

**Spending on social protection and its implications for poverty and unemployment in Iraq,
Analytical study for the period (2004–2019)**

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Abstract

Social spending is an important part of public spending, especially spending on social protection as a contributing factor in reducing poverty and unemployment rates, and Iraq is one of the countries that seeks to achieve sustainable development goals that require reducing unemployment rates and poverty rates, and Therefore this research came to aim to indicate the effects that spending on social protection leaves on poverty and unemployment rates. The research reached a set of conclusions, the most important of which was that social spending through spending on social protection can contribute to providing job opportunities and reducing poverty rates, but in a limited way.

Key words: Iraq, social spending, spending on social protection, poverty, unemployment.

An introduction

Expenditure on social protection is part of general social spending as transfers and sums of money directed towards the social protection sector, the aim of which is to achieve economic and social purposes for the state. Therefore, it has witnessed a growing interest by many countries because of its importance in increasing the well–being of individuals, enhancing social cohesion and achieving a decent life for their children. society by providing psychological and financial stability to them, and enhancing the values of social solidarity, and that this type of spending can contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, and help low–income families from

facing economic shocks, including shocks resulting from demographic Developments, technology and climate, as well as its role in reducing unemployment.

Iraq is one of the countries that seek to reduce poverty and unemployment through spending on social protection programs by allocating sums within their general budgets for that purpose. Despite this, we find that poverty and unemployment rates are still high in Iraq.

The importance of the research lies in knowing the role of spending on social protection in reducing poverty and unemployment rates in Iraq and showing the method of managing and investing the allocated funds in an optimal way to reduce waste and increase social benefits.

Research problem:

Spending on social protection in Iraq is not sufficient to eradicate poverty and unemployment, due to the weakness of administrative and technical bodies, the spread of financial and administrative corruption, the deterioration of the security situation and an increase in the number of those covered by social protection.

Research Hypothesis:

The research proceeds to the hypothesis that ((spending on social protection did not have an effective effect in reducing poverty rates and unemployment rates in Iraq)).

Research Methodology:

For the purpose of identifying the relationship between the variables of the study and reaching the desired results of the research, the researcher used the descriptive analytical method in analyzing the study variables and analyzing the developments in their trends based on data obtained from books, periodicals and official reports.

The first topic: (expenditure on social protection, poverty, unemployment): the conceptual framework

First: spending on the social protection sector.

Expenditure on social protection is defined as part of social spending that is predominantly social and whose main objective is to increase the level of welfare for members of society in general and the poor in particular). Or as (expenditure that goes to achieving social effects among individuals, in addition to a measure of social solidarity by helping some groups that

suffer from certain conditions and need support, such as providing aid and subsidies to people with limited income and the unemployed)⁽¹⁾.

There are those who consider social expenditures “as long-term social investments that enhance human capital and innovation, advance gender equality and improve inclusive growth”⁽²⁾

Thus, we can express social expenditures as public expenditures directed to the basic social sectors to ensure the achievement of social and human development.⁽³⁾

Forms of social protection have developed with the development of human societies, as the social security system emerged as a result of economic developments and the emergence of the modern state, and the first to use the term social security they are the Americans in 1935, following the Great Depression of 1929. The American Social Security Act was issued to help the elderly and the unemployed, and then it was circulated in many countries of the world, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights appeared, the importance of providing a decent living for every human being in order to ensure his health His happiness and his needs of food, clothing, and medical services in cases to which a person is exposed, such as unemployment, disability and old age⁽⁴⁾, and that the main objective of the social protection system is to guarantee the constitutional right of all to residence and indispensable care for the needy⁽⁵⁾, and that one of the most important goals it seeks Social protection is (the eradication of poverty in all its forms and for all members of society, the provision of a lifestyle characterized by well-being and health for all ages and the achievement of gender equality, as well as the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and the provision of decent work for all)⁽⁶⁾.

Second: unemployment.

