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The Concept of Unemployment as a Global Problem and Its Dimensions

Küresel Bir Sorun Olarak İşsizlik Kavramı ve Boyutları

[1]Yaşar TINAR

Abstract

Aim: Employment and unemployment are currently a significant issue, discussed at regional, national, and international levels, as they have been in the past. Economic crises experienced regionally or globally negatively impact state economies, triggering other socio-economic problems. Consequently, states and governments periodically develop policies to address economic and unemployment problems and minimize unemployment. This effort is based on examining global productivity problems based on generally accepted approaches. However, changes in global performance emerge from a transformational and theoretical perspective. Furthermore, the literature has highlighted the effects of deterioration, the global stress caused by economic downturns, and the resulting consequences. The theoretical connection between performance and globalization in this study is crucial in providing a perspective on these changes and transformations.

Method: The hermeneutic approach was used in the study.

Results: Global economic crises and the methods and measures to be taken to combat unemployment resulting from these crises have been presented through approaches such as “Neo-Liberalism” and “Keynesianism”, which have an important place in economic literature and have been implemented by states in the field of economics at certain periods.

Conclusion: The dimensions and general characteristics of global unemployment are examined, followed by an assessment of global employment and its structure, and finally, the evolution of employment policies developed to combat global unemployment. Thus, within the framework of the theoretical approaches of “Neo-Liberalism” and “Keynesian” economic models, global economic crises and the resulting unemployment-fighting policies are proposed.

Keywords

Types of Unemployment, Globalization. Dimensions of Unemployment, Economic Crisis, Concept of Unemployment

[1]Dr., Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Directorate General of Mint and Securty Printing, Istanbul, Türkiye.
✉ tinaryasar1@gmail.com

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Öz

Amaç: İstihdam ve işsizlik olgusu geçmişte olduğu gibi günümüzde de önemli bir sorun olarak bölgesel, ulusal ve uluslararası seviyede tartışılmaktadır. Bölgesel veya küresel anlamda yaşanan ekonomik krizler devletlerin ekonomilerini olumsuz yönde etkilediği gibi başka sosyo-ekonomik problemleri de tetiklemektedir. Böylece devletler veya hükümetler dönem dönem genelde ekonomik problemlere ve işsizlik sorununa karşı politikalar üretmeye ve işsizliği minimum seviyeye indirmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Bu çalışmada da küresel anlamda yaşanan işsizlik problemlemine karşı dünya genelinde genel kabul görmüş yaklaşımlar üzerinden inceleme yapılmıştır. Yine, küresel performanstaki değişim, dönüşüm ve gelişmeleri teorik bir bakış açısıyla incelenmiştir. Ayrıca literatür taraması yapılarak, ekonomilerdeki olumsuzlukların küresel etkisini ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan dönüşümü ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışmanın performans ve küreselleşme arasındaki teorik bağlantısı, yaşanan değişim ve dönüşümlere dair bir bakış açısı sağlaması büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Yöntem: Çalışmada yorumlayıcı yöntem kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Ekonomi literatüründe önemli bir yer tutan ve belli dönemlerde devletlerin ekonomi alanında uyguladığı "Neo-Liberalizm" ve "Keynesyen" gibi yaklaşımlar üzerinden küresel anlamda meydana gelen ekonomik krizler ve bu krizlerin netisinde ortaya çıkan işsizlikle mücadele yöntemleri ve alınacak tedbirler ortaya konmuştur.

Sonuç: Küresel işsizliğin boyutları ve genel özellikleri incelenmiş, akabinde küresel istihdam ve yapısı değerlendirilmiş ve son olarak küresel işsizlikle mücadele için geliştirilen istihdam politikalarının evrimi incelenmiştir. Böylece "Neo-Liberalizm" ve "Keynesyen" ekonomi modellerinin teorik yaklaşımları çerçevesinde küresel anlamda meydana gelen ekonomik krizlerin ve bu krizlerin sonucunda ortaya çıkan işsizlikle mücadele politikaları öne sürülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İşsizlik Türleri, Küreselleşme, İşsizliğin Boyutları, Ekonomik Krizler, İşsizlik Kavramı

Introduction

The phenomenon of unemployment has emerged as a problem for all states since the industrial revolution. Over the past period, wars, economic crises and epidemics have occurred in the world, and all countries of the world have implemented various policies to combat unemployment in these negative processes.

While the unemployment process can sometimes be short-term, sometimes it can be long-term. Although this unemployment process has varied from country to country, the most effective part of this process today is technological developments and economic activities. The important thing here is first the definition and classification of unemployment. Who is unemployed? What are the dimensions of unemployment? What policies do countries follow in response to this situation? There are many studies in the literature regarding this field. The important point here is that two globally accepted approaches have come to the fore. These are the Keynesian approach and the neo-liberal approach.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of global unemployment by integrating the conceptual definitions of unemployment, the theoretical perspectives of Keynesian and neo-liberal approaches, and the cross-country differences observed in developed and developing economies. In doing so, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and theoretically grounded analysis of how global economic crises shape unemployment dynamics and how active and passive labor-market policies evolve in response. Through a hermeneutic approach, this research seeks to offer a holistic understanding of unemployment within the changing global economic structure.

On the other hand, it is known that economic, social, cultural, climatic, political and technological developments and conditions occurring in the world affect unemployment. At this point, countries produce various active and passive policies, improve existing policies and periodically introduce new policies and strategies to reduce unemployment and increase employment.

It is known that the policies implemented by states within the scope of combating unemployment, especially passive employment policies, have been criticized because they accustom people to laziness. That's why states mostly focus on active employment policies, known as policies that increase production and employment.

In this context, the study first presents the definition and classification of unemployment. Second, it refers to the Keynesian and neo-liberal approaches in the fight against unemployment. Third, it examines the unemployment dimension of developed and developing countries. Fourth and finally, it includes the active and passive employment policies implemented around the world.

