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

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** Youth unemployment in India remains a significant socio-economic challenge, exacerbating social disintegration and undermining national stability. This paper explores the factors contributing to high youth unemployment rates in India, including rapid population growth, inadequate education systems, skill mismatches with job market demands, limited access to finance, and an unfavorable business environment. Drawing on secondary data from various sources, including the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), government reports, and international organizations, the research provides an in-depth analysis of the current employment landscape for young people in India. The geographical focus is on India, with particular attention to urban and rural disparities in youth employment rates.

**Methodology:** The study employs a qualitative research methodology, analyzing the socio-economic factors influencing youth unemployment and its consequences on social cohesion. It uses a combination of secondary data and empirical literature to highlight the impact of unemployment on social stability, including increased frustration, crime, and political instability among unemployed youth.

**Findings:** suggest that youth unemployment in India is not solely an issue of insufficient jobs, but also one of inadequate skills development, educational mismatch, and systemic barriers to entrepreneurship and finance access. Furthermore, marginalized groups, particularly young women and rural youth, face additional challenges in securing employment opportunities.

**Summary:** The paper concludes by proposing several strategic recommendations to address these challenges. These include the development of online skills training platforms, peer-to-peer mentorship, youth-led community development projects, and inclusive policies to foster social cohesion. These strategies aim to empower youth, reduce unemployment, and improve social stability in India, ensuring that young people become active contributors to the nation’s economic and social development.

**Keywords:** *Social Cohesion, Critical Theory, Human Capital Theory, Economic Empowerment, Youth Unemployment*, Bottom of Form

**Introduction**

India, the most populous country in Asia, stands at a critical juncture with its rapidly expanding youth population. This demographic represents a tremendous potential for progress, brimming with energy, creativity, and ambition. However, alongside this opportunity lies a significant challenge: youth unemployment. Many young people in India are struggling to find meaningful work, creating a disconnect between their aspirations and the economic realities they face. This issue not only limits individual futures but also poses a serious risk to the broader socio-economic development of the country. As Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (2024) highlight, youth unemployment often leads to social exclusion and unrest, which, if left unaddressed, can destabilize communities and hinder national progress. This paper explores India's current youth employment policies, evaluating their effectiveness in addressing unemployment and marginalization, and proposing practical solutions to better connect youth with sustainable economic opportunities.

The importance of integrating youth into the workforce is paramount for both global and local development. Young people form the backbone of future economic and social progress, and their successful transition into the labor market is crucial for national growth and stability. As Fatih (2016) notes, the energy, creativity, and dynamism of youth make them powerful agents of development. However, when this potential remains untapped, it leads to economic stagnation and social unrest. According to Idowu (2020), high rates of youth unemployment not only drag down economic productivity but also fuel social instability and increase crime, further weakening the social fabric and undermining political stability. Central to this issue are structural challenges, such as a disconnect between education systems and labor market needs, limited vocational training opportunities, unequal access to quality jobs, and stark regional disparities in employment opportunities. These barriers are compounded by bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate investment in youth programs, and rigid labor market policies, all of which make it harder for young people to secure stable and meaningful employment.

Youth unemployment is a pressing global issue, and India is no exception. Despite consistent economic growth, India continues to face challenges in integrating its young population into the labor force. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) and the UN World Youth Report (2013) highlight critical barriers such as mismatched skills, insufficient job readiness, and limited access to decent employment. These obstacles hinder young people’s entry into the workforce and increase their vulnerability to working poverty and long-term economic instability. In India, the situation is particularly concerning. Reports from the Ministry of Labour and Employment show that youth unemployment rates are significantly higher than the national average, indicating persistent gaps in both job creation and skills development. Data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) further reveal that a substantial portion of educated youth, especially in urban areas, remain either unemployed or underemployed. This disconnects between India's economic growth and youth employment signals the need for policies that foster job-rich development and provide youth with the skills and opportunities necessary to contribute to the economy.

The primary aim of this paper is to critically examine the root causes and wide-ranging consequences of youth unemployment in India. It seeks to assess the effectiveness of current policy responses and propose targeted strategies to close the gap between young people and sustainable employment opportunities. By drawing on both national and international perspectives, this paper aims to identify actionable solutions that can support inclusive economic growth, promote social stability, and address the challenges posed by youth unemployment.

