

Youth Bulge is Liability or Asset

1- Introduction

Youth bulge can be a liability or an asset for the nation. However, due to lack of their positive contribution in nation's development, they become liability. Their negative contribution stems from the challenge of meeting the burgeoning needs of youth in an environment of limited resources.

2- How youth bulge can be a liability or an asset

3- How youth bulge is a liability (thesis)

- a- Unskilled youth hinders economic growth
- b- Youth bulge strains the education system
- c- Youth is more vulnerable to extremism, and thus creates social unrest
- d- Youth promotes political instability due to prevalence of institutional acquisition syndrome in them
- e- Increased consumption of limited resources by growing youth population causes environmental degradation

4. How youth bulge is an asset (Anti-thesis)

a- Promoting the skills of youth leads the nation towards economic growth

b- Introducing modern educational approaches for accomodating large youth population leads the nation towards workforce development

c- Youth has more capability of critical thinking due to their dependance on technology

d- Engaging youth in constructive activities brings political stability

e- Fostering a sense of environmental responsibility in youth mitigates environmental degradation

5. Youth bulge is a liability due to scarcity of resources (synthesis)

a- Initiating training programs for unskilled youth creates resource drain for the economy

b- limited access to technology can impede the effectiveness of educational strategies for youth

and increases strain over education system

c- Increased dependence of youth on technology leads towards superficial engagement; this causes extremism and social unrest

d- Disillusionment of youth with political system can never allow constructive activities to bring political stability

e- If ^a rising awareness in youth for environment was beneficial; then the world would never be at this verge of global warming

6- Conclusion

Youth Bulge is a liability or an Asset

In the heart of every society beats the pulse of its youth, a force both dynamic and unpredictable. Every society always stands on a teetering scale, where the weight of youth's energy and ambition can tip the balance towards either prosperity or peril. So, youth bulge can be a liability or an asset for the nation. However, due to their lack of positive contribution in nation's development, they become liability. Their negative contribution stems from the challenge of meeting the burgeoning needs of youth in an environment of limited resources. While the negative impact of youth bulge, that renders them as liability for their nations, arises from their deficiency of skills. Moreover, their increasing strain on education, their vulnerability to extremism that leads nation towards political instability and their contribution in environmental degradation make youth bulge liability for the state. Contrarily, the opponents of this idea emphasize that youth bulge is an asset because promoting the skills of youth leads the nation

towards economic growth. They advocate their idea by saying that introducing modern educational approaches and engaging youth in constructive activities bring stability in state. Moreover, they think that fostering a sense of environmental responsibility in youth helps in mitigating environmental degradation. However, the scarcity of resources impedes the effectiveness of all strategies that are aimed at harnessing the potential benefits of youth.

The phenomenon of youth bulge presents a double-edged sword, capable of both propelling societies towards stability or tipping them into instability.

On one hand, the young population injects vigor into economies, innovation and productivity due to which it is an asset for the nation.

For instance, India has largest population of young people in the world - over 350 million representing more than a quarter of the population and contributing about one-third to the country's Gross National Income; **(Robert Chaskin,**

Youth in India, July 2023). On the other hand, if left unmanaged, this demographic surge can badly influence economic development.

For instance, Pakistan is one of the largest young countries in the world. But unfortunately in 2023 almost 5.6 million ^{people} of this ^{young} population were unemployed. This unprecedented hike in unemployment hampers country's economic growth, thus making youth bulge a liability.

One of the main reasons due to which youth bulge is considered ^{as} a liability is the fact that the unskilled youth hinders economic growth. The persistent prevalence of unskilled youth within the workforce poses a formidable obstacle to sustainable

economic growth. In a world that is increasingly shaped by technological advancements and complex global dynamics, the demand for highly skilled labor continues to escalate. However, the unfortunate reality is that a significant portion of today's youth lacks the necessary competencies to meet these demands. This deficiency not only affects individual's potential but also diminishes the collective prosperity of nations. For example, nearly 75% of the young population living in 92 countries lacks the skills which are demanded by the job market (UNICEF, World Youth Skills, 2022). When the youth lacks the skills that are demanded by the competent market of modern era, they merely act as a burden for the economy and contributes nothing in economic growth of country. In this way, the unskilled youth act as an obstacle for economic prosperity of the state.

