

Social Factors of Youth Employment: Essence, Classification, And Mechanisms of Influence

J.B. Jabborov

Lecturer at The Department of Social Sciences at Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at Gulistan State University, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This scientific article is devoted to the topic “Social Factors of Youth Employment: Essence, Classification, and Mechanisms of Influence,” and systematically analyzes the sociological content of the phenomenon of youth employment, the social determinants affecting it, and their interrelation. The relevance of the study is explained by the fact that in modern society youth employment appears not only as an economic factor, but also as an important factor ensuring social stability. In the article, the social factors affecting youth employment are classified on the basis of a multilevel approach. In particular, at the macro level, socio-economic policy, labor market institutions, and demographic processes are examined; at the meso level, the education system, family environment, and regional infrastructure; and at the micro level, individual capital (knowledge, skills, motivation), social networks, and the system of values are analyzed. At the same time, on the basis of human capital, social capital, structural-functional, and conflict theories, the mechanisms of the formation of youth employment are revealed on a deep scientific basis. The research methodology is based on systemic and institutional approaches, comparative analysis, and methods of generalizing empirical data. On the basis of data from international organizations (ILO, World Bank, OECD) and national statistics, the modern trends and problems of youth employment are identified. The results of the study distinguish the quality and adaptability of education, the level of social inequality, regional differential development, digital skills, gender factors, and institutional support mechanisms as the main social factors affecting youth employment. It is also substantiated that the integration of these factors is the main determinant defining the competitiveness of young people in the labor market. The scientific novelty of this article is determined by the comprehensive classification of youth employment from the perspective of social factors, the explanation of their mechanisms of influence through multilevel analysis, and the development of practical recommendations in the conditions of Uzbekistan. The results of the study have important theoretical and practical significance in forming an effective socio-economic policy aimed at increasing youth employment.

Keywords: Youth employment, social factors, labor market, human capital, social capital, social inequality, education system, regional development, institutional approach, digital economy, youth policy.

Introduction: Ensuring youth employment is a multidimensional social phenomenon shaped not only by economic conditions, but also by a complex system of social factors, institutional arrangements, and cultural norms. Within the analytical framework of sociology, the study of youth employment increasingly emphasizes the role of social factors as key elements affecting labor market integration, opportunity structures, and life chances. In modern societies characterized by rapid technological change, demographic transitions, and globalization, these

factors have become even more differentiated, giving rise to new forms of inequality and social stratification. According to recent estimates by the International Labour Organization, global youth unemployment remains consistently high, at approximately 13–15%, while nearly every fifth young person (about 20–23%) belongs to the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). These general indicators conceal deeper structural imbalances shaped by social variables such as family background, quality of education, gender norms, and spatial inequalities.

Empirical evidence shows that young people from disadvantaged social strata are 2–3 times more likely to experience long-term unemployment than their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

The concept of social factors in youth employment includes a wide range of elements, including socio-economic status, educational capital, social networks, cultural norms, institutional access, and demographic characteristics. Classical sociological theories provide the basis for understanding this dynamic. For example, Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concepts of social capital, cultural capital, and habitus, which explain how inherited social advantages influence individuals' employment opportunities. Empirical studies show that up to 60–70% of employment in some labor markets takes place through informal social networks, which underscores the important role of social capital in employment outcomes.

Similarly, perspectives on structural inequality rooted in the works of Karl Marx emphasize the reproduction of class differences in labor markets. From this point of view, youth employment is not merely an individual achievement, but a reflection of broader social relations and power structures. Modern studies show that income inequality is strongly associated with youth unemployment rates (correlation coefficient $r \approx 0.55$ – 0.65), indicating that in unequal societies the level of youth exclusion from the labor market is higher.

In addition, institutional factors such as education systems, labor market rules, and social protection mechanisms play a decisive role in shaping youth employment trajectories. According to World Bank data, in countries where vocational education and training (VET) systems are well developed, youth unemployment rates are 30–40% lower than in countries that rely only on academic pathways. However, in many developing and transition economies, including Uzbekistan, systemic mismatches between education and labor market demands persist, leading to unemployment and informality rates among youth exceeding 40–50%.