Unemployment is one of the dangerous phenomena and one of the main problems that threaten the stability of both developed and developing countries⁽⁷⁾, as no country in the world can achieve full employment for all its children, and behind this are many reasons, including high illiteracy rates, low educational and health levels, and underdevelopment Training and rehabilitation programs, weak economic activity, and the inability of the national economy to absorb the largest possible amount of labor, in addition to the political instability, the contradiction of the economic development programs adopted, and the high rate of population growth. This is accompanied by negative results in building society, as it contributes to the loss of basic opportunities to obtain income and thus affect the standard of living of the individual⁽⁸⁾.

It is also used to determine the number of individuals who work independently or not as a percentage of the total workforce⁽⁹⁾.

Third: poverty

Poverty is one of the issues that have attracted the attention of researchers of different specializations, and it is a complex phenomenon in terms of its economic and social dimensions, as well as the psychological and human dimensions represented by the loss of self-esteem, the feeling of failure and the control of boredom over them, and a decrease in physical and mental alertness⁽¹⁰⁾, a phenomenon that no society is without with Taking into consideration the disparity in its nature, its nature and the changing categories of it, and all the concepts presented in this regard share about taking the relative deprivation of a segment of society as a starting point, and the measurement of this concept has evolved by relying on the lack of income as an indicator for it to the modern concept that explains poverty as the lack of ability to obtain basic necessities⁽¹¹⁾.

The second topic: analysis of unemployment and poverty indicators in Iraq for the period (2004–2019).

First: an analysis of unemployment trends

Iraq is one of the countries that suffer from unemployment, especially after 2003, and this is due to multiple reasons, especially the increasing population growth and the demobilization of large numbers of members of the Iraqi armed forces⁽¹²⁾, not to mention the weak flexibility of local production, which is characterized by weak absorptive capacity, whether in the public or private sectors Consequently, it is poorly absorbed in generating new job opportunities⁽¹³⁾.

By monitoring the conditions of the labor market in Iraq during the period (2004–2019) as presented in Table (1), it is clear that the unemployment rate had reached 26.8% at the beginning of the period in 2004, which is a high percentage that reflects the limited availability of job opportunities in the Iraqi market. This is due to the suspension of many facilities, especially those related to military industrialization and the dissolution of the Iraqi army, as well as the destruction of many factories and laboratories during the military operations in 2003, not to mention the continued increase in education outputs. After this year, unemployment rates continued to decline, reaching 11.70% in 2007, and this is mainly due to the transitional phase of the authority and the government's tendency to increase employment in government institutions in order to address the problem of unemployment, as well as to return the dismissed

politicians and to increase spending to contribute to reducing unemployment rates⁽¹⁴⁾. However, it rose again during the years (2008, 2009, 2010) at rates of about (15.34%, 15.1%, 15%) respectively for each of them, for reasons the most important of which was the increase in the population from 27.139 million people in 2004 to about 30,577 million people in 2008⁽¹⁵⁾, on the one hand, and the decline in world crude oil prices from \$94.45/barrel in 2008 to \$77.45/barrel in 2010, on the other hand. Due to the recovery of the oil markets and the improvement of oil prices after 2011, they decreased to 11.92% in 2012, and then rebounded to rise in 2013 and fluctuated between the decline at times and the rise at other times during the years (2014–2019).

Table (1)

Unemployment rates in Iraq for the period (2004–2019)

2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	year
12.8	22.6	10.9	10.8	15	10.9	16	11.9	12.2	15	15.1	15.3	11.7	17.5	17.9	26.8	unemployment%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on:

1. Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, Central Agency for Statistics and Information Technology, Annual Statistical Collection for Different Years, separate pages.
2. Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, National Strategic Plan (2010–2014), plan document, Baghdad, 2010, p. 25.

