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Correspondence: Taha Nazir
PhD, Researcher, Worker, and
Journalist. Thomson Reuters -
ID N-5730-2015 | ORCID ID -
orcid.org/0000-0002-5308-6798
| <https://tahanazir.com>

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Analytical Review Article

**YOUTH BULGE, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND POLITICAL
INSTABILITY IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

Taha Nazir¹, Zaighum Javaid^{2,3}

1. Director Advanced Multiple Inc., Canada. Thomson Reuters - ID N-5730-2015 | orcid.org/0000-0002-5308-6798 | <https://tahanazir.com>
2. Chief Executive, Media South Asia Canada Inc., Canada.
3. Host, community radio programs WTOR 770 AM Toronto ON and CFRM 90.5 Saskatoon SK Canada.

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between youth bulge, unemployment, and political instability in Muslim-majority countries. A rapidly growing young population, when combined with limited economic opportunities and weak governance, creates significant social and political pressures. It highlights that demographic pressure alone is not the problem; rather, the failure to convert this population into productive human capital leads to instability. The article concludes that effective governance, economic reforms, and investment in education and employment are essential to transform this challenge into an opportunity for sustainable development.

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Introduction

Many Muslim-majority countries are experiencing a youth bulge, meaning a large proportion of their population is young. While this can be a demographic advantage, it becomes a serious challenge when economies fail to provide enough jobs and opportunities. As a result, high youth unemployment can contribute to political instability, social unrest, migration, and in some cases radicalization.



Understanding the Youth Bulge

A youth bulge occurs when a significant share of a country’s population falls within the working-age group, particularly between 15 and 29 years. This demographic trend can create both opportunities and risks depending on how well it is managed.

Table 1: Youth Bulge Dynamics

Factor	Description	Outcome
Large youth population	High number of young people	Potential workforce
Limited job creation	Weak economic growth	Unemployment
Skill mismatch	Education not aligned with jobs	Underemployment
Urban concentration	Migration to cities	Social pressure

When properly managed, a youth bulge can boost economic growth. However, without planning, it can lead to instability.

Youth Unemployment Crisis



Youth unemployment is one of the most pressing challenges in many Muslim-majority countries. Economic stagnation, weak governance, and lack of industrial development limit job opportunities. As more young people enter the labor market each year, the gap between supply and demand for jobs widens.

Table 2: Causes of Youth Unemployment

Cause	Description	Impact
Slow economic growth	Limited industrial expansion	Few jobs
Poor governance	Inefficient policies	Weak job creation
Education gaps	Skills mismatch	Unemployment
Political instability	Reduced investment	Economic decline

High unemployment leads to frustration, loss of trust in institutions, and increased vulnerability to social unrest.

Link to Political Instability

Unemployed and dissatisfied youth populations often become a driving force behind protests and political movements. When governments fail to address economic and social grievances, public dissatisfaction grows.

Youth Bulge → Unemployment → Frustration → Protests → Political Instability

This cycle explains why many countries with large youth populations experience frequent protests and governance challenges.

Migration Pressures



Lack of opportunities pushes many young people to migrate in search of better lives. This includes both legal and irregular migration. While migration can provide economic benefits through remittances, it also leads to brain drain, where skilled individuals leave their home countries.

Table 3: Migration Drivers

Driver	Description	Outcome
Unemployment	Lack of jobs	Out-migration
Low wages	Poor income opportunities	Economic migration
Political instability	Insecurity	Forced migration

Risk of Radicalization

In some cases, prolonged unemployment and marginalization can make youth vulnerable to extremist ideologies. When individuals feel excluded from economic and political systems, they may seek alternative identities or support networks.

However, it is important to note that radicalization is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors, including political, social, and ideological conditions—not just unemployment alone.

Broader Socioeconomic Impact

The combination of youth bulge and unemployment creates pressure on:

- Public services (education, healthcare)
- Urban infrastructure
- Housing and transportation systems

This leads to overcrowded cities, rising inequality, and increased competition for limited resources.

Future Prospects

Future research should examine how Muslim-majority countries can convert youth bulges into demographic dividends through education reform, job creation, digital transformation, and inclusive governance. More comparative studies are needed to understand why some countries manage youth populations more successfully than others. Research should also focus on the role of artificial intelligence, remote work, entrepreneurship, and green jobs in creating new employment pathways for young people.

Another important future area is the relationship between climate change, youth unemployment, and migration. In regions facing water scarcity, food insecurity, and environmental stress, young people may experience stronger pressure to migrate or protest. Future studies should also explore how youth political participation, civic education, and community leadership can reduce instability and strengthen democratic culture.

Recommendations

Governments should prioritize youth employment as a national security and development issue. Education systems must be reformed to focus on practical skills, digital literacy, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. Public-sector dependency should be reduced by strengthening private-sector growth, small businesses, and innovation-based industries.

Policymakers should also create transparent and merit-based recruitment systems to reduce corruption and favoritism. Youth participation in local governance, policy consultation, and civic programs should be expanded to rebuild trust between young citizens and the state. International organizations and development partners should support long-term youth employment programs rather than temporary aid-based interventions.

Conclusion

The youth bulge in the Muslim world presents both a major opportunity and a serious challenge. If supported by strong governance, education, and economic planning, it can drive growth and innovation. However, when combined with unemployment and weak institutions, it can lead to political instability, migration pressures, and social unrest.

Addressing this issue requires comprehensive reforms, including job creation, education system improvement, and inclusive governance. Only through long-term planning and investment in youth can countries transform demographic pressure into sustainable development and stability.



Review Typology and Reporting

Review designs were classified into standard categories (scoping, umbrella, rapid, qualitative, and mixed-methods), with reporting aligned to established guidelines (PRISMA-ScR, PRIOR, PRISMA-RR, ENTREQ, and PRISMA/MMAT) to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

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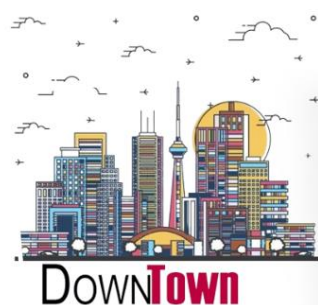
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