**Youth Unemployment: Bridging the Gap Between Potential and Opportunity for Sustainable Progress**

**Abstract**

India's rapidly growing youth population faces severe unemployment challenges that threaten economic progress and social stability. This paper investigates the primary causes of high youth unemployment, including rapid population growth, inadequate educational systems, mismatched job skills, limited access to finance, and unfavorable business conditions. It further examines how high rates of youth unemployment impact social cohesion, leading to increased social disintegration, criminal behavior, and decreased civic engagement. Through a comprehensive review of empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, including Human Capital Theory and Critical Theory, this paper highlights the urgent need for effective solutions. Proposed strategies include developing gamified skills development programs, establishing peer-to-peer mentorship and crowdfunding platforms, implementing youth-led community projects, and strengthening inclusive policies. These measures aim to reduce unemployment rates, enhance economic opportunities, and foster social cohesion. Addressing these interconnected issues is crucial for harnessing the potential of India's youth and ensuring sustainable national development.

**Keywords:** Youth unemployment, social cohesion, Human Capital Theory, Critical Theory, economic empowerment.Bottom of Form

**Introduction**

India, the most populous country in Asia, faces a profound challenge with its rapidly growing youth demographic. This vibrant age group holds immense potential for driving the nation forward. However, the high rate of youth unemployment threatens to derail India's developmental goals. The disconnect between young people and meaningful economic opportunities deprives them of essential livelihoods and undermines social stability. According to Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024), young people who are marginalized and jobless are more prone to social exclusion and unrest. Such conditions can spiral into broader societal instability, jeopardizing the nation's progress and making it harder to achieve its developmental aspirations.

The global and local significance of youth cannot be overstated. Young people represent the foundation upon which future economic and social development is built. Their integration into the workforce is not just important but essential for national advancement. Fatih (2016) highlights that the youth's inherent energy, talent, creativity, and dynamism position them as key drivers of developmental progress. Their potential to contribute to economic growth is immense, but if this potential is not harnessed effectively, the consequences can be severe. Idowu (2020) points out that high levels of youth unemployment not only stifle economic productivity but also fuel social unrest and criminal behavior. Such unrest can destabilize national and political frameworks, creating a cycle of instability that threatens the fabric of society.

Globally, the challenges faced by youth regarding unemployment and underemployment are significant, and this is mirrored in the Indian context. Despite overall economic growth, many economies struggle to effectively integrate their large youth populations into the labor market. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) and the UN World Youth Report (2013) both underscore the persistent barriers that young people encounter. These barriers hinder their full integration into the workforce, exacerbating issues such as working poverty and economic vulnerability. In India, these challenges are particularly acute, reflecting a broader global trend where economic growth has not necessarily translated into improved job prospects for young people.

The repercussions of high youth unemployment extend far beyond economic and social stability, seeping into areas such as crime and disorder. Olaleye (2019) sheds light on the dangerous correlation between unemployment and increased criminal behavior among youth. When young individuals are left without viable economic opportunities, they can become targets for manipulation by unscrupulous political actors or may engage in criminal activities out of desperation. This link between economic disenfranchisement and criminality presents a severe threat to national security and societal harmony. It underscores the urgent need for effective youth employment strategies to address these risks and ensure that the potential of India's young population is fully realized, contributing to a more stable and prosperous future for the nation.

**Literature Review**

*Youth Unemployment*

Youth unemployment intertwines two crucial concepts: 'youth' and 'unemployment.' From a demographic standpoint, 'youth' generally refers to individuals within a specific age range, typically between 15 and 24 years old, as defined by the United Nations (UN, 2018). This period marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood, characterized by significant developmental milestones and the quest for independence. Scholars such as Erikson (1968) and Arnett (2000) have explored the social and psychological dimensions of this stage, emphasizing identity exploration, self-discovery, and the pursuit of personal autonomy. Coleman (2000) notes that definitions of youth influence eligibility for various rights and responsibilities, impacting how governments and international organizations craft policies. Thus, youth is seen as a transitional life stage filled with physical, emotional, and social growth, as individuals prepare for full independence and adult roles.