Alongwith hindering the economic growth of the state, the youth bulge also strains the education system. This demographic trend not only tests the limits of physical infrastructure but also stretches

the human resources, demanding more teachers and administrative staff. The developing countries that are stuck in debt trap can not provide these resources to growing youth population. For instance, the troubled economy of Pakistan that had to pay back \$131 billion as total debt by the end of December 2023 can not accommodate its growing youth population. This is causing increase in illiteracy among youth, for instance, 32% of young generation of Pakistan is illiterate. This clearly depicts that youth bulge is burden on the education system of countries that have insufficient resources.

The youth bulge not only influences the education system of the country but also creates social unrest because the youth is more vulnerable to extremism. The youth bulge, while often celebrated for its potential dynamism and innovation, presents a nuanced challenge in the realm of security and stability due to its susceptibility to extremism. Without proper channels for constructive engagement and empowerment, the energy of youth bulge can easily be diverted towards destructive ends, posing a significant liability.

to national security efforts. Such as, a study conducted by Population Action International shows that about 80% of the world's civil conflicts since 1970s have occurred in countries with young population. Thus, the growing youth population is a liability due to its wider participation in conflicts and social unrest.

Since the youth is more prone to extremism, so institutional acquisition syndrome is more prevalent in them that ignites political instability of the country. This syndrome ~~ignites~~ spreads strong disregard for democratic principles across the state and presents a negative image of democracy of country across the world. In the hands of a generation affected by unemployment and limited opportunities, the allure of wielding institutional power can increase existing social tensions and damage the fabric of governance. Its one of the most magnificent examples is political polarization of Pakistan during 2022 and 2023 that was flared up by the violent events of 9th May, 2023. On this day, violent outbursts by the youth were observed that was followed by the arrest of most eminent leader of that time. Over 19,000 young workers of

that political party were involved in riots (Al Jazeera, Violent Protests in Pakistan, August 2023).

Later, when these protesters were arrested then they became even more opponent to the institutions of the state. This highlights the prevalence of institutional acquisition syndrome in youth due to their vulnerability to extremism and their role in promoting political instability.

In addition to create political unrest, the youth bulge also causes environmental degradation thus acting as a liability for the state. The phenomenon of youth bulge presents a paradoxical challenge in global landscape. The burgeoning demands of this demographic surge lead to intensified consumption of limited resources. Rapid urbanization, escalating energy needs, and heightened waste production exacerbate environmental degradation. For example, in Pakistan today more than 38.82% of Pakistan^{-is} live in urban areas. According to report of World Bank in 2023, urbanization in Pakistan is growing at an annual rate of 3% which is the highest growth rate in South Asia. It is estimated that by 2025 nearly half of country's population will start living in urban areas (United Nations Population Division,

Urbanization in Pakistan, 2023). In this way, youth bulge is a liability because of increasing demands of growing youth population and limited resources.

However, many people believe that youth bulge is not a liability rather it is an asset for the nation. They opine that youth bulge does not hinder economic growth, in fact promoting the skills of youth leads the nation towards economic growth. Equipping them with technical expertise, entrepreneurial acumen, and critical thinking prowess not only empowers individuals but also catalyzes economic advancement on national scale. When governments play their role in polishing the skills of youth, then this skilled youth will become the architects of progress. Its one of the most wonderful examples is of Indian youth whose skills are mainly brushed up in the last two decades. In Gujarat alone, nearly 2 lakh young boys and girls are being trained in various skills in nearly 600 Industrial Training Institutes. That is the reason due to which nearly 90,000 start-ups are functioning in the country today and the youth is widely participating in country's economic

growth. Thus, the youth bulge is an asset as it plays a key role in driving the economy of a country towards development.

Another advantage of youth bulges rather than perceiving it as a strain on education system is that introducing modern educational approaches to accommodate large youth population leads the nation towards workforce development. Recognizing the fact that youth bulge is a beacon of future prosperity, the strategic integration of modern educational approaches to serve this expanding youth cohort can transform perceived demographic pressure into a dynamic engine of workforce development. By transforming the education system with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technological advancements, students can be equipped with right skills. **For example,** Singapore's "Smart Nation" strategy is aimed at helping teachers to better customize and improve education for every student. This will help students in upgrading their skills and making a skilled workforce for their country by 2030 (**The Guardian, Singapore's Smart Nation Strategy, December 2023**). So, by implementing such visionary educational reforms, the youth bulge

metamorphoses from a daunting challenge into the most significant asset for sustainable development and long-term economic growth.