This volatility is attributed to a higher rate in 2018, amounting to about 22.6%, due to reasons including the poor performance of the economic policies followed, and the exposure of the national economy to a set of shocks such as the internal shock represented by the occupation of areas of Iraqi lands by terrorist gangs and the acts of sabotage, looting and looting that followed. And the shock of the drop in global oil prices, and that the change in security conditions, the increase in the number of graduates and the inability of the private sector to absorb them⁽¹⁶⁾ directly contributed to the high unemployment rates, and the failure to achieve the goal of the National Development Plan (2018–2022) in reducing the unemployment rate, and there were a number of other challenges that contributed In the fluctuation of rates and the instability of unemployment, the most important of which are⁽¹⁷⁾:

1. The fluctuation of Iraq's revenues from crude oil and the apparent deficit it generated in the budget was reflected in the nature of the spending policy, which reinforced the severity of the economic stagnation and the inability to generate job opportunities.
2. The limited role of the private sector in economic activity and its weak flexibility.
3. The expansion of the scope of the informal business sector in the Iraqi economy.

Second: Analysis of poverty rates trends in Iraq for the period (2004–2019).

In order to know the developments in poverty rates in Iraq, it is possible to follow the data contained in Table (2), as it is noted that the highest rate of poverty in Iraq was recorded in 2004, reaching about (28.7%), and the lowest percentage was in 2005, which amounted to about (11.02%), And it was in a state of continuous increase during the years (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011) reaching (22.4%, 25.2%, 27.4%, 28.02%, and 29.6%) respectively for each of them, and the reason for this is that the country was exposed to a situation From the political instability witnessed after the foreign military occupation and the spread of the phenomenon of terrorism as well as the spread of the phenomenon of corruption that cast a shadow on the political, economic and social developments of Iraqi society, especially during the years of launching the first poverty alleviation strategy (2010–2014), which had negative effects on the Its path, and the desired results from it, and imposed new challenges that were added to those challenges that this strategy dealt with, and its implementation and review became a concern before the Permanent Technical Committee for Poverty Reduction Policies and Management of Implementation, and despite the lack of funding and changing security conditions, implementation continued and achieved some results, even if they were Much less than planned⁽¹⁸⁾. The poverty alleviation plan actually began in 2012, following the allocation of about 445 billion dinars from the federal investment budget for 2012 to implement 24 activities. The allocation was raised to 606 billion dinars in 2013 to include new activities, and it was to implement those activities related to poverty alleviation. The impact of reducing the poverty rate from 29.6% in 2011 to 19.8% in 2013⁽¹⁹⁾, Despite that, the country was exposed to a double crisis represented by the financial crisis in 2014 and the terrorism crisis together and its continuation, the estimates under analysis and what they indicate in their rise in the second half From 2014 to about 22.5%⁽²⁰⁾, which means that the security deterioration in 2014 for three governorates in Nineveh, Anbar and Salah al–Din in mid–2014 had negative effects on the

level of well-being and the increase in the poverty rate with an increase of about 3.6 points, in addition to that The poor descend away from the poverty line, meaning the loss of the gains achieved between 2007 and 2012, not to mention the increase in the poverty rate in the Kurdistan region as a result of the large wave of displacement from the provinces under the occupation of terrorist gangs, the loss of job opportunities and the increase in competition for them, and also pressure on goods, etc. The poverty rate doubled to 41.2%⁽²¹⁾.

Table (2)

Estimates of poverty rates in Iraq for the period (2004–2019)

2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	year
20.01	20.05	20.1	20.06	20.04	22.5	19.3	18.9	29.6	28.02	27.4	25.2	22.4	16.9	11.02	28.7	Poverty rates %

Source: The Ministry of Planning, the National Committee for Sustainable Development, The Second National Voluntary Report to Verify the Sustainable Development Goals and Return to the Development Path, 2021, Baghdad, July 2021, p. 38.

Despite the gains made within the framework of the goal of eliminating poverty in 2018, and the approach to achieving it, reaching a rate of 20.05%, successive crises led to the erosion of the expected gains and the effort to address poverty did not lead to addressing poverty and multiple forms of deprivation⁽²²⁾, as it is noted Through the table under analysis, the reduction of the poverty rate has been undermined and its spread almost unchanged, reaching 20.01% in 2019 as a result of the improvement in the economic and security conditions. In any case, there are important basic factors that have contributed to the increase in poverty rates, the most important of which was the weakness of feasibility studies for projects directed to reduce poverty. Poverty rates, which negatively affected the specifications and costs of these projects, the lack of planning in some of them, and the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis that originally resulted from the drop in oil prices in global markets, and then the decline in the country's revenues from crude oil⁽²³⁾.