In this context, the study first included the definition and classification of unemployment. Secondly, Keynesian and neo-liberal approaches in the fight against unemployment are mentioned. Thirdly, the unemployment dimension of developed and developing countries was examined. Fourth and lastly, active and passive employment policies implemented around the world are included.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering an integrated and theory-driven framework that brings together conceptual definitions of unemployment, global economic crises, and labour market policies within a single analytical structure. Previous research has largely addressed unemployment through fragmented perspectives. A substantial strand of the literature focuses on labour market institutions and rigidities, emphasizing the role of wage bargaining systems, employment protection legislation, and union density in shaping unemployment outcomes (Nickell, 1997, pp. 55–57; Bassanini & Duval, 2006, pp. 9–12). While these studies provide important insights into institutional determinants of unemployment, they tend to analyze these factors in isolation and do not situate them within a broader conceptual and historical framework.

Another line of research examines the effects of global economic crises on unemployment, with particular emphasis on youth labour markets (Junankar, 2014, pp. 1–4). Demonstrates that youth unemployment increased substantially more than adult unemployment following the Global Financial Crisis, despite declining relative youth wages, indicating a disproportionate and persistent impact of macroeconomic shocks on younger cohorts.

Similarly, shows that the Great Recession was associated with a deterioration in young adults' economic conditions and highlights cross-country variation shaped by differences in national labour market structures and welfare regimes (Sironi, 2017, pp. 1–3). However, these studies primarily concentrate on specific demographic groups and do not systematically integrate unemployment typologies, theoretical approaches, and policy responses.

Macroeconomic approaches to unemployment further underscore the importance of aggregate economic conditions and labour market regulations in shaping unemployment dynamics. In this context emphasize that unemployment cannot be explained only by demographic factors and that economic conditions and labour market regulations are important determinants affecting employment outcomes (Akduğan & Doğan, 2021, pp. 22–23). By contrast, this study bridges these fragmented strands of the literature through a hermeneutic approach that integrates unemployment typologies, economic theories, comparative country analysis, and the historical evolution of labour market policies. In doing so, it addresses a key conceptual gap in the literature and provides a holistic perspective on unemployment that has largely been overlooked.

Literature Review

Although numerous empirical studies have examined the interaction between globalization and unemployment, the literature remains fragmented, with most studies focusing either on macroeconomic shocks, labor-market institutions, or country-specific samples. Therefore, a comprehensive theoretical synthesis that integrates unemployment typologies, global crises, and policy responses is still limited.

Another line of research examines the effects of global economic crises on unemployment, with particular emphasis on youth labour markets. Youth unemployment increased substantially more than adult unemployment following the Global Financial Crisis, despite declining relative youth wages (Junankar, 2014, pp. 1–4). Similarly, the Great Recession was associated with a deterioration in the economic conditions of young adults, with significant cross-country variation shaped by differences in labour market structures and welfare regimes (Sironi, 2017, pp. 1–3).

Beyond crisis-focused analyses, empirical studies have directly examined the relationship between globalization and unemployment. Economic globalization, particularly through trade openness, is associated with lower levels of structural unemployment in a cross-country setting (Gozgor, 2017, pp. 421–423). Moreover, the unemployment effects of globalization vary with income per capita across developed and developing economies (Rahman & Alam, 2023, pp. 395–397).

Country-specific evidence further supports these findings. For Türkiye, economic globalization has been shown to have a statistically significant long-run effect on unemployment rates (Mike & Kardaşlar, 2023, pp. 450–452). Similarly, increased globalization is associated with lower youth unemployment in the long run based on an augmented ARDL approach (Uğurlu, 2024, pp. 177–179).

Taken together, these studies indicate that the globalization–unemployment nexus has been extensively examined in the recent literature.

Studies examining the determinants of unemployment and the effects of labour market institutions on unemployment commonly include variables such as unemployment benefits, employment protection legislation (EPL), union density,

the degree of coordination in collective bargaining, tax wedges, and active labour market policies (ALMPs) (Nickell, 1997, pp. 55–57; Elmeskov, Martin and Scarpetta, 1998, pp. 208–210).

However, the literature differs substantially with respect to the way macroeconomic variables are incorporated into empirical models. Some studies control for macroeconomic conditions using only inflation. For instance, inflation is employed as a proxy for wage pressure and cyclical conditions in unemployment equations (Nickell, 1997, pp. 60–63).

Other studies control for the business cycle using the output gap in order to distinguish between cyclical and structural components of unemployment (Elmeskov et al., 1998, pp. 208–212). This approach follows the OECD framework of equilibrium unemployment and aims to isolate non-cyclical unemployment dynamics.

A further strand of the literature incorporates macroeconomic shocks directly into unemployment models. These studies include variables such as real interest rates, labour productivity or total factor productivity, terms of trade, and labour demand shocks. The interaction between adverse macroeconomic shocks and labour market institutions is emphasised as a key factor in explaining the rise of unemployment in Europe (Blanchard & Wolfers, 2000, pp. 1–3).

Similarly, negative total factor productivity shocks, increases in long-term real interest rates, and negative labour demand shocks are found to increase unemployment, while the magnitude of these effects depends on the institutional configuration of labour markets (Bassanini & Duval, 2006, pp. 7–9, 29–31).

Another important difference across studies concerns data frequency and time horizon. Some empirical analyses rely on annual data when assessing the effects of labour market institutions and policies on unemployment (Elmeskov et al., 1998, pp. 205–206; Boone & Van Ours, 2004, pp. 4–6).

By contrast, other studies use longer-term data or multi-year averages to abstract from short-run fluctuations and focus on structural relationships between institutions, macroeconomic conditions, and unemployment (Nickell, 1997, pp. 58–60; Blanchard & Wolfers, 2000, pp. 1–3).

Globalization can be defined as a set of cross-border processes that link states not primarily through political mechanisms, but through technological, economic, and, to some extent, social interactions. These processes operate across multiple levels of human organization and are characterized by decentralized exchanges such as trade, capital flows, and communication networks, which integrate national economies into a truly global system. Rather than being directed by a single authority, globalization emerges from the cumulative effects of interactions among diverse actors, thereby transforming the structure and functioning of the world system. As a result, events and decisions taken at the local or national level increasingly generate widespread and often unpredictable global consequences (Henrikson, 2003, p. 96).

