

CURRENT ISSUES OF EMPLOYMENT IN UZBEKISTAN: PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE***Bazarova Gulnora Gulamovna****Associate Professor of the Department of Economics,
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Abstract: Employment in Uzbekistan is one of the priority areas of state policy. This article analyzes the current state of employment, the level of unemployment, formal and informal employment, especially in the Andijan region. The study proposes conclusions and recommendations based on analysis of current problems, government policies, labor migration, and youth and women's employment.

Keywords. employment, unemployment, labor market, regional analysis, Andijan region, migration, youth employment.

In a society based on a market economy, the issue of employment is considered one of the main factors of socio-economic stability. The level of full employment of the population serves not only as an indicator of economic growth but also as a guarantee of social protection, living standards, and social stability for citizens. Therefore, since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has been implementing systematic measures to regulate the labor market, create new jobs, and reduce unemployment.

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has been implementing comprehensive reforms aimed at reducing unemployment rates, providing the population with stable jobs, and developing the labor market. In this process, increasing employment among youth and women, balancing labor resources across regions, and formalizing labor migration abroad remain pressing issues [1; p.17]. The importance of addressing employment matters is linked not only to economic factors but also to social stability, poverty reduction, increasing tax revenues, and ensuring the sustainability of the social insurance system [14; p.42]. This article analyzes the political and practical experiences related to employment in Uzbekistan, with a particular focus on the Andijan region.

The aim is to conduct an in-depth study of the employment situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan, identify trends in its development, assess existing problems, and develop effective solutions. For this purpose, the research employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods based on a comprehensive approach. The object of the study is the labor market formed within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the state employment policy, and the system of programs aimed at ensuring employment. The subject of the research encompasses the problems in the field of employment, their root causes, and practical approaches to addressing them, as well as potential solutions that could be applied in the context of Uzbekistan, derived from the examination of international experiences.

The research was based on the IMRAD methodology, and the following methods were employed:

Analytical method - The current policy and situation were analyzed based on legislation related to employment and the labor market, Presidential Decrees [PF-60, 2022], and reports from the Ministry of Employment [4; p. 9].

Regional approach - Employment indicators in the Andijan region were studied separately [3; p. 6].

Comparative analysis - General indicators of Uzbekistan's labor market were compared with data from the International Labor Organization [13; p. 14].

Analysis of literary sources - Scientific articles and monographs were systematically utilized [6; 5; 2;].

The research results revealed the current state of labor market development in Uzbekistan, regional disparities, and the effectiveness of employment policies. Based on the analysis, findings were recorded in the following key areas. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, by the end of 2023, the number of economically active population in the republic exceeded 15.2 million people, of which 6.7 million were formally employed. The remaining population was engaged in informal sectors or temporary employment. The overall unemployment rate stood at 8.6 percent; however, this figure was significantly higher among certain age groups and women.

The main sectors of employment are distributed as follows:

- Agriculture - 24.5%
- Trade and services - 21.8%
- Construction - 13.2%
- Industry - 10.7%
- Education and healthcare - 7.3%
- Other sectors - 22.5%

Andijan region is one of the most densely populated areas of Uzbekistan. As of 2024, the region's population has exceeded 3.4 million, of which 1.6 million comprise the economically active segment. Key observations: The official employment rate in the region is around 41%, with the remainder engaged in informal labor. In Andijan, a large portion of the employed population works in small businesses, services, and the service sector. There is a high level of labor migration abroad among the region's population, which indicates a shortage of permanent jobs and a high demand for professional skills. Challenges and opportunities of employment policy:

1. High informal employment: Many citizens work without formal employment contracts, leading to a lack of social security and benefits.
2. Mismatch in professional qualifications: Job seekers often do not meet the requirements of available job vacancies. This highlights the need to modernize the vocational training system.
3. Regional disparities: While employment rates are higher in regions such as Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana, they are significantly lower in remote areas, particularly in the rural parts of the Andijan region.