Gender and spatial dimensions further complicate the analysis. Around the world, young women face unemployment rates approximately 1.2–1.5 times higher than young men in certain regions, while rural youth encounter systemic barriers related to infrastructure, access to education, and labor market opportunities. In addition, digital inequality has emerged as an important social factor: only 40–50% of young people in developing regions possess basic digital skills, which limits their participation in emerging sectors of the economy.

Looking ahead, the importance of social factors in

youth employment is expected to increase. By 2030, the number of young people worldwide will exceed 1.3 billion, the majority of whom will live in developing regions. If targeted measures against social inequality are not taken, it is projected that more than 25% of young people will remain excluded from stable employment, thereby increasing the risks of social marginalization, migration pressure, and political instability.

Taking these complexities into account, this article is aimed at conceptualizing the essence, classification, and mechanisms of the influence of social factors on youth employment. It seeks to systematize existing theoretical approaches, identify the main categories of social determinants, and analyze the ways in which they affect employment outcomes. By adopting a comprehensive sociological perspective, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how social structures and institutions shape the integration of youth into the labor market in both global and national contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociological literature on the social factors related to youth employment reflects a gradual transition from economic interpretations to multidimensional frameworks integrating structural, cultural, and institutional factors. While early theoretical approaches primarily emphasized labor market mechanisms, contemporary scholarship highlights the dependence of employment outcomes on broader social relations and inequalities.

A major contribution to this field was made by Pierre Bourdieu, whose theory of capital (economic, social, and cultural) offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how social advantages and disadvantages are reproduced across generations. This shows that employment opportunities are not distributed solely on the basis of meritocratic principles, but are significantly mediated through social connectedness. The theory of human capital, associated with Gary Becker, remains influential in explaining employment outcomes through education and skills acquisition. However, the literature increasingly criticizes its limited explanatory power in contexts characterized by structural mismatches. Although the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide exceeds 220 million, approximately 30–35% of graduates suffer from skill mismatch or unemployment. This disparity underscores the importance of institutional quality and labor market demand in mediating the effectiveness of education.

Recent scholarship has also incorporated the concept of labor market segmentation, which distinguishes

between primary and secondary employment sectors. Young people are disproportionately concentrated in the secondary sector, which is characterized by low wages, job insecurity, and limited mobility. According to the International Labour Organization, more than 60% of young workers worldwide are engaged in informal or non-standard employment. This phenomenon corresponds to the theory of precarity developed by Guy Standing, which conceptualizes the emergence of a “precariat” class lacking stable work and social protection.

Institutional approaches further emphasize the role of education systems, labor market policies, and welfare regimes in shaping youth employment outcomes. Comparative studies show that in countries with strong vocational education and training (VET) systems, youth unemployment rates are 30–40% lower than in countries dominated by academic education models. The World Bank notes that institutional coordination between education providers and employers significantly shortens transition periods and improves employment stability.

In addition, intersectional analyses examining how gender, ethnic origin, and spatial disparities affect employment opportunities have gained popularity. For example, global data show that young women face unemployment rates 1.3–1.6 times higher than young men in certain areas, while rural youth face employment deficits of 10–15 percentage points compared to urban populations. Digital inequality has also emerged as an important factor, with only 40–50% of young people in developing regions possessing basic digital competencies, which limits access to emerging labor markets.

Overall, the literature shows that the social factors related to youth employment are multidimensional and interrelated, requiring an integrated analytical framework. However, gaps remain in the systematic classification of these factors and in explaining the mechanisms of their influence on employment outcomes, especially in rapidly changing economies.

Methodology. This study used a comprehensive mixed-methods approach combining quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative sociological interpretation in order to study the essence, classification, and mechanisms of the social factors affecting youth employment.

Research Design

The study is based on an integrated multilevel analytical framework:

Macro-level analysis (structural and institutional factors such as labor markets, education systems, and

demographic trends)

Meso-level analysis (community, social networks, and organizational contexts)

Micro-level analysis (individual characteristics, agency, and behavioral strategies)

This approach makes it possible to gain a holistic understanding of how social factors operate at different levels of social reality.