On the other hand, unemployment is an economic term that describes a situation where the number of job seekers exceeds the available employment opportunities. Theories of unemployment often analyze factors such as labor supply and demand, wage levels, and government policies (Blanchard & Summers, 1989). Unemployment is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that impacts individuals, families, and entire communities, influenced by factors such as economic conditions, policy decisions, and technological changes (Giddens, 1991; Paul & Moser, 2009; Standing, 2011). When focusing on youth unemployment, the issue becomes more acute as it highlights the specific challenges faced by young individuals in entering and sustaining employment within the labor market.

Globally, unemployment remains a significant concern, with the worldwide rate standing at 6.6 percent. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) reports that nearly one billion people, representing about 30 percent of the global workforce, are either unemployed or underemployed. This issue is prevalent across both industrialized and developing nations, with growing concerns about the increasing number of "working poor" who face precarious employment conditions. The ILO warns that rising unemployment rates contribute to broader social and economic problems, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

**Figure-1: Youth Unemployment Rate for India**

Source: World Bank

From 1991 to 2023, the youth unemployment rate in India exhibited a pronounced upward trend, reflecting a growing challenge in the labor market for young individuals. Beginning at approximately 11.8% in 1991, the rate increased steadily throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, reaching 14.7% by 2004. This trend continued into the subsequent decades, with the rate peaking at 25.9% in 2018. The period from 2019 to 2023 showed some fluctuations; however, the unemployment rate began to decrease, falling to 15.8% by 2023. This decline in recent years could indicate potential improvements in employment opportunities or changes in economic conditions, although the overall trend still highlights significant challenges in addressing youth unemployment in India. (World Bank)

*Social Disintegration*

Social disintegration, as conceptualized by Émile Durkheim (1897/1951), represents the breakdown of social cohesion and the weakening of social bonds essential for societal stability. Durkheim emphasized that social integration is crucial for maintaining order and preventing a state of normlessness, or anomie. According to Durkheim, social disintegration occurs when societal norms and values erode, leading to increased deviance and societal instability. This breakdown undermines the collective conscience that binds individuals together, resulting in a disjointed society where norms are unclear or absent.

Building on Durkheim's foundation, conflict theorists such as Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and Lewis Coser (1951) offer a different perspective on social disintegration. They argue that social disintegration stems from ongoing social conflicts and power struggles. In their view, the constant clash between competing groups and classes erodes social stability and coherence. These conflicts create divisions within society, undermining the ability of different groups to collaborate and maintain a unified social order. Thus, social disintegration is seen as a consequence of unresolved social tensions and power imbalances that disrupt societal harmony.

Talcott Parsons (1951) also contributes to the understanding of social disintegration by focusing on the malfunction or breakdown of social institutions. Parsons posits that social order relies heavily on institutions such as the family, education, and government. When these institutions fail to perform their roles effectively, the result is social disintegration. The malfunctioning of these critical institutions leads to a decline in their ability to regulate behavior and maintain societal norms, contributing to broader social instability and disorder.

Erving Goffman (1959) provides a micro-level perspective on social disintegration, examining it through interactions and symbolic meanings. Goffman argues that disintegration occurs when shared symbols, meanings, and communication patterns break down. These symbols and meanings are fundamental for social cohesion and cooperation. When individuals no longer share a common understanding or engage in meaningful communication, social bonds weaken, leading to a breakdown in cooperative behavior and social integration. Similarly, James S. Coleman (1990) and Burt (1992) focus on the role of social networks, viewing disintegration as the weakening or fracturing of social ties, which diminishes social capital and leads to increased isolation. Anthony Giddens (1990) extends this view by highlighting how global forces, such as rapid economic, technological, and cultural changes, disrupt traditional social structures and values, contributing to social disintegration. These global transformations can cause dislocation and alienation, further exacerbating the erosion of social cohesion and stability.

*Economic Empowerment*

Economic empowerment is a multifaceted concept that can be understood from various perspectives, each highlighting different aspects of how individuals and communities gain access to resources and opportunities.

From a gender perspective, Naila Kabeer (2005) emphasizes the importance of enhancing women’s economic agency. She argues that economic empowerment involves improving women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. By addressing structural barriers that limit women’s economic participation, this perspective focuses on overcoming inequalities and ensuring that women can fully engage in economic activities, thus promoting gender equality and economic justice.

In the realm of human development, Amartya Sen (1999) and Mahbub ul Haq (1995) frame economic empowerment as a means of expanding individuals' capabilities and choices. They stress that empowerment is not merely about increasing income but also about improving overall well-being through education, health, and other non-economic factors. This perspective highlights that true empowerment involves enhancing people's ability to lead fulfilling lives and make meaningful choices, thereby addressing both economic and social dimensions.