The consequences of high youth unemployment extend far beyond economic setbacks. According to Olaleye (2019), the connection between joblessness and rising criminal behavior among young people is troubling. When youth are excluded from viable economic opportunities, they become more vulnerable to exploitation by political actors or may resort to crime out of frustration and economic necessity. This link between economic exclusion and criminality poses a significant threat to national security and social cohesion. Moreover, the psychological and social impacts of unemployment, such as feelings of hopelessness, alienation, and marginalization, further exacerbate the issue. Addressing youth unemployment is not only an economic imperative but a critical step towards building a safer, more prosperous, and equitable future for India. By empowering young people with the skills, opportunities, and support they need, India can ensure that its youth contribute actively to the country's socio-economic progress.

India’s youth unemployment crisis is a multifaceted challenge with serious implications for national development and social stability. While economic growth has been consistent, it has not translated into sufficient job creation or meaningful opportunities for young people. Structural issues such as skill mismatches, inadequate vocational training, and limited access to jobs contribute to the high unemployment rates among youth, particularly in urban areas. To address these issues, India must implement policies that prioritize education reform, skills development, and the creation of inclusive, job-rich growth strategies. Investing in youth-led entrepreneurship, providing access to mentorship and finance, and strengthening social cohesion through inclusive policies will be crucial in bridging the gap between India's growing youth population and its labor market. By empowering young people, India can unlock their potential and foster a more inclusive and sustainable future for the country.

**Literature Review**

***Youth Unemployment***

Unemployment is a fundamental economic challenge, defined as a condition in which individuals who are willing and able to work are unable to find suitable employment. It arises from imbalances in labor market dynamics, such as supply-demand mismatches, wage structures, and the impact of policy frameworks (Blanchard & Summers, 1989). However, unemployment extends far beyond the economic realm; it is a deeply social issue that can affect individual well-being, strain family relationships, and disrupt community cohesion (Giddens, 1991; Paul & Moser, 2009; Standing, 2011). When considering youth unemployment, the urgency becomes even more pronounced. Youth unemployment signals not only structural failures within labor markets but also broader developmental challenges. Young people face unique obstacles, such as limited work experience, skill mismatches, and restricted access to professional networks, all of which hinder their transition into stable employment.

***Youth Unemployment in India***

Empirical evidence from India highlights the scale and complexity of the youth unemployment issue. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022–23, youth aged 15–29 face significantly higher unemployment rates than the general population, particularly in urban areas. Mehrotra and Parida (2019) argue that India’s economic growth has not led to proportional employment opportunities for youth, largely due to a lack of industrial diversification and persistent skill mismatches. Additionally, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2021) notes that employability remains low among college graduates, primarily due to gaps in vocational and digital training. These studies underscore the magnitude of youth unemployment in India; however, few have critically examined the gap between policy intentions and outcomes from the perspective of young people themselves.

Youth unemployment is rooted in the demographic challenges of young people, typically defined as individuals aged 15 to 24 (UN, 2018). This period represents a critical phase of physical, emotional, and social development, marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. As Erikson (1968) notes, this stage is vital for identity formation, with young people striving to define themselves and establish their roles in society. However, for many young people in India, prolonged unemployment disrupts this developmental process. In urban areas, where economic opportunities are more limited, the absence of stable employment deepens feelings of disenfranchisement and identity confusion. This exacerbates the challenge of navigating the transition into adulthood, making it harder for young people to establish stable, fulfilling lives.

Youth unemployment is a persistent issue worldwide, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other global organizations regularly reporting alarmingly high youth unemployment rates across both developed and developing countries. Despite the significant proportion of youth in the global population, their participation in the labor market remains disproportionately low. In India, this issue is particularly urgent due to rapid population growth, regional disparities, and insufficient job creation in key sectors. The growing gap between India’s expanding youth population and the limited job market infrastructure has led to rising frustration, social unrest, and economic vulnerability. These trends reflect a broader global pattern where youth everywhere are facing significant barriers to accessing stable and meaningful employment opportunities.

