforts to create an enabling environment for foreign investors to come to the country even those that are on the ground are forced to leave the country owing to xenophobic attacks of foreign nationals and their businesses. A participant lament that . . . *I used to work in a small organisation that shows potential to grow big in future, but the business was burnt down in September 2019 as a result of xenophobia claiming that the business was owned by a foreigner. There were 13 staff in*

*the organisation out of which 8 of us are South Africans . . . since then I have not been able to secure another job.* In fact, our government must find a solution to this disgracing behaviour. In a nutshell, the South African government needs to create an enabling environment where the creation of employment will thrive.

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