Institutional perspectives on economic empowerment are articulated by Douglas North (1990), who underscores the significance of supportive and inclusive economic institutions. North argues that effective institutions are crucial for fostering participation in economic activities, stimulating entrepreneurship, and driving innovation. By creating a conducive environment for economic activities, institutions play a pivotal role in enabling individuals to achieve economic empowerment.

Entrepreneurial perspectives on economic empowerment, as discussed by Joseph Schumpeter (1934) and Muhammad Yunus (2007), emphasize the role of entrepreneurship. They highlight the provision of skills, resources, and opportunities necessary for individuals, especially in marginalized communities, to start and sustain businesses. Entrepreneurship is seen as a key driver of economic development, enabling people to leverage their capabilities to create economic opportunities and improve their livelihoods.

Robert Putnam (2000) introduces a social network perspective, arguing that economic empowerment is closely tied to social relationships and networks. He suggests that strong social ties, trust, and cooperation within communities are essential for accessing economic opportunities. This view emphasizes the role of social capital in facilitating economic engagement and enhancing collective well-being.

Finally, perspectives on globalization by Jagdish Bhagwati (2004) and Joseph Stiglitz (2002) examine how global economic processes impact empowerment. They explore how trade policies, international financial institutions, and global supply chains can either enhance or hinder economic empowerment. This approach considers the broader economic context, recognizing that globalization can create both opportunities and challenges for economic empowerment, depending on how global economic dynamics are managed.

**Research Objectives**

1. Determine the main reasons for high youth unemployment in India, including population growth, education quality, skill gaps, finance access, and business conditions.
2. Examine how youth unemployment affects social stability, focusing on social disintegration, crime, and reduced civic engagement.
3. Suggest practical measures to reduce youth unemployment and enhance social stability, such as skills training, mentorship programs, and community development projects.Top of Form

**Theoretical Framework**

This paper utilizes Human Capital Theory and Critical Theory to analyze the issues of youth unemployment and social disintegration in India. Both theories offer valuable insights into the challenges and potential solutions associated with these phenomena.

*Human Capital Theory*

Human Capital Theory, formulated by economists such as Gary Becker (1964) and Theodore Schultz (1961), emerged as a significant economic framework in the mid-20th century. This theory posits that investments in education, training, and health are comparable to investments in physical capital. By enhancing individuals' skills, knowledge, and overall well-being, these investments are believed to increase their productive capacity, thereby contributing to economic growth and development. The core principle of Human Capital Theory is the view of individuals as valuable economic assets whose productivity and economic potential can be significantly improved through strategic investments in human capital.

According to Human Capital Theory, education, vocational training, and healthcare are essential for boosting a person's productivity and earning potential. Those with higher levels of human capital—reflected in their education, skills, and health—are anticipated to earn more over their lifetimes. This perspective underscores the economic returns associated with investing in human capital, suggesting a direct correlation between the quality and quantity of a nation's human capital and its economic growth. Heckman (2000) further emphasizes that a skilled and healthy workforce is crucial for sustained economic development, reinforcing the idea that investments in human capital are key to enhancing national economic performance.

Despite its influential framework, Human Capital Theory has faced significant criticism. Critics argue that the theory often overlooks the impact of existing social structures and inequalities on access to education and training. Not everyone has equal opportunities to invest in their human capital, which can perpetuate and even exacerbate social disparities. Additionally, critics contend that the theory places excessive emphasis on quantifiable elements such as education and training, while neglecting other important factors like social capital and emotional intelligence. The theory is also criticized for reducing the value of education and training to purely economic outcomes, ignoring the broader societal benefits and the intrinsic value of education for personal development and social enrichment (ILO, 2017; Olaleye, 2019; UN, 2013).

Overall, while Human Capital Theory provides valuable insights into the economic benefits of investing in education and health, it is essential to consider its limitations. The theory’s focus on economic returns may overlook the complexities of social inequality and the multifaceted nature of human development, highlighting the need for a more holistic approach that incorporates social and emotional dimensions alongside economic factors.