The third topic: spending on social protection and its role in reducing poverty and unemployment rates in Iraq.

First: Analyzing the evolution of financial allocations for social welfare in Iraq

The social protection network project, which started on December 31, 2005, and started in 2006, is one of the important projects to confront the growing rate of poverty, the increase in the number of the unemployed, and the absence of job opportunities, as this project included many individuals, estimated at five Millions of Iraqi people, and this is a big task that needs proper implementation in order for the subsidies to reach their beneficiaries, as the general budget has established a comprehensive program for social protection for the poor represented by paying cash amounts to those entitled to support the poor groups and avoiding the widening of poverty episodes and the negative manifestations that may result in the Iraqi economy.

Table (3) indicates a statistic about the number of beneficiaries during the period (2004–2019), as it is clear from it an increase in the number of units and their growth rate, which increased from 11.1% in 2005 to 190 percent in 2006, and then between rise and fall, up to growth rates It was negative, amounting to about (-4%) in 2018 and -4.2% in 2019, and the average annual growth for the whole period was about 13.7%.

The number of beneficiaries of care was increasing, as it rose from 100,400 people in 2004 to 133,6506 people in 2019, as a result of which the amounts allocated to them increased from 71,789 million dinars in 2004 to 19696,000 million dinars in 2019, with an average annual growth rate of about 192.9% Due to the large fluctuations in the annual growth rates over the years for the period under consideration, which contributed to the fluctuation of the amounts allocated to each beneficiary between 0.715 million dinars in 2004 and 14.737 million dinars in 2019 due to the inclusion of the unemployed and new categories without controls and instructions, which caused a doubling of numbers Significantly and surprisingly, which caused the entry of thousands of fictitious and duplicate names, and the exchange amounts doubled to become billions in 2008, and after 2008 a new database was created through which all violators of social protection salaries were excluded, as well as the establishment of a department for social protection for women that was merged with men over the years. 2009 and then separated in the years (2010 – 2011 – 2012) to be associated with the Council of Ministers and then joined the Ministry of Labor under Law No. (77) for the year 2012 to end

the matter with the legislation of Protection Law No. (11) for the year 2014, according to which the social protection departments (men + women) were merged into a single formation called the Social Protection Authority in 2017, so the allocated amounts increased to reach at the end of 2017 about 14,822,600 million dinars, then to 19696,000 million dinars, with an annual growth rate of about 29.9% due to the allocation of additional amounts. In 2017, for the authority, it amounted to about (2,264,000) million dinars, and all of this contributed to an increase in the beneficiaries' share of social welfare allocations.

In order to understand the reasons for those changes in the financial allocations directed to social care, especially after the events of 2003 and the inclusion of the unemployed in the social protection network that was established in the Social Welfare Department and its splitting as a department concerned with the project of this network, it is clear that there is a development in the number of beneficiaries of social care, as there was a significant increase from 100,400 people in 2004 to 1,336,506 people in 2019, while the reason for the decline in those numbers, especially in the years (2009, 2013, 2017), is mainly due to the exclusion of those who exceeded social protection salaries, as well as the changes that occurred in the Social Protection Department. For women with men in 2009 and their separation for the years (2010, 2011, 2012) to be attached to the Council of the Ministry and later attached to the Ministry of Labor under Law No. (77) of 2012, which ended with the issuance of Protection Law No. (11) of 2014, on the basis of which departments were merged. Social protection in the formation under the name (Social Protection Authority), which in turn led to a doubling of the allocated amounts to become in 2017, about 14822.6 billion dinars 19696.0 billion dinars in 2018, and about 19696.0 billion dinars January 2019.