The relationship between economic growth and employment is not uniform across countries. While a linear progression between growth and employment is generally observed in developed economies, this pattern does not necessarily hold in developing countries. In such contexts, unemployment often fails to decline even during periods of economic growth due to structural constraints, including capital scarcity and the predominance of an unskilled young workforce. Moreover, empirical evidence indicates a strong correlation between rising unemployment—particularly during periods of global economic crisis—and firm dynamics. Global crises are typically associated with a substantial increase in business closures alongside a decline in new firm formation, highlighting the vulnerability of employment to firm-level disruptions (Atila & Çelikkaya, 2020, p. 249).

A study examining the economic situation of young people before and after the 2008 global economic crisis was conducted in five countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, and Spain. The findings indicate that men were more severely affected by the crisis, and their economic conditions deteriorated more than those of young women. However, it was found that the service sector, where women's employment is concentrated, was relatively less affected by the crisis. In addition, the impact of the global crisis remained limited in countries such as Norway, which has a generous welfare state, and Germany, which has a strong vocational training system. Another important finding of the study is that highly educated young people were significantly affected by the crisis due to their lower wages (Alkan & Çelen, 2022, p. 372).

Junankar (2014) conducted a study on the youth labor market in Australia and its response to the global financial crisis, finding that the youth labor market was more volatile than the adult labor market. The study found that young people were more affected by the crisis because they worked more in sectors sensitive to cyclical fluctuations and in part-time, temporary employment. Young people are more vulnerable during economic downturns because they enter employment in a vulnerable state. Furthermore, young people employed in this way are more likely to be laid off. The study also found that while youth wages have fallen relative to adult wages, youth unemployment rates have increased significantly more than those of adults (Alkan & Çelen, 2022, p. 372).

The impact of economic crises on youth labor market exclusion was examined using a fixed-effects panel data model covering several countries over the period 1980–2005. The econometric results indicate that crises affect unemployment rates prior to GDP deviations, and that their impact on youth unemployment is stronger than on overall unemployment. This effect is found to be more pronounced in high-income countries. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the labor market effects of crises emerge within five years of the crisis onset, with the most severe negative impacts occurring in the second and third years following the crisis (Alkan & Çelen, 2022, pp. 372–373).

An analysis of the effects of macroeconomic shocks on unemployment, including those affecting Türkiye, shows that positive shocks to economic growth, exports, and inflation reduce unemployment, while positive shocks to the exchange rate, interbank interest rate, and money supply increase unemployment. Accordingly, there is a negative relationship between output and unemployment and a positive relationship between unemployment and inflation (Doğan, 2012, p. 72).

Theoretical Framework: How Globalization Influences Unemployment

Globalization affects unemployment through several interrelated economic mechanisms (Pal & Villanthenkodath, 2024, pp. 6784–6802; Gozgor, 2017, pp. 1–23). First, the integration of global markets facilitates the free movement of capital, enabling firms to relocate production to countries with lower labor costs, which may increase unemployment in developed economies, particularly among low-skilled workers (Rahman & Alam, 2023, pp. 2–4). Second, the diffusion of technology and automation—an inherent component of globalization—reduces labor demand in developing economies as firms adopt capital-intensive production methods (Doğan, 2016, pp. 620–633). Third, increased international competition forces firms to reduce labor costs, often resulting in wage suppression, limited job creation, and outsourcing (Mike & Kardaşlar, 2023, p. 458). Fourth, globalization intensifies sectoral shifts within national economies; as traditional industries decline and new ones emerge, skill mismatches contribute to structural unemployment (Pal & Villanthenkodath, 2024, pp. 6790–6795). While globalization promotes economic growth and productivity, these benefits do not automatically translate into higher employment levels. Instead, without adequate labor-market policies, globalization may result in 'jobless growth,' where economic expansion fails to create sufficient employment (Gozgor, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, globalization and unemployment are linked through complex causal pathways that operate differently across countries depending on institutional structures, labor-market flexibility, and technological readiness (Rahman & Alam, 2023, pp. 15–18).

Globalization

Globalization, which is constantly dynamic in the new global world order we live in, can be defined as the process of national sharing of the knowledge and accumulation of the masses, ignoring the difference between the far and the near, the convergence of countries and people with the opportunities of new technologies, their involvement in a more intense data transfer and their presence in economic, cultural, political and social data transfers with particles, the disappearance of universalization, polarization and fragmentation, and the process of national sharing of the knowledge and accumulation of the masses.

Basing globalization solely on economic foundations, ignoring its economic, cultural, political, and social foundations, will complicate understanding the concept. Nevertheless, researchers define (Yüceol, 2005, p: 495) globalization as "a universal economic reorganization movement based on the logic of creating a single global market" a transnational global economic system that transcends domestic and foreign trade boundaries and imposes a different role on nation-states (Habermas, 2002, p: 64) and explain it with the term "economic globalization".

The Effects of Global Economic Crises on Economies and Employment

Globalization has fostered economic growth in many developed countries, but it has failed to fully contribute to job creation and unemployment. The failure to fully address unemployment has become a significant problem and predicament for developed countries, and solutions have become increasingly difficult. Because of integrated national economies, economic crises occurring in one country have begun to impact all countries globally. Furthermore, the restructuring of production in the new economic world order, while favorable and positive for capital accumulation, has not yielded positive results for the working class and has led to the rise of new social problems and a decline in growth rates (Ercan, 1995, p. 690-691), industrial production, trade volume, and fixed investment expenditures in all countries worldwide (Narin & Marşap, 2010, p. 6).

The world's first economic crisis emerged in 1929 and affected the economies of developing countries the most. These countries have also been responsible for the numerous economic crises that have occurred to date. The most significant impacts of global economic crises on the world economy have been contractions in world trade volume

resulting from declines in production and exports and imports, as well as rising inflation rates in both developed and developing countries (Yıldırım, 2010, p. 54).