*Critical Theory*

Critical Theory, originating from the Frankfurt School in the early-to-mid 20th century, provides a robust framework for analyzing and challenging societal structures and power dynamics. Developed by prominent theorists such as Max Horkheimer (1982) and Theodor Adorno (1944/2019), Critical Theory goes beyond mere academic analysis to address real-world social issues and advocate for social justice. Its core aim is to critically examine and deconstruct societal norms, cultural practices, and power relations, unveiling the hidden assumptions that perpetuate oppression and inequality. This theoretical approach is particularly pertinent for addressing the systemic issues faced by marginalized groups, including unemployed youths in India, by promoting a critical understanding of the societal structures that contribute to their disenfranchisement.

Central to Critical Theory is the dialectical method, which involves analyzing contradictions within societal systems to reveal deeper insights into complex social phenomena (Freire, 1970; Fraser, 1985; Saskia, 2001). By focusing on the critique of established structures and advocating for emancipatory practices, Critical Theory seeks to address systemic inequalities and foster social justice. This approach is valuable in understanding youth unemployment and social disintegration, as it highlights the structural and power-related factors that contribute to these issues. By challenging the status quo and advocating for transformative changes, Critical Theory aims to empower marginalized groups and promote a more equitable society.

However, Critical Theory is not without its criticisms. Some argue that while it effectively identifies and critiques existing structures, it often falls short in offering concrete solutions or alternative frameworks for addressing the issues it highlights. The subjective nature of critical analysis can also introduce potential biases, and the varying interpretations of Critical Theory may limit its universality. Additionally, critics suggest that an overemphasis on power dynamics might overshadow other significant factors that contribute to societal problems (Saskia, 2001; McNay, 2014). These limitations underscore the need for a balanced approach that integrates practical solutions alongside critical analysis.

Despite these critiques, both Human Capital Theory and Critical Theory offer valuable perspectives for understanding and addressing youth unemployment and social disintegration. Human Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of investing in education, skills, and health to enhance economic empowerment and social cohesion. Policymakers can use this framework to develop interventions that promote economic growth and improve individual opportunities, while being mindful of its limitations. In contrast, Critical Theory provides crucial insights into the structural and systemic issues underlying these challenges. By examining societal structures and power dynamics, Critical Theory informs policies and interventions aimed at achieving social justice and fostering an inclusive society. Integrating insights from both theories can guide comprehensive strategies that address both the economic and structural dimensions of youth unemployment and social disintegration, ultimately contributing to a more just and equitable society.

***Table-1: Theoretical Framework and Relevance Analysis***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Theory** | **Core Idea** | **Criticisms** |
| *Theoretical Framework* | *Human Capital Theory* | * HCT=f (E, T, H) where HCT represents Human Capital Theory, E is education, T is training, and H’ is health, all enhancing economic productivity and individual earnings.
 | * CHCT={Overlooks social disparities, Reduces education to economic outcomes, Neglects social capital and emotional intelligence} (ILO, 2017; Olaleye, 2019; UN, 2013)
 |
| **Critical Theory** | * CT=g (SN, SS, SJ) where CT represents Critical Theory, SN is societal norms, SS is societal structures, and SJ is social justice, focusing on deconstructing and challenging these elements to address systemic inequalities.
 | * CCT={May not provide concrete solutions, Subjective nature can introduce bias, Emphasis on power dynamics} (Saskia, 2001; McNay, 2014)
 |
| *Relevance* | *Human Capital Theory* | * RHCT={Importance of investing in education and skills, Economic opportunities and social cohesion}. Requires addressing limitations for inclusivity.
 |   |
| *Critical Theory* | * RCT={Insights into systemic issues and power dynamics, Policies for economic empowerment and social cohesion, Encouragement of transformative change}
 |   |

*(Source: ILO. (2017). Olaleye, D. (2019). McNay, L. (2014). Saskia, S. (2001))*

*Review of Empirical Studies*

High youth unemployment rates are a significant concern. In Nigeria, for instance, recent studies indicate that youth unemployment rates have surpassed 33%, driven by rapid population growth, an inadequate educational system, and a mismatch between job skills and market needs (NBS, 2013; NBS, 2018). These issues are compounded by limited access to finance and a challenging business environment. The resulting high unemployment rate severely affects social integration, leading to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and alienation among young people. This disenfranchisement can manifest in increased social vices, reduced civic engagement, and weakened social cohesion, illustrating the need for effective interventions to address these issues.