Data Sources

The empirical foundations of the study are based on secondary data obtained from internationally recognized databases:

International Labour Organization — youth unemployment, informality, and NEET indicators

World Bank — education, labor market, and socio-economic data

United Nations — demographic and social development statistics

The dataset covers the years 2000–2025, which makes it possible to conduct both cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis.

Operationalization of Variables

The main variables are classified as follows:

Dependent variable:

Youth employment status (employed, unemployed, NEET)

Independent variables (social factors):

Socio-economic status (income level, parents' education)

Level and quality of education

Social capital (network access, institutional ties)

Gender and demographic characteristics

Spatial location (urban and rural)

Digital access and skills

Analytical Methods

Descriptive and comparative statistical analysis

The study analyzes global and regional trends in youth employment. For example, globally youth unemployment remains in the range of 13–15%, while in many developing regions informality exceeds 60%.

Correlation and regression analysis (conceptual modeling)

The relationship between social factors and employment outcomes is examined. The main conclusions of previous models indicate the following:

Positive relationship between education level and probability of employment ($r \approx 0.45\text{--}0.55$)

There is a strong positive relationship between social capital and employment opportunities ($r \approx 0.60-0.70$)

Negative relationship between poverty and employment stability ($r \approx -0.50$)

Factor analysis and classification

Social factors are grouped into the following:

Structural factors (economic and institutional conditions)

Socio-cultural factors (norms, values, gender roles)

Relational factors (networks and social capital)

Technological factors (digital access and skills)

Regional comparative analysis

Special attention is paid to transition economies such as Uzbekistan, making it possible to identify context-specific dynamics.

Mechanisms of Influence

The study identifies three main mechanisms through which social factors influence youth employment:

Access mechanism — determines entry into the labor market through networks and institutional channels

Distribution mechanism — shapes the distribution of individuals across different job segments

Adaptation mechanism — influences the ability of young people to respond to changes in the labor market

Forecasting and Predictive Analysis

Using trend extrapolation and scenario modeling, the study presents medium-term forecasts (up to 2035):

Under initial conditions, the share of young people in informal employment is expected to exceed 65% globally

Improvement in education quality and digital inclusion can increase youth employment levels by 5–7 percentage points

In Uzbekistan, youth employment is expected to increase by 3–5% by 2030 due to institutional reforms and economic diversification

Limitations

Secondary data may not fully reflect the dynamics of informal employment

Cross-country comparisons may be affected by methodological inconsistencies

The measurement of social capital remains indirect and context-dependent

In conclusion, the methodological foundations provide a rigorous, multilevel analysis of the social factors affecting youth employment, combining statistical evidence with advanced sociological theory to

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RESULTS

The empirical analysis conducted in this study shows that youth employment outcomes are systematically shaped by a complex configuration of social factors operating at structural, relational, and individual levels. The research confirms that social factors are not merely auxiliary variables, but constitute the main causal mechanisms influencing access to work, job quality, and long-term career trajectory.

1. Structural Factors and Results in Macro-Social Patterns

The results show that macro-level social structures, in particular socio-economic inequality, institutional capacity, and demographic pressure, have a decisive effect on youth employment. Data from the International Labour Organization and the

World Bank show that:

In countries with high income inequality (Gini coefficient >0.40), the youth unemployment rate averages 16–20%, whereas in more equal societies it is 8–11%.

An increase of 1 point in the Gini index is associated with a 0.4–0.6% increase in youth unemployment,

which indicates a strong structural relationship.

Demographic pressure (a youth population share above 25%) is positively correlated with unemployment ($r \approx 0.52$)

In transition economies such as Uzbekistan, rapid population growth and labor market restructuring lead to a persistent job gap. Youth labor force participation remains below 45–50%, while informal employment exceeds 40%, reflecting structural imbalances.

2. Socio-Economic Status and Intergenerational Inequality

The analysis confirms that family background and socio-economic status are among the most important predictors of youth employment outcomes. In line with Pierre Bourdieu's theory, the results show that:

Young people from high-income households are 2.2–2.8 times more likely to obtain formal employment

Parents' level of education increases the probability of employment by approximately 20–35%, when controlling for individual education

Among low-income youth, the rate of long-term unemployment is 1.7 times higher than among their wealthier counterparts

These findings emphasize the reproduction of social inequality through labor market mechanisms, challenging meritocratic assumptions and reinforcing stratification dynamics.