Developments in the global economy: In 2005, the global economy grew by 4.4%. The primary reason for this slow growth rate was rising oil prices. In 2006, the economic growth rate increased by 0.7 percentage points to 5.1%. The production growth rate, which began to decline in 2007, is projected to fall to 3% in 2009. The most significant reason for the gradual contraction of the global economy since 2007 is the mortgage crisis that emerged in the US housing market in mid-2007. Because the US economy is a major driver of the global economy, this crisis negatively impacted the global economy. The growth rate in developed economies remained below the world average. While these economies grew by 2.6% in 2005, they have been in continuous decline since 2007. Growth rates are expected to fall to 0.5% by the end of 2009. Among the developing Asian economies, China and India, followed closely by Russia, have been the fastest-growing economies in the world since 2005 (Yıldırım, 2010, p. 48).

The global contraction in demand caused by the 2008 global economic crisis meant that, even if productivity and production increased, these positive developments were not reflected in labor markets, particularly in developing countries. In other words, even if economic growth did occur in developing countries, it was growth that failed to create jobs. The costs of the economic crisis were reflected in wage earners in the form of unemployment, low wages, or social insecurity. The number of unemployed people worldwide increased by approximately 34 million between 2007 and 2009, and the number of working poor increased by 111 million between 2008 and 2009. There has also been a significant increase in informal employment (Can & Karataş, 2014, p. 17-18).

According to research, while global growth was 2.8% in 2019, negative growth of -3.1% was achieved in 2020 due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken while vaccine research was still actively underway but not yet implemented. As of 2021, significant increases in production and consumption volumes as a result of the active implementation of vaccine research and controlled liberalization have led to positive growth of 5.9% globally (Ünüvar & Aktaş, 2022, p. 129).

As a result of the measures implemented to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, market flows have declined and economies have lost their vitality. In low-income countries, measures taken to combat Covid-19 have been relaxed somewhat to stimulate economic development, while in upper- and middle-income countries, strict lockdown measures of around 70% have continued, significantly disrupting working life.

Throughout the curfew period, workplaces remained closed in 94% of countries. This played a significant role in increasing unemployment rates. As countries faced reduced production due to the COVID-19 pandemic and implemented layoffs, flexible and short-time work schedules, and home offices, a 17.3% decrease in working hours was observed in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. Globally, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 5.5% decrease in global labor income (ILO, 2020, p: 1).

While the new economic order has offered economic growth opportunities to countries around the world, it has also led to negative social and political consequences. This has led to problems of inequality, insecurity, exclusion, and especially poverty at the national or local level in almost every country, thus taking the situation to a global level (Sapancalı, 2001, p. 136).

Global economic crises have impacted investments in the countries where they occurred and put financial sectors in a difficult position. Policies of reducing the number of employees and maintaining low employment levels in businesses have triggered unemployment and led to increased economic and social (Yılmaz and Çetin, 2007, p: 20) unemployment, poverty, marginalization, and discrimination among individuals who constitute the unskilled workforce. Workers worldwide have been burdened with the consequences of the crises caused by the globalization of trade and production (Tuna, 1997, p. 54).

Unemployment Definition and Types

Concept of Unemployment

Although there are many definitions of unemployment in the literature, they all actually mean the same thing. However, the most used definition is the unemployment definitions of TURKSTAT and International Labour Organizations.

According to TURKSTAT, the definition of unemployment is as follows; “It consists of people who were not employed during the reference week, were actively looking for a job in the last four weeks, and were able to start work within 2 weeks if they found a job. “In addition, the job is reviewed to wait for the job to continue, and people who will start working within three months are also included in the unemployed” (TURKSTAT, 2023, p. 9).

As a reference period for job search activities until 2014; Instead of "last 4 weeks", "last 3 months" was expressed as "last 3 months", and in previous years, the reference period was expressed as one week.

According to Ersel, based on the ILO's definition, the definition of unemployment is as follows: *"Those who are over a certain age group on a certain day or week, who do not do any income-generating work for a temporary and indefinite period of time, who cannot have a job and who are available to work looking for paid employment*" (Ersel, 1999, p. 150).

For a person to be defined as unemployed, "*he or she has the will and power to work but cannot find a job despite looking for a job at the current and valid wage and also within the hours determined by law or custom*" and "*the idleness he is exposed to has occurred beyond his will and desire*". " must be.

According to Demir, based on the ILO's definition unemployment through three criteria that can mirror unemployment. These;

1. "unemployed" (not having a job), that is, those who are not employed in the form of wage or self-employment,
2. *"job seekers", that is, those who have taken significant steps to look for work some time ago,*
3. *"ready to start work", i.e. ready to be employed in paid or self-employment during the reference period (a defined time period/one week or one day)* (Demir, 2022, p. 403).

People who are able to work and want to work, but cannot find a job with suitable wages and working conditions, are considered unemployed (Kanca, 2012, p. 2). According to some studies, unemployed refers to a person who is not employed (Feng, Lakagos & Rauch, 2018, p. 6).

Types of Unemployment

When the types of unemployment are examined and the literature is reviewed, the most common types of unemployment are as follows: Open Unemployment, Incidental (Frictional) Unemployment, Structural Unemployment, Technological Unemployment, Cyclical Unemployment, Seasonal Unemployment, Hidden Unemployment.

According to Zaim (1997), the concept of open unemployment refers to the total of those who are looking for a job at the current wage level but cannot find it, although they have the power and desire to work. In other words, it is the situation where a person does not have a job to earn money or provide for himself or his family.

Incidental (frictional) unemployment is a type of unemployment that arises from location and job changes, and from the inability to meet job offer and job demand at the same time (Talas, 1997, p. 138).

Unemployment that occurs due to changes in the economic, social and cultural structure of the society is called structural unemployment. For example, a rapid transition from a structure based on an agricultural economy to an economy based on the industry and services sector can lead to structural unemployment.