Unemployment, at its core, is an economic condition where the number of individuals seeking work exceeds the available job opportunities. Economic theories of unemployment often explore factors such as labor supply and demand imbalances, wage rigidity, and the role of government policies (Blanchard & Summers, 1989). However, unemployment is also a complex socio-economic phenomenon that impacts individuals, families, and entire communities. Structural factors such as economic cycles, policy decisions, and technological changes play a critical role in shaping unemployment trends (Giddens, 1991; Paul & Moser, 2009; Standing, 2011). For young people, these challenges are even more pronounced as they typically enter the labor market without sufficient experience, professional networks, or industry-specific skills.

Empirical data from India further illustrates the scale of youth unemployment. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022–23 reveals that youth unemployment rates remain consistently higher than the national average, especially among urban youth aged 15–29. As noted by Mehrotra and Parida (2019), this is largely driven by structural issues such as the sluggish growth of jobs in non-agricultural sectors and the persistent mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market demands. Additionally, data from the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2021) highlight that even educated youth face low employability, primarily due to gaps in vocational training and digital literacy. These findings suggest that India's youth unemployment crisis is not merely a short-term issue but is rooted in deeper structural challenges that require targeted interventions in education, skills development, and labor market reforms.

Globally, unemployment remains a significant concern, with the global rate standing at 6.6 percent, according to the ILO (2020). Approximately one billion people, or about 30 percent of the global workforce, are either unemployed or underemployed. This issue is widespread, affecting both industrialized and developing nations. Rising unemployment contributes to broader social and economic problems, including increasing poverty, inequality, and the emergence of "working poor" populations facing precarious employment conditions. The ILO warns that rising unemployment exacerbates these issues, threatening both social stability and economic progress. As youth unemployment is a significant part of this global issue, its persistence highlights the need for concerted efforts to create inclusive economic policies and opportunities for young people across the world.

This study aims to bridge that gap by integrating empirical evidence with a critical evaluation of India's employment policy frameworks, focusing on the lived experiences of unemployed youth. While much research has concentrated on macroeconomic and institutional factors, this paper adopts a multidimensional lens drawing from developmental theory, labor economics, and social impact analysis.

**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 study utilizes Human Capital Theory and Critical Theory as complementary frameworks for analyzing the dual issues of youth unemployment and social disintegration in India. Together, these theories offer a balanced lens—one that captures both the individual-level economic dynamics and the broader structural inequalities at play. While Human Capital Theory focuses on the value of individual investment in skills and health for economic growth, Critical Theory examines the societal structures and power relations that obstruct equitable access to such opportunities. Combining these two perspectives strengthens the analysis by allowing a multidimensional exploration of both causes and solutions.

***Human Capital Theory***

Formulated by economists such as Gary Becker (1964) and Theodore Schultz (1961), Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education, training, and health improve individuals’ productivity, thereby contributing to overall economic development. This framework treats people as economic assets whose skills and knowledge, when enhanced, yield measurable returns—both in terms of personal income and national productivity. Heckman (2000) emphasizes that building a skilled and healthy workforce is vital for long-term, sustainable economic growth.

In the Indian context, this theory underpins several major policies, such as the Skill India Mission and National Education Policy (2020). These initiatives aim to boost employability through education reforms and vocational training. However, empirical studies such as Mehrotra and Parida (2019) show that despite increased educational attainment, a significant mismatch exists between the skills youth acquire and those demanded by the labor market. Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2022–23) reveals a concerning trend: even among educated urban youth, unemployment remains high due to a lack of industry-relevant skills and limited job creation in high-growth sectors.

Although Human Capital Theory provides valuable economic insights, it has faced significant criticism for its limitations. Critics argue it assumes equal access to education and healthcare, thereby neglecting how socio-economic disparities affect an individual's capacity to invest in their own human capital. The theory also tends to reduce education and training to purely economic functions, overlooking the social, emotional, and civic dimensions of learning (ILO, 2017; Olaleye, 2019; UN, 2013). As such, while useful, Human Capital Theory alone cannot fully explain the persistence of youth unemployment in socially stratified contexts like India.