It is over-exaggerated to say that youth bulge creates social unrest as it is more vulnerable to extremism; because youth has more capability of critical thinking^{-g} due to their dependence on technology.

The modern youth's deep reliance on technology has revolutionized their approach to critical thinking. Many young journalists shape their guts of critical thinking just by using technology in a positive manner. They play a pivotal role in uncovering^{the} injustice committed by politicians or other influential players of society.

Its one of the most incredible examples is **Seymour Hersh**, who uncovered the **My Lai Massacre** during the Vietnam war which involved the killing of hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians by US soldiers. Similarly, **Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo** were two Reuters journalists from Myanmar who uncovered the massacre of Rohingya Muslims in the village of Inn Din. These

young journalists have shown bravery and dedication in their pursuit of truth and accountability, often risking their safety and freedom to uncover human rights abuses. This clearly depicts that youth bulge is an asset of the nation because youth can contribute more towards their nation and state because of their abilities of critical thinking and their abilities to extract truths even from eroded facts.

And the argument that youth promotes political instability due to prevalence of institutional acquisition syndrome in them overlooks the role ^{that} they can play in bringing political stability. The youth bulge is an asset as it can bring political stability if it is engaged in constructive activities. When empowered with avenues for participation, they play their role in societal resilience, steering away from the tumultuous currents of unrest. By channeling their energy into community-building initiatives, they sow the seeds of enduring political stability. Like, the United States

has a vibrant culture of youth volunteerism and community engagement. Organizations like AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and various youth led initiatives across the country provide opportunities for young Americans to get involved in social work and make a difference in their communities (Peter Levine,

American Volunteerism: The Role of Youth Community Service Programs, 2006).

In this way, the torchbearers of society bring political stability when they are involved in constructive activities.

It is merely one side of picture that presents the growing youth population as a cause of environmental degradation. While another side of picture is that the growing youth population is an asset as fostering a sense of environmental responsibility in youth mitigates environmental degradation. Instilling a sense of environmental responsibility in youth emerges as a powerful antidote against the relentless march of environmental degradation. When the state governments put their efforts in making

the young generation realize about their responsibilities towards nature, then the youth of that state will become an asset as they will also give their best in addressing environmental problems. Its one of the best examples is of Sweden that is known for its environmental education curriculum in schools, which emphasizes sustainable practices and conservation efforts (The Economist, Sweden's environmental education curriculum, August 2022). The country also promotes environmental awareness through various media platforms and public campaigns. So, by nurturing an ethos of stewardship and respect for planet, young minds become the vanguards of change, thus catalyzing sustainable practices and innovative solutions.

The arguments presented by proponents of the notion that the youth bulge is an asset fail to withstand validity for several reasons. The evidence that they offer in support of argument that promoting skills of youth fosters economic growth lacks authenticity. Because youth bulge presents a significant liability for state budgets, primarily due to the substantial resource drain caused by ^{initiating} training programs for the unskilled youth. These programs contribute to an economic burden rather than contributing to economic development. Moreover, the time and money invested in training never yields immediate returns. It requires long-term policies that are totally dependant on government structure. However, in countries like **Pakistan** where democracy always remains in doldrums, the policies of training

or training programs for youth initiated by one government are never continued by the second one. So, these programs merely create burden on the economy rather than improving the skills of youth. For instance, "Kamyaab Jawan Programme" initiated by PTI government in 2019 had spent \$639 million. But it was no longer continued by the next government. Thus, launching training programs for polishing the unskilled youth creates financial hurdles for the economy, thus making youth bulge a liability for the state.

As far as opposition to the argument that youth bulge strains the education system is concerned, the opponents merely argue that introducing modern educational approaches

leads the nation towards workforce development. But this opposition is more opposition for the sake of opposition, because the limited access to technology can impede the effectiveness of educational strategies for youth and increases strain over education system. The limited access to technology hampers effectiveness of these strategies, thus exacerbating the strain on already overburdened education systems. It stymies

their academic growth, restricts their exposure to diverse perspectives and hinders the development of critical digital skills necessary for success in 21st century. For example, in India nearly half of population lacks internet access (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). In this sort of situations, it is useless to expect that any modern educational strategy would bring a change. Thus, the growing youth population is a liability since limited digital access can never allow modern educational approaches to improve the skills of youth rather this will increase burden on education system.