Technological unemployment is considered by some as the most important cause of unemployment due to the changing production structure due to technological developments. Because the use of labor-saving technology in production allows more efficient production with less labor force (Kökocak, Yılmaz & Demirci, 2015, p. 117).

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Seasonal unemployment is a type of unemployment that occurs due to seasonal fluctuations. For example, the decrease in construction work in winter and increase in summer, and the decrease in cotton picking work in winter and increase in summer can be given as examples of seasonal unemployment (Yıldız, 2014, p. 12).

If there is no change in the total amount of production by withdrawing some labor element from any field of economic activity, it means that there is hidden unemployment. For example; Ten employees work in the finance department of a business. If the resignation or dismissal of any personnel does not affect the productivity of the business, it can be said that there is hidden unemployment in that workplace (Kanca, 2012, p. 3).

Basic Approaches to the Unemployment Problem

There are two basic approaches to the unemployment problem. The first of these is the Keynesian approach, and the other is the neo-classical approach, which is today's representative of the classical economics of the past.

Keynesian Approach

When economic history is examined, it is seen that unemployment was not considered a problem until the Great Depression of 1929. According to the economic approach dominant in this period, the economy was at full employment level and there was no unemployment other than voluntary unemployment. According to this understanding, if, for

any reason, it moves away from full employment, the economy has the elements to reach full employment on its own. Despite everything, despite the effects of World War I and all the economic measures taken in the 1920s, the phenomenon of unemployment could not be prevented. Indeed, the economic stagnation and decline, which started in the USA in 1929 and then affected the whole world, caused an increase in unemployment and a decline in production and national income all over the world.

According to Keynes, unemployment; It literally happens out of will. The most important development that moved Keynes away from the phenomenon of unemployment in classical economic theories and enabled him to see unemployment as an involuntary problem was the 1929 Great Depression and the negative economic developments that continued afterwards. Because in the period following the Great Depression of 1929, people could not find a job despite looking for a job. In his work titled "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" published by Keynes in 1936, Keynes drew attention to the inadequacy of classical economics' classification of unemployment. In addition, Keynes stated that unemployment is not just a voluntary issue and is mostly caused by insufficient effective demand. In addition, Keynes recognizes that it is generally unlikely that people will find as much work as they want at current wages. For example, he argues that some people accept work at nominal wage levels but still cannot find a job. Accordingly, this situation creates a different unemployment than the frictional and voluntary unemployment mentioned in classical economics (Özdemir, 2018, p. 125).

There are three basic assumptions about the free market mechanism made by classical economists and revealed by Keynes as false:

1. The basis in the market is full employment.
2. There is a natural order and an automatic balance mechanism based on competition in the market.
3. Money is a neutral thing that does not create economic consequences other than its purpose of exchange (Tomanbay, 2017, p. 12).

In this context, according to Keynes, unemployment is not a labor supply problem, but on the contrary, it is a demand problem. Therefore, the aim of Keynesian economics is to ensure active interventions of the state and full employment in the economy. In other words, in this model, the state must be active in the economy and macro policies must be established. According to this economic model; Economic growth is sustained and high employment and high purchasing power are essential to create high demand in the domestic market.

At that time, this policy also complied with the social demands of the period, and in many countries, the social characteristics of the state developed thanks to these policies. However, since the 1970s, especially in the 1980s, the Keynesian model began to lose its influence in Western countries.

Neo-Liberal Approach

World War II negatively affected European economies. In 1944, Western states established two institutions to stimulate European economies and stabilize the financial system based on international capitalism: the first is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now part of the World Bank) and the second is the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Freeman, 2015, p. 146).

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, Keynesian economics was at its peak over Western governments. When the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the declaration included not only liberal civil and political rights but also social democratic economic and social rights. Article 25 of the Declaration states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, to necessary social services and to security in the event of unemployment. In the post-World War II period when the "Cold War" dominated world politics, two economic policy models dominated: the authoritarian state socialist model of the Soviet Union and the liberal, social democratic welfare state model of the West. Classical free-market economic liberalism was widely thought to be responsible for the economic depression of the 1930s, the rise of fascism and thus the Second World War, and as a result appeared to be completely discredited (Freeman, 2015, p. 147).

In the 1970s, the sustainability of the welfare state model began to be questioned. Western capitalist economies experienced a period called 'recession'. In this period; High inflation, stagnant economy, rising unemployment and living standards were under threat. In response to this crisis in welfare states, economic liberalism began to revive (Freeman, 2015, p. 147).

Despite the increase in oil prices in Turkey in the 1970s, the view that state interventions in the economy and the state should be downsized in decision-making processes emerged. The economic crisis that emerged due to oil

prices affected OECD countries, especially European countries. As a result of this economic crisis; Economic growth slowed down, inflation increased, high levels of structural unemployment emerged, budget deficits began to occur, and public expenditures increased. Essentially, the neo-liberal policies that emerged in this period emerged as an alternative to Keynesian policies and constituted the contemporary interpretation of classical liberal policies.

On the other hand, within neo-liberal economic policies; Opinions such as the concepts of supply and demand, the idea that the market will balance on its own, and the individual putting his own interests first are dominant. According to this economic view; The labor market consists of labor supply and demand. For this reason, imbalances in the labor market are generally attributed to excessive increases in wages, and it has been argued that the labor market will balance as the unemployed accept lower wages.

Again, according to the neo-liberal economic view; People whose unemployment will be reduced by general interventions have a wrong conversation. Because the economy will not decrease thanks to these policies. Thus, as a result of these policies, price increases, worker layoffs and decrease in investments will occur and cuts will increase due to division. In this way, it is seen as the correct approach and opinion that it would be correct to release the market with its own model.

The micro-level approach to the market in new methods stems primarily from the fragmented nature of this market. In other words, the market has a mosaic structure, the causes of unemployment are diverse, and numerous uncertainties exist to exaggerate people's choices between work and leisure. It would be more meaningful to consider unemployment at different levels, rather than considering this data within a global approach. This suggests that examining events at a macro level alone is insufficient to explain. It's noteworthy that no single theoretical approach is sufficient to explain current unemployment. In this regard, hybrid theories have been developed. These are considered new interpretations of unemployment within Keynesian, Classical, and Marxist theories (Ataman, 1998, p. 70).