Table (3)

The number of care units and the total amounts allocated to them in Iraq for the period (2004–2019), the amount in millions of dinars

Year	Number of care units	annual growth%	Number of beneficiaries of care	Allocated amounts	annual growth%	Amount allocated to each beneficiary
2004	27		100400	71789		0.715
2005	30	11.1	131734	75287	4.9	0.572
2006	87	190.0	982595	505489	571.4	0.514
2007	87	0.0	772216	796818	57.6	1.032
2008	90	3.4	691707	772337	-3.1	1.117
2009	90	0.0	754224	142522	-81.5	0.189
2010	89	-1.1	367401	1069861	650.7	2.912
2011	91	2.2	395131	4611833	331.1	11.672
2012	93	2.2	381345	474066	-89.7	1.243
2013	96	3.2	878507	2672810	463.8	3.042
2014	94	-2.1	884297	1056489	-60.5	1.195
2015	96	2.1	819176	11447900	983.6	13.975
2016	98	2.1	905773	10350600	-9.6	11.427
2017	99	1.0	630326	14822600	43.2	23.516
2018	95	-4.0	1141383	15166800	2.3	13.288
2019	91	-4.2	1336506	19696000	29.9	14.737
average		13.7			192.9	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on:

1. Final accounts of the departments of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the number of social protection network units, beneficiaries and financial allocations for selected years.
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Second: Analyzing the relationship between social protection allocations and poverty and unemployment rates in Iraq

Whereas social protection is a temporary mechanism for alleviating misery, combating poverty, unemployment, low standard of living, sickness, disability, old age, and empowering some

segments of society that have been affected by wars and external interventions, and the accompanying pressures and conditions on governments with the need to reduce government spending directed towards social protection programs and so on to transform Governments gradually abandoned the principle of the social welfare state, which increased the problem of unemployment and poverty⁽²⁴⁾.

In order to understand the relationship between what is allocated to social protection units and poverty on the one hand, and unemployment on the other hand, the data in Table (4) shows the reality of that.

With regard to the relationship of what is allocated to social protection and its impact on poverty rates in Iraq, the same table indicates the increase of those allocations from 71.8 billion dinars in 2004 to about 19,966 billion dinars in 2019 and at annual growth rates that were fluctuating according to the federal public budgets and the fluctuation of their financial allocations on the one hand. On the other hand, when the annual growth of these allocations was about 4.9% in 2005 and increased to 571.4% in 2006, the poverty rate increased by 53.4% and unemployment rates decreased to -2.2 in 2006, and the decrease in the annual growth of social protection allocations was 89.7 – was This corresponds to a decrease in the poverty rate to 18.9% and a decline in its growth at a rate of -36.1% in 2012, while the growth of the unemployment rate declined to -2.5%, which all points for the years 2004, 2012 to the compatibility of the growth of the poverty rate and unemployment rate with the annual growth of social protection allocations, and given The decline in the number of beneficiaries of social welfare and its volatility after 2013, and its reflection on the volume of financial allocations prepared for social protection, all contributed to the decline in the annual growth rate of those allocations from 463.8 in 2013 to This corresponds to an increase in the poverty rate from 19.3% in 2013 to 20.01% in 2019, as well as an increase in the unemployment level from 16% in 2013 to 22.6% in 2018 and an increase in its annual growth from 34.5% in 2013 to 107.3% in 2018. This means that those amounts allocated for social protection after 2013 will not lead to positive repercussions on the poverty rate on the one hand and the unemployment rate on the other hand, due to the increase in population growth and the decline in economic growth rates in Iraq, as well as the increase in military spending, especially after Iraq was exposed to terrorist attacks. After 2014, something that contributed to the imbalance of social spending in general and spending on protection in particular.