Another contention against the argument that youth is more involved in creating social unrest is that youth has more capability of critical thinking due to their dependence on technology. However, this increased dependence of youth on technology leads them towards superficial engagement, thus causing extremism and social unrest. This dependence has played a key role in spreading disinformation in youth regarding military, judiciary and other state organs.

This disinformation creates dissatisfaction in youth that is fanned up by the non-state actors for creating unrest in the state. The archrival states use media platforms for disparaging state institutions in the eyes of their youth by misusing the dependence of youth on technology. **For instance**, European Union Disinformation Task force has released a report, according to this report, around 265 coordinate fake local media outlets are serving (are^x serving) Indian interests against Pakistan in nearly 65 countries. Their IP addresses trace back to **Srivasta Group** which is home of New Delhi Times. All these **(India in Hybrid war against Pakistan, 2023)** accounts ignited the events of 9th May by contaminating the minds of youth. In this way, youth bulge is a liability as they get easily trapped by fake campaigns orchestrated by adversaries of the state.

Moreover, people who consider youth bulge as an asset argues with those who claim that youth promotes political instability due to prevalence of institutional acquisition syndrome in them. They believe that youth brings political stability if they are engaged in constructive activities. But the disillusionment of youth with political system can never allow constructive

activities to bring political stability. When political system of a state fails to satisfy the basic needs of its youth like education, health and employment, then it is impossible that the youth will give respect to their leaders even though the government makes efforts for engaging youth in positive activities. These activities can never overcome the dissatisfaction of youth with their political system until the youth is given opportunities to access the power corridors of the country. Unfortunately, **Pakistan** has highest number of out of school children in South Asia that is 28 million that has led to a fall in employment to population ratio upto **47 percent (World Bank, Challenges for Youth in Pakistan, 2023)**. In these situations, youth is entangled in tough knots of poverty and unemployment; and are unable to access influential ranks of state where they could prove themselves in bringing stability in country. So, it is impossible to bring political stability in countries where the youth is not given the desired opportunities, thus making youth bulge a liability for the state.

But still some people feel reluctant to accept the stance that the growing youth population is a liability. They don't try to comprehend the bitter truth that increased consumption of scarce resources by this growing ^{youth} population is leading this world towards environmental degradation. In fact, they argue that fostering a sense of environmental responsibility in youth helps in controlling the environmental degradation. However, if promoting a sense of environmental awareness in youth can mitigate environmental degradation, then the world would never be at this ^{chaotic} verge of global warming. In this modern era, despite the numerous efforts made by various developed countries to raise environmental responsibility in youth the world is still moving towards disastrous climatic changes. Even they have not become successful in getting rid of drastic impacts of climate change that are initiated by rapidly growing youth population. **For instance**, the European countries try their best to control the

negative impacts caused by growing youth population by educating their youth through curriculum and media. But still Europe has recorded **1600 deaths** in 2022 due to global warming (**The Guardian, Global Warming in youth, December 2022**). Thus, the growing youth population is becoming a challenge because of its drastic impacts on environment.

Conclusively, this discussion has shown that youth bulge represents a significant liability, particularly in nations where economic structures and educational systems are ill-prepared to absorb this demographic wave. An unchecked youth bulge, characterized by high unemployment rates and limited access to quality education, can increase social tensions, fuel unrest, and promote radical ideologies. Without the means to channel their energies constructively, a generation's potential may pivot towards instability, thus straining social services and challenging peace. So, this demographic scenario demands urgent, strategic interventions to prevent a promising asset from morphing into a profound societal

liability. Transforming this potential liability into an asset requires foresighted policies that will not only expand economic opportunities but ^{will} also foster inclusive societal development, thereby ensuring that the youth bulge becomes a cornerstone for sustainable growth and stability, rather than a harbinger of discord and regression. Thus, proper utilization of energies and aspirations of the youth can transform a demographic challenge into golden opportunity, propelling nations towards an unprecedented prosperity and progress. "The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Their energy and passion, if guided with wisdom, are the energies of innovation and change. Neglected, they become the missed opportunities of a generation."

(Nelson Mandela)