According to 2017 research, the world's population is approximately 7.5 billion. The workforce is 3.4 billion, and the unemployment rate is 5.8%. Furthermore, the labor force is expected to grow by an average of 0.5% annually over the next 10 years. Population growth data show that both the global population and the global workforce are increasing by an average of 100 million people annually, but only 50 million jobs are being created annually (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 466).

Unemployment in Developed and Developing Countries

Unemployment in Developed Countries

The first large-scale unemployment, which caused great fluctuations in developed countries, occurred after the 1929 economic crisis. The 1929 economic crisis caused countries to make major changes in their economic policies. Especially after World War II, with the Keynesian policies implemented, a high level of employment was achieved and unemployment ceased to be a problem for a while. In the period until the 1980s, states experienced a golden age. After the 1980s, as a result of the oil crisis and the continuous increase in the price of oil and the completion of the industrialization of East Asian countries, a serious competitive environment was created and as a result of this situation, developed countries changed their economic policies.

When this pause in growth is examined economically, two important results have occurred. The first of these was the strengthening of liberal economic policies, and the second was followed by the liberalization of international trade. These changes occurring in economically developed countries have led to a revision of world trade. Along with this, the foundations of today's global economic market were laid.

Especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the world underwent economic restructuring. Countries with strong economies have begun to follow liberal policies. In other words, they wanted to establish an economic structure in which the free market economy was valid. Movements such as "deregulation" and "privatization" have been initiated to ensure the functionality of this structure. Of course, all these developments have also caused unemployment to increase rapidly.

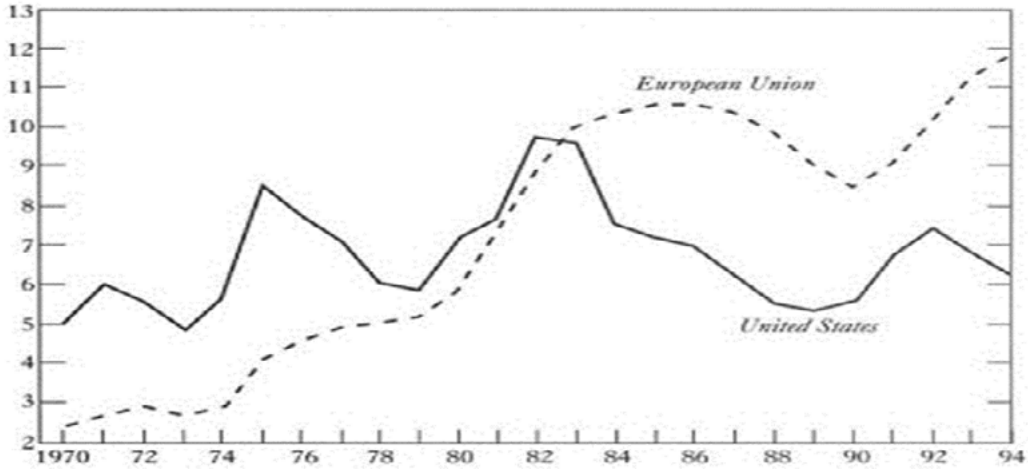

Figure 1. Unemployment Rate in Europe in the 80s and 90s

Source: Henry & Snower, 1996, p. 3.

As can be seen in the graph above, the increase in unemployment in the European Union countries gained great momentum from the early 1980s until the 1990s and reached double digit figures. Although rate ratios showed a small decline in 1990, since then rate rates have increased again in European Union countries.

Table 1. Unemployment Rate in Europe and Turkey by years (2015-2022)

Years	European Union	Euro Area	Türkiye
2015	10.2	11.0	10.3
2016	9.3	10.1	10.9
2017	8.3	9.1	10.9
2018	7.4	8.2	10.9
2019	6.8	7.6	13.7
2020	7.2	8.0	13.2
2021	7.1	7.7	-
2022	6.2	6.8	-

Source: Eurostat, 2023.

According to recent data, unemployment rates in the European Union are observed as single digits both in the European region and within the European Union. According to the same table, the unemployment rate in Turkey was in double digits between 2015 and 2020.

Table 2. OECD Unemployment Rates (2015-2022)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Türkiye	10.33	10.91	10.93	10.89	13.74	13.14	12.03	10.48
Euro Area	10.97	10.11	9.13	8.23	7.60	7.94	7.73	6.72
European Union	10.18	9.28	8.28	7.39	6.83	7.22	7.05	6.16
OECD	6.89	6.47	5.94	5.49	5.42	7.16	6.16	5.00

Source: OECD, 2023.

When the table above is examined, it is seen that unemployment rates as of 2015 are lower in OECD countries than in the European Union and Euro Zone until 2022.

The effects of the 2008 global crisis were particularly severe in the real sector in 2009. Labor markets were negatively affected in the United States, where the crisis originated. The unemployment rate in America was %5.1 in 2005, %4.6 in 2006 and 2007, and started to rise in 2008, reaching %5.8. Since the beginning of the global crisis, the unemployment rate in America in 2009 has almost doubled and reached %9.3, and the peak unemployment rate, which will not occur from 1999 until 2022, was %9.6 in 2010. Since 2010, unemployment rates in America have shown a continuous downward trend until 2019, and the unemployment rate, which was %9.6 in 2010, decreased to %3.7. With the global epidemic that affected the whole world in 2019, the economies of the countries were also negatively affected, and the unemployment rate in America increased again to %8.1 in 2020 (Statista, 2023).

According to ILO projections, the labor force participation rate in G7 countries remained stable at around 60% in 2024. The unemployment rate, which peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic, fell from 20.6% in 2021 to 17.3% in 2024. Nearly 10 billion new full-time jobs have been created in the last three years, benefiting both men and women equally. However, G7 economies are aging rapidly, and by 2026, the working-age population (20-64 years old) is projected to decline by 35% in Italy, 33% in Japan, 23% in Germany, 9% in France, and 3% in the United Kingdom. Only the United States and Canada are expected to increase by 5% and 12%, respectively (ILO, 2025).