The demographic impact is profound. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) reported that individuals aged 15 to 35 constitute about 60% of Nigeria’s population, with significant numbers facing unemployment and underemployment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2013), this demographic includes approximately 34 million unemployed and 1.6 million underemployed individuals. The NBS (2016) further highlighted an alarming unemployment rate of 44.52% for this age group in the third quarter of 2016, indicating a worsening situation over recent year. This high level of unemployment underscores the critical need for targeted policies to improve employment opportunities and economic prospects for young people.

Unemployment’s links to social conflict and insecurity are also notable. Muzan (2014) argued that unemployment-induced idleness can lead to antisocial behavior and aggression, even among educated individuals. Kakwagh and Ikwuba (2010) found that unemployed youths often become involved in conflicts due to their social exclusion and marginalization. Similarly, Emeka and Olaowei (2015) observed that unemployment fosters misery and hopelessness, which can drive individuals toward criminal activities and community conflicts. Agba, Akwara, and Idu (2013) noted that many individuals apprehended for criminal activities were unemployed or underemployed, with some holding educational qualifications. This connection between unemployment and crime highlights the urgent need for productive employment opportunities and social security measures to prevent crime and conflict.

The relationship between economic growth and conflict was explored by Iyoboyi and Pedro (2014), who conducted a meta-analysis using data from the Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR). Their study found that unemployment significantly predicts conflict, suggesting that unemployment rates can be used to anticipate levels of social unrest. This finding emphasizes the importance of addressing unemployment as a means to mitigate social conflict and promote stability.

*Mathematical Representation of Empirical Findings*

*1. Prevalence and Causes*

* Unemployment Rate (UR):$ UR>33\%$
	+ Supporting Reference: NBS (2013; NBS, 2018)
* Contributing Factors (CF): $CF=\{(RPG),(IES),(MJD),(LAF),(UBE)\}$
* $Impacts (I):I=\{(FH),(ISV),(RCE)\}$
* Supporting Reference: NBS (2013; NBS, 2018)

*2. Unemployment and Social Conflict*

* Link to Conflict (LC):LC=Idleness → Antisocial behavior and aggression (ABA)
* Supporting Reference: Muzan (2014)
* Role in Conflict (RC):RC=Unemployed youths → Social exclusion (SE)
* Supporting Reference: Kakwagh & Ikwuba (2010)
* Criminal Activities (CA): CA=Unemployment → Crime and community conflicts (CCC)
* Supporting References: Emeka & Olaowei (2015); Agba, Akwara, & Idu (2013)

*3. Predicting Conflict*

* Findings (F): F=Unemployment (UR)→Conflict (C)
* Supporting Reference: Iyoboyi & Pedro (2014)

*Where:*

* *ABA: Antisocial Behavior and Aggression*
* *CA: Criminal Activities*
* *CCC: Crime and Community Conflicts*
* *CF: Contributing Factors*
* *F: Findings*
* *FH: Frustration and Hopelessness*
* *IES: Inadequate Educational Systems*
* *ISV: Increased Social Vices*
* *LC: Link to Conflict*
* *LAF: Limited Access to Finance*
* *MJD: Mismatch between Job Skills and Market Demands*
* *NBS: National Bureau of Statistics*
* *RC: Role in Conflict*
* *RCE: Reduced Civic Engagement*
* *RPG: Rapid Population Growth*
* *SE: Social Exclusion*
* *UR: Unemployment Rate*

Kabeer, Naila’s (2018) gender perspective highlights the critical need to enhance women's economic agency to address youth unemployment, particularly among young women who face substantial barriers to workforce entry. By employing a ‘reverse’ life-course analysis, this approach examines evidence from older women to younger age groups, emphasizing the importance of improving access to resources, education, and decision-making. Implementing gender-inclusive policies, such as female entrepreneurship support and vocational training, is vital for overcoming structural inequalities and empowering young women in the labor market. In countries like India, integrating gender perspectives into employment policies is crucial for reducing disparities and fostering broader economic development by unlocking the potential of young women.

Ul Haq’s (1995) human development perspective underscores that addressing youth unemployment requires a focus on expanding capabilities and choices through investment in education, health, and skills development. This approach suggests that simply creating jobs is insufficient; youth must be equipped with the tools and knowledge to seize opportunities and align their aspirations with their capabilities. In India, a nation with a significant young population, this perspective advocates for a holistic development strategy that not only prepares youth for the job market but also enables them to contribute actively to the economy. Such policies are essential for sustainable growth and addressing the root causes of youth unemployment.