Positive aspects were also noted: instances of self-employment have increased through subsidies and grants provided by the state. The activities of vocational guidance centers and "Ishga Marhamat" mono-centers are becoming increasingly active. Opportunities for skill enhancement and temporary work abroad are expanding in cooperation with international organizations. As of 2023, 65.4% of the working-age population in Uzbekistan is employed, 8.9% are unemployed, and 25.7% are engaged in work activities through the informal sector [11, p. 12]. In the Andijan region, this indicator is higher than the national average, with an unemployment rate of 9.8%. Labor issues are particularly acute in the Pakhtaabad, Baliqchi, and Asaka districts [3; p. 7].

The results obtained indicate that there are imbalances in the labor market, particularly a discrepancy between the vocational education system and the needs of employers [12; p.64]. The uniformity of employment policies across regions is creating excessive pressure in densely populated provinces such as Andijan [7; p.30]. Furthermore, disparities in the employment of women and youth demonstrate that the labor market does not align with the principles of social justice [15; p.40].

The issue of ensuring employment in Uzbekistan is closely tied to the country's socio-economic stability and the quality of life of its population. Research shows that at the present stage, a number of measures are being implemented in the country to create jobs, ensure employment, and reduce

informal employment. Analysis has revealed that informal employment in Uzbekistan's labor market remains at a high level. This is particularly evident in the Andijan region, where a large portion of citizens work without any employment contracts, leading to their deprivation of pension benefits, social insurance, and labor rights. To address this issue, the following solutions can be proposed: simplifying the process of formalizing informally employed individuals, encouraging their involvement in small businesses through preferential tax regimes, and implementing incentivized models for participation in the social insurance system. The majority of the unemployed do not meet the requirements of existing job positions. This situation has been confirmed by the example of the Andijan region. Graduates from vocational colleges and higher education institutions often possess knowledge and skills that are far removed from the real market needs. As a solution to this problem, the following can be recommended: strengthening cooperation between employers and educational institutions, developing the "Dual Education" system, and implementing career guidance services starting from the school level.

Significant disparities exist in labor market development among the regions of the republic. While employment levels are high in Tashkent city and industrialized areas, the situation remains quite challenging in peripheral regions, particularly in some districts of Andijan. This exacerbates social inequality. From this perspective, it is advisable to implement the following measures: develop cross-sectoral development strategies for each region, establish industrial clusters based on public-private partnerships in remote areas, and strengthen regional employment centers and mobile services.

The analysis revealed that in recent years, positive changes have been implemented in Uzbekistan's employment policy:

1. A targeted approach has been strengthened based on databases such as "Youth Notebook" and "Women's Notebook."
2. Opportunities for retraining and skill enhancement are being created through "Ishga Marhamat" (Welcome to Work) monocenters.
3. Temporary labor migration projects are expanding in cooperation with foreign countries.

These circumstances contribute to the stability of the labor market; however, they need to be strengthened through broader regional and cross-sectoral integration.

Ensuring employment in the Republic of Uzbekistan is considered one of the main priorities of socio-economic development today. During this study, the current state of employment in the republic, and particularly in the Andijan region, was analyzed.

Reducing informal employment: Simple and cost-effective mechanisms should be created to legalize workers without employment contracts [p. 13-19].

Adapting the vocational education system to market demands: Aligning curricula with the real sector [p. 95].

Reducing regional disparities: Separate employment programs should be developed for each district [p. 3-9].

Incentives for youth and women: Providing loans, grants, and creating ready-made job opportunities [p. 42].

Regulating foreign labor migration: Expanding official and protected pathways [p. 21].

Recommendations:

1. To reduce informal employment, the following is recommended:

Develop simple and cost-effective mechanisms for formalizing individuals working without employment contracts. Increase the popularity of the social insurance system, thereby providing social protection to unemployed and temporarily employed individuals.

2. Reforming the vocational training system: Aligning educational curricula of training institutions with real market needs. Widely implementing dual education, practical training, and entrepreneurship lessons.

3. To reduce regional disparities: Expanding public-private partnerships to create new jobs in remote areas (including districts of Andijan region). Developing specific employment strategies for each district.

4. Increasing employment opportunities for women and youth: Expanding preferential loan programs, career guidance courses, and family entrepreneurship support initiatives. Strengthening individualized approaches through the "Youth Notebook" and "Women's Notebook" programs.

5. Coordinating temporary labor activities abroad: Expanding safe, legal, and protected pathways for official labor migration. Implementing programs for the reintegration and employment of citizens returning from migration.

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