Unemployment in Developing Countries

Lack of any source of income also means unemployment and low growth of economic activities or low economic performance in a country. One of the most important parameters showing economic performance is the high unemployment rate. However, the high unemployment rate also indicates that resources are not fully used. As it is known, the economy is based on the production of goods and services. At the same time, the phenomenon of unemployment affects not those who are employed. On the other hand, unemployment is not only a development problem. In this context, the phenomenon of unemployment seriously affects not only developed countries but also developing countries (Siddiqa, 2021, p. 19).

Human beings want economic growth to improve and unemployment to be low, price stability, currency value to be stable, etc. He has constantly sought to improve his financial situation through the effective use of resources such as (İmran, Mughal, Salman & Makarevic, 2015, p. 147-148).

Europe has gained a great advantage over other countries in production and employment, thanks to the advantages it has achieved as a result of industrialization and technological developments. These developments have divided the world into two groups: developed and developing countries. This duality continues to exist today. Especially since the 1990s, developed countries have made efforts to combat unemployment as a result of the economic crises and epidemics experienced in the world. But developing countries have made more efforts to combat unemployment than western countries.

While unemployment in developed countries generally occurs as a result of a lack of demand, unemployment in developing countries is a structural situation due to insufficient production technology and qualified human resources and rapid population growth (Hesapçıoğlu, 1986, p. 164).

According to Hesapçıoğlu (1986), the unemployment process in developing countries and the negative effects of this process are as follows: insufficient production equipment and capacity, as well as a high population growth rate. This situation gives the appearance of structural unemployment in developing countries. Seasonal unemployment, which accelerates this structural unemployment, technological unemployment that arises due to technological innovations, and cyclical unemployment that emerges after a while in areas where technological innovations have entered, emerge as a major problem that developing countries generally face.

Other reasons affecting unemployment in developing countries are;

1. Determination of wages above the equilibrium wage level due to collective bargaining and similar reasons, resulting in a contraction in labor demand
2. Limited substitution opportunities between labor and capital
3. Lack of a balanced factor distribution
4. Unbalanced development of factor prices due to inadequate competitive conditions
5. Preferring more capital-intensive techniques in production
6. Income differences in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and the phenomenon of intense urban migration caused by these differences (Şahin, 2012, p. 80).

For example, The COVID-19 pandemic has brought economic activity to a standstill, with millions of people in Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and other developing economies losing their jobs or experiencing significant reductions in income or working hours.

Meanwhile, unemployment rates have risen rapidly, and underemployment and informality have also increased sharply. So-called low-skilled workers—especially women, youth, and immigrants—have been more exposed to layoffs and wage cuts. Workers in the informal sector, where social protection is weak or nonexistent, have been particularly hard hit. Consequently, developing economies have faced enormous challenges in recreating the millions of jobs lost.

In addition to the emergency stimulus measures implemented during this period, governments have sought to create robust employment programs to create sufficient decent jobs to employ the unemployed (UN, 2025).

Table 3. Unemployment and unemployment rate, 2019–25, by sex, world and income group

		Unemployment rate (percentage)							Unemployment (millions)						
Country group	**Sex**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
World	Women	5.7	6.6	6.2	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.3	78.5	90.0	87.0	79.2	77.9	78.5	79.4
	Men	5.5	6.6	6.0	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.0	115.9	137.3	126.4	110.6	110.7	112.3	113.3
	Total	5.6	6.6	6.1	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.2	194.3	227.3	213.4	189.7	188.6	190.8	192.7
Low Income	Women	5.4	6.1	6.3	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.7	6.6	7.0	6.5	6.7	6.9	7.0
	Men	5.1	6.0	6.0	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.6	7.0	8.3	8.7	8.4	8.9	9.2	9.3
	Total	5.2	6.0	6.1	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.6	12.7	15.0	15.7	14.9	15.6	16.1	16.3
Lower-middle income	Women	6.1	6.8	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.4	22.5	25.2	25.2	22.7	23	22.9	23.5
	Men	5.7	6.9	6.1	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	45.6	54.8	49.5	39.8	40.7	41.4	42.1
	Total	5.8	6.9	6.2	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.9	68.2	80.0	74.7	62.5	63.7	64.4	65.5
Upper-middle income	Women	5.7	6.4	6.1	5.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	36.1	39.0	38.4	36.1	34.5	34.5	34.5
	Men	5.8	6.6	6.1	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.5	47.2	52.6	49.3	47.2	45.7	45.8	45.8
	Total	5.8	6.5	6.1	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.5	83.3	91.6	87.7	83.3	80.2	80.3	80.4
High income	Women	5.0	6.9	5.9	4.8	4.7	4.9	5.0	14.2	19.2	16.5	13.8	13.7	14.1	14.4
	Men	4.5	6.2	5.4	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5	16.0	21.6	18.9	15.2	15.4	15.9	16.1
	Total	4.8	6.5	5.6	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.7	30.1	40.8	35.4	29.0	29.0	30.0	30.5

Source: ILO, 2024, s. 28

As seen in the table above, there was a decrease in unemployment rates globally between 2019 and 2025. However, in the years following the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment rates increased significantly for both women and men, and overall. Low-income countries, another group, observed an increase in unemployment rates between 2019 and 2025. When these increases in unemployment rates are analyzed by year, it is clear that the increase peaked in the years affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In low-middle-income, upper-middle-income, and upper-income countries, a general decrease in unemployment rates between 2019 and 2025 is observed, in sharp contrast to low-income countries.

Policies Implemented to Combat Unemployment

Policies displayed and implemented against the unemployment problem may differ from country to country. Among these policies, on the one hand, there are liberal policies that leave the solution of the unemployment problem to economic development, and on the other hand, there are approaches and policies that accept this problem as a social problem and give priority to employment policies. Depending on countries, periods and political powers, societies generally prefer one of these policy practices (Uyar Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008, p. 9).