Table (4)

Amounts allocated for social protection and poverty and unemployment rates in Iraq for the period (2004–2019)

Year	Beneficiaries of care	Allocated amounts	annual growth%	poverty %	annual growth%	unemployment %	annual growth%
2004	100400	71789		28.7		26.8	
2005	131734	75287	4.9	11.02	-61.6	17.9	-33.2
2006	982595	505489	571.4	16.9	53.4	17.5	-2.2
2007	772216	796818	57.6	22.4	32.5	11.7	-33.1
2008	691707	772337	-3.1	25.2	12.5	15.3	30.8
2009	754224	142522	-81.5	27.4	8.7	15.1	-1.3
2010	367401	1069861	650.7	28.02	2.3	15	-0.7
2011	395131	4611833	331.1	29.6	5.6	12.2	-18.7
2012	381345	474066	-89.7	18.9	-36.1	11.9	-2.5
2013	878507	2672810	463.8	19.3	2.1	16	34.5
2014	884297	1056489	-60.5	22.5	16.6	10.9	-31.9
2015	819176	11447900	983.6	20.04	-10.9	15	37.6
2016	905773	10350600	-9.6	20.06	0.1	10.8	-28.0
2017	630326	14822600	43.2	20.1	0.2	10.9	0.9
2018	1141383	15166800	2.3	20.05	-0.2	22.6	107.3
2019	1336506	19696000	29.9	20.01	-0.2	12.8	-43.4
average			192.9		1.7		1.1

Source: based on data from tables (1, 2,& 3).

Findings and Recommendations:

First: the results

1. Expenditure on social protection aims to increase the level of welfare for members of society, especially the poor, and aims to achieve social effects among individuals, in addition to a measure of social solidarity by helping some groups that suffer from certain conditions and need support, such as providing aid and subsidies to people with low incomes and the unemployed about job.
2. Unemployment and poverty are two of the dangerous phenomena and among the main problems that threaten the stability of developing countries, including Iraq, which is one of the countries that suffer from unemployment, especially after 2003, due to the increase in population growth, not to mention the weak flexibility of local production, whether in the public or private sector, and therefore The weakness of its absorption in generating new job opportunities, as well as the weak performance of the adopted

economic policies, and the exposure of the national economy to a set of monetary and financial shocks that directly contributed to the high unemployment rates.

3. Poverty rates in Iraq have been on a continuous rise during the years (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011), reaching (22.4%, 25.2%, 27.4%, 28.02%, and 29.6%), respectively, for each of them. The reason for this is the country's exposure to a state of political instability that it witnessed after the foreign military occupation and the spread of the phenomenon of terrorism, as well as the spread of corruption, which cast a shadow on the political, economic and social developments of Iraqi society.
4. The number of beneficiaries of social protection programs increased during the study period, as a result of which the amounts allocated to them increased from 71789 million dinars in 2004 to 19696000 million dinars in 2019 with an average annual growth of about 192.9%.
5. With regard to the relationship of what is allocated to social protection and its impact on the rates of poverty and unemployment in Iraq, the rates of poverty and unemployment rates have increased on average during the research period at rates exceeding the growth of the allocations prepared for social protection, which all indicates the lack of harmony required between them and therefore these allocations will not lead To achieve positive repercussions to reduce both the poverty rate and the unemployment rate, and this is the result of an imbalance in social spending in general and spending on protection in particular.

Second: Recommendations

1. Since human resource development is the goal and purpose of economic development and its means, the development of the social protection network is a very important measure to reduce the suffering of the poor, in order to achieve distributive justice, but it is not an effective mechanism to reduce the poverty rate itself, unless it is integrated with other institutional bodies, including rehabilitation institutions and training.
2. Activating the role of social organizations and institutions will contribute to providing job opportunities, contributing to and reducing poverty and unemployment rates in Iraq, and this will be reflected in the level of per capita income and the advancement of his standard of living, and will enhance the state of integration between the state and these organizations.

3. The necessity of adopting strategies that reduce poverty in Iraq in a manner consistent with the work of development policies, which require setting goals and selecting tools for each stage.
4. Increasing the amounts allocated to social protection programs and raising the level of their efficiency by trying to refine the technical aspect of them by alleviating administrative complications and trying to follow appropriate methods to limit the benefits of those programs to the groups for which they were found.
5. The necessity of complying with the laws and legislations, especially with regard to the social assistance ceiling stipulated in Law No. (11) of 2014.

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