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Pakistan's Youth Bulge : An Asset or A Liability ?

Outline:

I. Introduction:

Although Pakistan has great potential in the form of youth bulge, high unemployment and underemployment, education crisis, brain drain, and social unrest and extremism clearly indicate that the country's youth bulge is a liability.

II. Contextualizing the Term "Youth Bulge"

III. Counter-Perspective: Youth Bulge as an Asset

A. Global workforce and remittance

Example: In January 2025, Pakistan received \$3 billion in remittance from overseas workers.

B. Potential for innovation and technology

Eg: Pakistan's freelancing industry ranks top 4th globally.

IV. High Pakistan's Youth Bulge as a Liability Because

A. High unemployment and underemployment

Point-in-view: Youth unemployment rate of around 11% (ILO, 2024)

B. Education Crisis

Case in Point: A report of UNICEF "22.8 million children are out of school"

C. Brain Drain

Example: In 2023 alone, 800,000 Pakistani left the country

D. Social Unrest and Extremism

E. Increased Dependency Ratio

Eg: If youth remain unemployed, fewer people contribute to the economy.

F. Pressure on Infrastructure and Resources

G. Gender Disparity and Limited Female Participation.

Example: Women's participation remains

below 25%, limiting national productivity

by Ishrat Hussain in his book 'Governing the Ungovernable'

H. Inadequate Digital and Technological Skills

Case in Point: A World Bank Report "only 8% of

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Pakistani Youth have adequate IT skills.

V. Inlay Forewards to Fully Utilize the Youth Bulge

A. Investment in Education and Vocational Training

Case study: Countries like Germany and Finland integrate vocational training with mainstream education.

B. Creating employment opportunities for young people.

VI. Conclusion

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"In Pakistan, 63% of the population is under 30, making it one of the largest countries in the world."

In the aforementioned statistics, a researcher, Muhammad Farooq, depicted in his study 'Consequence of youth bulge in Pakistan' that Pakistan possesses a significant number of youth people, which directly or indirectly affects the country. He explained that youth are extremely affected by political and economic instability. Statistics provide a grim picture of how this youth bulge comes with a downside in a country like Pakistan where youth unemployment rate stood at 8.5%, one of the highest in the region. As a result, this proves to be fatal for the country as youth indulge themselves in terrorist organizations in order to fulfil their bellies. The state of involving in the organization possesses a significant and expanding threat to society and the government. How is it possible to consider youth as an

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asset when their potential remain untapped? Are young people not leaving the country due to unemployment? How can we say that youth is an asset when the ratio of contribution is less than 10%? Although Pakistan has great potential in the form of youth bulge, high unemployment and underemployment, education crisis, brain drain, and social unrest and extremism clearly indicate that the country's youth bulge is a liability.

In order to understand how Pakistan's youth bulge is a liability, it is important to contextualize the term youth bulge. The term "Youth bulge" refers to a population in which the proportion of youth people is much higher than other, older age group. It is the age range to 15-29 years old. (Imai et al, 2008)

This phenomenon occurs due to high birth rates and declining infant mortality, which eventually enhance the ratio of youth population. While youth

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people are considered to be drivers of economic growth and progress, they can also possess a significant and expanding threat to the country when there is lack of employment, stability and opportunities. Thus, it is safe to assume that youth bulge can be a positive and a negative factor if they are not tackled cautiously and sensibly.

Some people argue that youth bulge is an asset. The most striking evidence of this is global workforce and remittance. The global workforce refers to the total number of employed and employable individuals worldwide. A key aspect of this movement is remittance, the money sent by migrant workers to their home countries, which significantly impacts economic growth and poverty. For example, in January 2025, Pakistan received \$3 billion in remittance from overseas workers. These remittances play a vital role for growth and

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progress. Therefore, it is logically safe to assume that the country's youth bulge is an asset.

Like global workforce and remittance, potential for innovation and technology is another evidence of Pakistan's youth bulge as an asset. The youth of the country has immense potential to transform the society through tech-savvy because young people are more interested to ~~too~~ technology. This has made the country a major player in freelancing industry. For instance, Pakistan's freelancing industry ranks among the top 4th globally. This clearly demonstrates the skills of young people in the country. Thus, one cannot deny the fact that Pakistan's youth bulge is an asset because of innovation and technology.

Opponents might have their own justification regarding youth bulge, but Pakistan's youth bulge is a liability in many ways. The most

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obvious proof of this is high unemployment and under employment. The country faces a severe challenge of this, particularly among its youth. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2024, the youth unemployment rate stands at around 11%. This indicates that a major portion of the young population struggles to find stable jobs. Many educated graduates remain jobless due to a mismatch between their skills and market demand. Without adequate opportunities of employment, frustrated young people may turn to crime, illegal activities, and migration. Hence, it shows that the country's youth bulge is a liability due to high ratio of unemployment.