*Variables:*

* E = Economic Empowerment
* G = Gender Inclusion Factors (e.g., support for female entrepreneurship, vocational training)
* H = Human Development Factors (e.g., education, health, skills development)
* R = Resource Access (e.g., financial resources, infrastructure)
* D = Decision-Making Power (e.g., participation in economic decisions, leadership roles)

*Formula*: Economic Empowerment can be modeled as a function of these variables, reflecting their combined impact. A possible formula might look like this:

*E=αG+βH+γR+δDE*

*Where:*

* α, β, γ, and δ are weights that represent the relative importance of each factor.
* E represents the overall level of economic empowerment.

Source: This approach is inspired by the work of Kabeer (2018) and Ul Haq (1995).

*Example*

*Suppose empirical research suggests that gender inclusion (α\alphaα) contributes 30% to economic empowerment, human development (β\betaβ) contributes 40%, resource access (γ\gammaγ) 20%, and decision-making power (δ\deltaδ) 10%. If the values for G, H, R, and D are measured on a scale from 0 to 1, the formula becomes:*

*E=0.3G+0.4H+0.2R+0.1DE = 0.3G + 0.4H + 0.2R + 0.1DE=0.3G+0.4H+0.2R+0.1D*

*If G=0.8G = 0.8G=0.8, H=0.7H = 0.7H=0.7, R=0.6R = 0.6R=0.6, and D=0.5D = 0.5D=0.5, then:*

*E=0.3×0.8+0.4×0.7+0.2×0.6+0.1×0.5=0.24+0.28+0.12+0.05=0.69E = 0.3 \times 0.8 + 0.4 \times 0.7 + 0.2 \times 0.6 + 0.1 \times 0.5 = 0.24 + 0.28 + 0.12 + 0.05 = 0.69E=0.3×0.8+0.4×0.7+0.2×0.6+0.1×0.5=0.24+0.28+0.12+0.05=0.69*

*So, the overall economic empowerment score would be 0.69 on a scale from 0 to 1.*

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has tackled the critical issue of youth unemployment in India, underscoring its prevalence and the detrimental impact on social cohesion. It has illuminated several key factors contributing to the high unemployment rates among Indian youth, including rapid population growth, inadequate educational systems, a mismatch between job skills and market demands, limited access to finance, and an unfavorable business environment. These interconnected issues create a vicious cycle, leading to widespread unemployment, growing frustration, and escalating social disintegration.

To address these challenges and foster social cohesion, several strategic recommendations are proposed. First, there is a need to develop gamified skills development and entrepreneurship training. Traditional educational systems often fail to align with the specific skills required in today’s job market. Therefore, creating interactive, gamified online platforms—such as mobile apps or web interfaces—that offer engaging training in high-demand areas like coding, data processing, digital marketing, and renewable energy is crucial. Integrating these platforms with entrepreneurship training, which includes business planning, financial literacy, and pitching skills, will make learning more relevant and applicable to current job market demands.

Establishing a peer-to-peer mentorship and crowdfunding platform can significantly enhance support for young entrepreneurs. Limited access to mentorship and finance often impedes the entrepreneurial ambitions of youths. A secure online platform where experienced entrepreneurs can mentor aspiring youths, combined with a crowdfunding feature, can provide both guidance and financial support. This platform should be promoted through social media to boost visibility and attract mentors and investors, thereby strengthening community support for youth-led ventures and addressing gaps in mentorship and financial access.

Implementing youth-led community development projects with skills-based incentives is essential. There is often a disconnect between the skills of young people and community needs, compounded by a lack of relevant job opportunities. Partnering with local governments and NGOs to design projects that address local needs—such as sanitation, infrastructure, and education—can provide temporary employment while offering valuable on-the-job training. Incentives such as training certificates or micro-credentials can motivate participation, promote a sense of purpose, and enhance community ownership, which will contribute to social cohesion and civic engagement.

Strengthening social cohesion through inclusive policies is vital. Building social cohesion requires policies that promote inclusivity and address inequality. Implementing policies to ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and social services for all youths is essential. Community development initiatives should engage young people in activities that build social capital and resilience. Creating an inclusive environment where youths feel valued and connected to their communities will help foster a sense of belonging and strengthen social bonds.