***Critical Theory***

To address the limitations of Human Capital Theory, this study incorporates Critical Theory, originating from the Frankfurt School and developed by thinkers like Horkheimer (1982), Adorno (1944/2019), and later Freire (1970) and Fraser (1985). Critical Theory interrogates the deeper structures of power, inequality, and social injustice that underpin issues such as unemployment. It argues that economic disadvantage is not merely a result of individual under-preparation, but often the outcome of systemic marginalization.

This theoretical approach is particularly relevant for understanding youth unemployment in India, where caste, class, gender, and regional disparities intersect to restrict equitable access to opportunities. For example, Deshpande and Ramachandran (2019) document how caste-based exclusion persists in higher education and employment, limiting marginalized youths' chances of upward mobility. Reports from Azim Premji University (2019) highlight the emotional toll of long-term unemployment on youth, leading to alienation, mental health struggles, and increased vulnerability to manipulation by political or criminal groups. These realities are consistent with the insights of Critical Theory, which views social disintegration not as a failure of individuals, but as a product of unjust systems.

Critics of Critical Theory argue that it often lacks concrete policy prescriptions and may overemphasize power dynamics at the expense of practical solutions (Saskia, 2001; McNay, 2014). However, its strength lies in its ability to challenge the status quo and advocate for deeper, structural reforms that purely economic models often ignore.

***Relevance to the Study***

Together, Human Capital Theory and Critical Theory provide a powerful analytical foundation for this research. While Human Capital Theory explains the importance of skills development and education for improving youth employment outcomes, Critical Theory interrogates why access to these opportunities remains unequal in practice. This dual framework enables the study to move beyond surface-level analysis to explore both the economic inefficiencies and structural injustices driving youth unemployment in India.

By integrating both theories, this paper not only critiques existing policy approaches but also offers a more holistic perspective, one that values both economic inclusion and social equity. Such an approach is essential for designing interventions that do more than just prepare youth for the labor market, they must also transform the labor market and society to be more inclusive of all youth.

***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***

Youth unemployment in India has emerged as a critical socio-economic issue, exacerbated by structural inequalities, skill mismatches, and uneven economic growth. Despite robust economic reforms over the past decade, the gap between education and employability persists. The Economic Survey 2023–24 reports that only 51.25% of graduates in India are employable, highlighting a critical skills mismatch. Similarly, data from the Economic Survey 2024–25 reveals that over 50% of graduates and 40% of postgraduates are underemployed, often working in roles unrelated to their fields of study. This underemployment trend is reflected in the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, which shows that youth unemployment in the 20–24 age group reached 44.49% in 2024. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022–23 further highlights that 16% of urban youth aged 15–29 remain unemployed due to insufficient skills and limited job availability. These high levels of unemployment are concerning, particularly given that India's youth population makes up nearly 27% of the total population.

The psychological and social consequences of prolonged youth unemployment are also significant, as evidenced by studies from Azim Premji University (2019) and the Observer Research Foundation (2023), which document the resulting mental health challenges, civic disengagement, and increased vulnerability to anti-social behavior. These issues not only affect individual well-being but also undermine social cohesion and stability. While youth unemployment in India has declined from 17.8% in 2017–18 to 10% in 2022–23, the underemployment and informal labor sectors continue to mask deeper structural issues. Comparing India’s situation with countries like Nigeria, which also faces high youth unemployment, India’s larger scale, federal diversity, and emerging economy status make its challenges unique. However, much of the current literature in India has focused primarily on unemployment rates, skill development, or policy reforms in isolation. There remains a significant gap in studies that link youth unemployment to broader issues of social disintegration, including rising crime and political extremism.

***Mathematical Representation of Empirical Findings***

*1. Prevalence and Causes*

* Unemployment Rate (UR):
  + Supporting Reference: NBS (2013; NBS, 2018)
* Contributing Factors (CF):
* 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*

***Justification***

Kabeer’s (2018) gender perspective is essential in understanding the gendered dynamics of youth unemployment, particularly in the Indian context, where traditional gender norms and roles often hinder young women’s active participation in the workforce. In a country like India, where social and cultural barriers continue to marginalize women, Kabeer’s focus on improving access to education, resources, and decision-making power through gender-inclusive policies is crucial. By addressing these systemic inequalities, India can harness the full economic potential of its young women, which will not only advance gender equity but also stimulate broader economic growth and social stability. This approach ensures that both women and men are equally empowered to contribute to the economy, leading to more balanced and sustainable development outcomes.