Like unemployment and under employment, education crisis is another aspect of a liability. Pakistan faces a severe education crisis, which limits the potential of ~~its~~ its youth and hinders economic growth.

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According to UNICEF, 22.8 million children in Pakistan are out of school, making it one of highest countries in number globally. There are various factors which contribute in education crisis, including poverty, gender disparity, political instability, and weak policies.

Even the ~~stund~~ students who are achieving education is considered as low-class quality. As a result, these are unable to ~~acquire~~ acquire skills which ultimately contribute in enhancing unemployment. Thus, it is logically safe to assume that youth bulge is a liability due to lack of education.

Apart from this, brain drain is another factor which indicates that Pakistan's youth bulge is a liability. Due to lack of opportunities, our youth is leaving Pakistan in great number. For example, in the first half of 2023 alone, an unprecedented 800,000 Pakistani left the country, with significant portion comprising doctors,

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nurses, engineers, IT experts, and accountants. This departure of such skilled individuals has a profound impact on our economy, not only in terms of human capital loss but also the potential contributions they could make to nation's development.

In addition to this, Pakistan's youth bulge, if not utilized properly, it will lead to social unrest and extremism. When the large portion of youth is unemployed, they become frustrated which leads them in criminal activities and violence in order to fulfill their bellies. Not only this, but they can also indulge themselves in terrorist organizations and radical ideologies which pose a significant and expanding threat to the communities and the government.

For example, in Balochistan, many youth people claim that they are being denied from their rights which force them to involve in certain ideologies. (Editor of

...s economic growth.

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DAWN Newspaper Muhammad Ali Baba Khil writes this).

Furthermore, the country's youth bulge is a liability due to increased dependency ratio. The youth seem to be burdened on economy when they are jobless and skillless. If youth remain unemployed, fewer people contribute to the economy. This places an economic burden on families and reduces overall productivity. Unemployed youth contribute little to national income while increasing demand for education, healthcare, and social services. If this continues, the country will suffer a lot. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the youth of Pakistan is a liability due to excessive dependency on fewer people.

Moreover, Pakistan's growing youth bulge is placing immense pressure on infrastructure and resources, leading to economic and social challenges. The rapid increase in population has overwhelmed

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education, healthcare, transportation, and housing facilities. This makes difficult for the government to provide adequate services. Urban areas, in particular, face overcrowding, traffic congestion, water shortages, and power crisis due to rising demand. As a result, this leaves many without basic services. Hence, Pakistan's youth bulge possesses a significant pressure on infrastructure and resources.

Not only this, but also gender disparity and limited female participation is another sign of liability which proves that youth is considered as burden. Among 63% of the young people, half of them are girls. In Pakistan, the rights of girls, such as education, healthcare, and workforce, are being denied. Due to societal norms and customs, gender discrimination and limited female participation are often seen in the country. For example, Ishaat Hussain writes in his book

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'Governing the Ungovernable' that women's participation remains below 25% which eventually limits national productivity. Thus, this clearly demonstrates that how the country's youth bulge is a liability.

Inadequate digital and technological skills ~~is~~ also play an important role in enhancing a liability of youth people. Due to lack of proper education and understanding of IT sectors, youth are often seen as ~~unemployment~~ unemployed. This ultimately enhances burden on the economy of the country because they are not aware of modern technology. A World Bank report shows that ~~is~~ only 8% of Pakistani youth have adequate IT skills. How opponents can consider this youth as an asset when there are only 8% who contribute in economy.

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In order to make Pakistan's youth bulge as an asset, there is a dire need to adopt some preventive measures. One of the most important solutions is to investment in education and vocational. Investing in education is an essential tool to enhance the productivity level. However, in Pakistan, education system is often lacking quality due to its outdated curriculum. Countries like Germany and Finland, for example, integrate vocational training with mainstream education. Therefore, it is also pertinent to Pakistan to adopt some model for molding Pakistan's youth bulge in an opportunity.

Apart from this, creating employment opportunities for young people is another solution. By creating jobs, Pakistan can get various benefits of this asset because they will ultimately contribute in the economy of

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the country. For this, ^{the} government can start mini startups where the young people can demonstrate their skills. For instance, Indian government has taken the similar steps to utilize its youth by starting mini startups. Hence, it is necessary for the country to apply same model for the betterment of the young people.

In a nutshell, Pakistan's youth bulge has immense potential to rise the economy of the country. This youth is considered as an asset because of global workforce and remittance and freelancing industry. However, there are various reasons which indicate that the country's youth bulge is a liability, including unemployment and under-employment, education crisis, brain drain, social unrest and extremism, enhanced dependency ratio, pressures on infrastructure and resources, gender

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disparity and limited participation of female, and weak digital and technological skills. Hence, it is a need of time that the government should adopt some measure to utilize the youth bulge of the country. As Muhammad Idrees writes in his article 'Youth bulge and social unrest that if the youth don't utilize carefully, they become a key perpetuator of violence.'