Labor market policies implemented to combat unemployment are basically divided into two groups. While some of these policies try to eliminate the negative consequences of unemployment, the other part aims to eliminate or reduce unemployment. These policies are called active and passive employment policies.

OECD has divided the policies implemented within the scope of combating unemployment into seven groups. These are respectively;

1. Public-private sector cooperation and consultancy services
2. Occupational retraining-lifelong learning
3. Subsidized employment (subsidies to the private sector, assistance to those who start their own businesses, direct employment in the public sector, etc.)
4. Employment policies for young people
5. Employment policies for disabled people
6. Unemployment insurance regulations
7. Early retirement policies (Ay, 2012, p. 330-331).

The first five items here are classified as active policies, and the sixth and seventh items are classified as passive policies. While passive policies generally increase the financial burden, they can also push people into laziness during long-term unemployment. On the other hand, it can be said that active policies are more permanent and increase production due to their effectiveness in creating employability, vocational training and employment.

For example, in the fight against long-term unemployment, the European Union uses the following methods to reduce unemployment:

1. Vocational training policies in the fight against long-term unemployment
2. Counseling and job search assistance services
3. Temporary work programs
4. Aids to support self-employment and co-operative establishment
5. Flexible working and new working models
6. Reducing employment costs
7. Government subsidies and tax breaks for work
8. Revision of unemployment benefit systems
9. Supporting entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized businesses
10. New employment strategy and solutions to long-term unemployment in the European Union (Duruel, 2007, p. 399-400).

Conclusion

Although the phenomenon of unemployment mainly manifested itself with the industrial revolution, it has always existed in different structures, sizes and rates from past to present in countries, regions and throughout the world, whether in the developed country category or the developing country category.

As is known, although it is described in different terms by different authors or researchers, a generally accepted definition and categorization of unemployment has been made by international organizations. Today, states or governments generally carry out their work based on these definitions.

States and the governments that govern them have been faced with changes and developments in the economic, social, cultural, political and health fields that have occurred around the world or in any region in different time periods. In fact, as it is known, from past to present, and especially after the industrial revolution, two world wars, economic crises, oil shocks, epidemics and regional wars have occurred.

On the other hand, governments have resorted to various policy practices to get rid of the negative effects of economic crises and prevent unemployment from increasing. Keynesian and neo-liberal economic policies are among the most effective and important policies implemented worldwide. In addition to these policy practices, governments also implement active and passive employment policies to minimize unemployment within their own bodies. Ultimately, thanks to these economic and employment policies that are tried to be implemented, states are trying to fight hard against the phenomenon of unemployment.

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Özet

Dünya üzerindeki en değerli varlık olan insan, insanlık tarihinin başından günümüze kadar hayatını devam ettirebilmek için sürekli bir mücadele içerisine girmiştir. Bu mücadelenin en önemlisi ise çalışma hakkıdır. Çalışma hakkı ise günümüzde hemen hemen tüm insan hakları sözleşmelerinde mevcuttur. Şöyle ki ulusal veya uluslararası tüm sözleşmelerin amacı çalışma hakkını, insanın onurlu bir yaşam sürdürebilmesi için bir hak olduğunu ifade etmek ve korumak olarak belirlenmiştir. Tüm bunlara rağmen, günümüzde istihdam ve işsizlik sorunu ciddi olarak tartışılmaya devam etmektedir. Çünkü istihdam ve işsizlik sorunu ciddi bir ekonomik ve sosyal sorun teşkil etmektedir.

Ancak istihdam ve işsizlik sorununun bölgeden bölgeye, ülkeden ülkeye tür, kapsam ve boyut olarak farklılık gösterdiği unutulmamalıdır.

Özellikle 1980'li yıllardan sonra işsizlik sorunu sadece gelişmiş ülkelerin değil gelişmiş ülkelerin de yakından ilgilendiği ve işsizliğin en aza indirilebilmesi için gerek ulusal gerekse uluslararası ölçekte plan, program ve stratejiler üretilmeye çalışılmıştır. Yine de devletler veya hükümetler tarafından alınan ve düşünülen tedbirler işsizliği azaltmaya yetmemiştir. Bir başka ifadeyle işsizlik sorunu, istenilen seviyelere düşürülemediği gibi pek çok gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkede artış göstermiştir. Sonuç olarak ise işsizlik küresel bir sorun olarak karşımıza çıkmıştır.

Küreselleşen dünyada teknolojik yeniliklerinde ortaya çıkmasıyla işsizlik tanımı ve türleri de eski dönemlere göre değişim göstermiştir. Değişen çalışma hayatında özellikle "1929 Büyük Buhran"dan sonra işsizlikle mücadelede iki temel yaklaşım kabul edilmiştir. Bunlardan ilki, "keynesyen yaklaşım" ikincisi ise geçmişteki klasik iktisadın bugünkü temsilcisi olan "neo-liberal" yaklaşımdır.

Diğer taraftan işsizlikle mücadele edilirken uygulanan işgücü piyasası politikaları da değişkenlik göstermektedir. Bu değişiklikler ülkelerin gelişmişlik düzeyine, ekonomik ve sosyal koşuluna, eğitim seviyesine, nüfus yapısına, kayıt dışı çalışma hayatının ne derecede olduğu vb. verilere göre değişmektedir. Ancak genel olarak bu işgücü piyasası politikalarının bir kısmı işsizliğin meydana getirdiği negatif etkileri önlemeye çalışırken; bir kısmı ise işsizliğin ortadan kaldırılmasının ya da asgari seviyeye indirmeye çalışmaktadır.

İşsizlikle mücadele edebilmek adına örneğin OECD ülkeleri; sübvansiyonlu istihdamı, sürekli mesleki eğitimi, gençlere, kadınlara ve engellilere yönelik istihdam programları hazırlamaktadırlar ve işsizlik sigortası ve erken emeklilik gibi konularda çalışmalarını sürdürmektedirler.