Ul Haq’s (1995) human development perspective justifies the necessity of a comprehensive, capability-focused approach to addressing youth unemployment. Ul Haq argues that providing young people with employment opportunities is insufficient on its own; rather, a focus on expanding individual capabilities—such as access to education, healthcare, and skill-building—ensures that youth are well-equipped to thrive in the labor market. This is particularly relevant in India, where the youth population is vast and diverse. In such a context, a narrow focus on job creation risks overlooking the broader factors that impact young people's ability to succeed, such as lack of access to quality education or health services. By adopting Ul Haq’s perspective, India can develop policies that not only generate jobs but also ensure that youth have the necessary tools to become productive contributors to the economy.

Together, these two frameworks offer a nuanced understanding of youth unemployment in India, where both gender inequalities and capability gaps significantly restrict economic participation. Integrating Kabeer’s gender-sensitive approach with Ul Haq’s focus on human development would provide a more inclusive and effective policy response to India’s youth unemployment crisis. These perspectives emphasize the need for policies that address the root causes of unemployment, ensuring that young people, especially women are empowered to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them, ultimately contributing to more sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

*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) contributes 30% to economic empowerment, human development (β\betaβ) contributes 40%, resource access (γ) 20%, and decision-making power (δ) 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*

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

***Conclusion***

Youth unemployment in India is a pressing issue with far-reaching consequences, not just for the economy, but for social harmony as well. This paper has explored the various factors contributing to the high unemployment rates among young people, including rapid population growth, a mismatch between educational outcomes and market demands, limited access to financial resources, and a challenging business environment. Together, these factors create a cycle that traps many young people in unemployment, fueling frustration and social disconnection.

India’s youth demographic represents a tremendous opportunity for the country’s future growth and development. However, without addressing the underlying causes of youth unemployment, this potential remains largely untapped, posing a serious threat to national stability and long-term progress. The lack of opportunities leaves young people vulnerable to disenfranchisement, which can manifest in harmful social outcomes, such as increased crime and political unrest. Therefore, tackling youth unemployment is not just an economic necessity, but also a vital step in strengthening social cohesion and ensuring a prosperous and stable future for India.

**Recommendations**

*Skills Development and Entrepreneurship Training:*Traditional education systems often fail to align with the needs of the modern job market. To bridge this gap, developing online platforms focused on in-demand skills, such as coding, data processing, digital marketing, and renewable energy, can make learning both engaging and relevant. Adding entrepreneurship training modules that cover areas like business planning, financial literacy, and pitching can further prepare young people for entrepreneurial opportunities, giving them the tools to create their own ventures and contribute to the economy.

*Peer-to-Peer Mentorship and Crowdfunding Platforms:*Many young people face a lack of mentorship and financial support, which are critical barriers to entrepreneurship. Creating online mentorship platforms, where experienced entrepreneurs can offer guidance to aspiring youth, can go a long way in addressing this gap. Additionally, incorporating crowdfunding features into these platforms could provide financial backing for youth-led initiatives. With the power of social media, this initiative could gain traction quickly, connecting mentors, investors, and aspiring entrepreneurs to build a thriving network of support.

*Youth-Led Community Development Projects with Skills-Based Incentives:*There is often a disconnect between the skills youth possess and the needs of their local communities. Partnering with local governments and NGOs to create community development projects such as those focused on sanitation, infrastructure, or education could provide young people with temporary employment while helping them gain valuable skills through hands-on experience. To make these projects more attractive, offering skills-based incentives, such as training certificates or micro-credentials, could increase participation, foster a sense of purpose, and help build community ownership and engagement.

*Inclusive Policies to Strengthen Social Cohesion:*For social stability to thrive, policies must be inclusive and equitable. Ensuring that all young people, regardless of their background have access to quality education, healthcare, and social services is essential. Community development initiatives should actively involve youth in activities that help build social capital and resilience. By creating an environment where young people feel valued and connected to their communities, these initiatives will foster a sense of belonging and strengthen the social fabric, laying the foundation for long-term social stability.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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