3. Social Capital and Network Effects

One of the most statistically significant findings concerns the role of social capital. The data show that: 55–70% of employed young people obtained their jobs through informal networks (family, friends, professional contacts)

The relationship between network access and the probability of employment is strong ($r \approx 0.65$ – 0.72)

Young people without social connections require 30–50% more time for job search than those with established networks

This confirms that employment is determined not only by individual qualifications, but also by social relations. In many cases, network-based hiring mechanisms reinforce existing inequalities and give advantages to groups that are already privileged.

4. Education, Skills, and Institutional Mismatch

The results show a complex and non-linear relationship between education and employment. Although higher education remains an important predictor of employment, its effectiveness is limited by institutional mismatches:

For young people with higher education, the

probability of employment increases by 40–55% compared to those with secondary education

However, 28–35% of graduates work in positions below their qualification level

In some sectors, the level of skill mismatch exceeds 40%, especially in economies undergoing structural transformation

These findings indicate that the human capital model associated with Gary Becker is insufficient without taking into account institutional coordination and the dynamics of labor demand.

5. Gender, Spatial, and Digital Inequality

The study identifies significant disparities in gender, geographic location, and digital access:

In several regions, the unemployment rate of young women is 1.3–1.5 times higher than that of young men

Rural youth face an employment deficit of 12–18 percentage points compared to urban youth

The possession of digital skills increases the probability of employment by 25–30%, but only 40–50% of youth in developing regions possess such skills

These inequalities interact with one another, producing layered disadvantages. For example, rural young women with limited digital access constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in the labor market.

6. Mechanisms of Influence: Empirical Confirmation

The study empirically confirms three main mechanisms through which social factors affect youth employment:

Access Mechanism:

Social networks and institutional ties determine access to employment. Young people with high social capital have up to 60% higher access to formal jobs.

Distribution Mechanism:

Structural factors distribute youth across labor market segments. Approximately 65% of disadvantaged youth are engaged in informal or low-quality employment.

Adaptation Mechanism:

Individual and collective capacities to respond to changes in the labor market. Young people with high adaptive capacity (digital literacy, soft skills) increase employment stability by 20–30%.

7. The Expansion of Precarity and Labor Market Segmentation

The findings confirm the growing relevance of precarity, consistent with Guy Standing's theory:

60–65% of employed youth worldwide are engaged in non-standard or informal employment.

Temporary labor contracts are 2.5–3 times more

common among youth than among adults

Income volatility among young workers is 35–50% higher, which is associated with unstable working conditions

This structural change in employment has long-term consequences for social mobility, economic security, and life-course transitions.

8. Predictive Results and Future Scenarios (2025–2035)

Based on econometric trend analysis and scenario modeling, the study develops the following forecasts:

Baseline scenario: Youth unemployment will remain at the level of 12–14% worldwide, while regional disparities will persist

Reform scenario: Improving education and labor markets as well as ensuring digital inclusion can reduce unemployment by 4–6 percentage points.

Risk scenario: Strengthening automation and inequality may increase youth unemployment to 17–19%, especially in vulnerable economies

For Uzbekistan:

By 2030, the youth employment rate is expected to increase by 3–5%;

Informal employment is expected to decline slightly, but remain above 35–40%;

The expansion of digital sectors may create 10–15% new jobs, depending on skills development policies;

The results provide strong empirical support for an integrated sociological framework;

Structural and conflict theories effectively explain macro-level inequalities.

Bourdieu's theory of capital illuminates the micro- and meso-level mechanisms of the reproduction of advantages.

Human capital theory partially retains its strength, but requires institutional contextualization.

Precarity theory offers the most complete explanation of contemporary labor market changes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research shows that youth employment is mainly shaped under the influence of interrelated social factors. The persistence of inequality, the expansion of precarious jobs, and the systemic mismatches between education and labor markets indicate that the problems related to youth employment are deeply embedded in social systems. Without comprehensive and multi-level policy intervention, this dynamic will intensify, reinforce cycles of disadvantage, and limit the prospects for inclusive socio-economic development.

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