**References**

1. Awogbenle, A. C., & Iwuamadi, K. C. (2010). Youth unemployment: Entrepreneurship development programmes as a panacea. \*African Journal of Business Management, 4\*(6), 831-835. https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM.9000080
2. Agba, A. M., Akwara, A. S., & Idu, A. O. (2013). Youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria: A review of the literature. \*Global Journal of Human Social Science, 13\*(5), 14-24. https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS\_Volume13/3-Youth-Unemployment-and-Crime-in-Nigeria.pdf
3. Blanchard, O., & Summers, L. H. (1989). Hysteresis and the European unemployment problem. \*NBER Macroeconomics Annual, 4\*, 15-78. https://doi.org/10.1086/654061
4. Bhagwati, J. (2004). \*In defense of globalization\*. Oxford University Press.
5. Coleman, J. S. (2000). Social capital and human capital. In \*Social capital: A multifaceted perspective\* (pp. 13-39). Cambridge University Press.
6. Cuesta, J., López-Noval, A., & Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2024). Youth unemployment and social exclusion: Evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean. \*World Development, 151\*, 105560. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105560
7. Dahrendorf, R. (1959). \*Class and class conflict in industrial society\*. Stanford University Press.
8. Durkheim, É. (1951). \*Suicide: A study in sociology\*. Free Press. (Original work published 1897)
9. Emeka, I., & Olaowei, O. (2015). Unemployment and its effect on criminal activities in Nigeria. \*International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research, 3\*(3), 19-24. https://ijsshr.com/volume3/issue3/7
10. Fatih, C. (2016). Youth and employment: Challenges and solutions. \*Economic Policy Review, 21\*(4), 50-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econpol.2016.09.002
11. Freire, P. (1970). \*Pedagogy of the oppressed\*. Herder and Herder.
12. Giddens, A. (1990). \*The consequences of modernity\*. Stanford University Press.
13. Goffman, E. (1959). \*The presentation of self in everyday life\*. Anchor Books.
14. Heckman, J. J. (2000). Policies to foster human capital. \*Research in Economics, 54\*(1), 3-56. https://doi.org/10.1006/reec.1999.0228
15. Horkheimer, M. (1982). \*Critical theory: Selected essays\*. Continuum.
16. International Labour Organization. (2017). \*Global employment trends for youth 2017\*. https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/youth/2017/lang--en/index.htm
17. Iyoboyi, E., & Pedro, A. (2014). Unemployment and its effect on social stability: A meta-analysis. \*Journal of Socio-Economics, 48\*, 152-160. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2014.10.003
18. Kakwagh, T. A., & Ikwuba, C. F. (2010). The role of unemployment in the rise of social conflicts in Nigeria. \*African Journal of Social Sciences, 5\*(2), 52-63. https://journals.co.za/ajss
19. Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women’s empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal. \*Gender & Development, 13\*(1), 13-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070512331332273
20. McNay, L. (2014). \*Gender and agency: Reconfiguring the subject in feminist and social theory\*. Polity Press.
21. Muzan, T. (2014). Unemployment and antisocial behavior among Nigerian youths. \*Journal of African Studies, 12\*(1), 73-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2014.11212234
22. National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria. (2013). \*Labour force statistics: Unemployment and underemployment report\*. https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/
23. National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria. (2016). \*Unemployment statistics: A critical review\*. https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/
24. Olaleye, D. (2019). Unemployment and crime in Nigeria: A literature review. \*Nigerian Journal of Criminology and Security Studies, 5\*(2), 45-60. https://njcss.org/
25. Parsons, T. (1951). \*The social system\*. Free Press.
26. Paul, S., & Moser, C. (2009). Labour market transitions and their impact on youth employment. \*International Labour Organization\*. https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/lang--en/index.htm
27. Putnam, R. D. (2000). \*Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community\*. Simon & Schuster.
28. Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). \*The theory of economic development\*. Harvard University Press.
29. Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. \*American Economic Review, 51\*(1), 1-17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1818907
30. Sen, A. (1999). \*Development as freedom\*. Oxford University Press.
31. Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). \*Globalization and its discontents\*. W.W. Norton & Company.
32. United Nations. (2013). \*World youth report: Youth and migration\*. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/WorldYouthReport.pdf
33. Yunus, M. (2007). \*Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism\*. PublicAffairs.
34. Kabeer, Naila (2018) Gender, livelihood capabilities and women’s economic empowerment: reviewing evidence over the life course. Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE), London, UK.
35. Ul Haq, M. (1995). Reflections on human development. oxford university Press.