



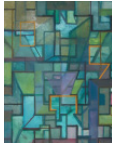
Population Policies and Migration Department
League of Arab States

ARAB YOUTH ISSUES
The State of the Art on Arab Youth Research
ANNUAL REPORT: 2005

Executive Summary

SERIES ON POPULATION & DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

This report is the first publication of the “Arab Youth issues” series of the year 2005, as a part of “Arab Youth Observatory” project, which is executed by (Population policies and migration department – League of Arab States) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).



Executive Summary

1- Report Objectives

The current report aims at achieving two main objectives:

1. Evaluating – theoretically and methodologically – the research conducted locally and regionally on Arab youth issues and identifying compiled data on Arab youth status
2. Developing an agenda for research priorities on youth issues in light of classifying and evaluating available data. These priorities will provide data and information to initiate and facilitate dialogue and advocacy programs in order to gain the necessary support for effective youth policies on empowerment and participation in development strategies.

2- Report Methodology

1. The timeframe for collecting surveys and researches started at the beginning of the last decade to date, taking into consideration the need for flexibility allowing researchers and experts to go beyond this time frame, if required, to pursue research in any given field.
2. A group of qualified experts in the field of youth issues, was assigned to prepare national reports on youth research and surveys in each of the selected countries to serve as scientific inputs into the current report . The national reports were based on a working paper that encompassed guidelines focusing on the idea and objectives of the national report, its content and the main expected conclusions. In addition, another professional group of experts was assigned to complete the scientific content of the report.
3. For the purpose of the report, youth have been defined as the age group between 15 - 29 years old, with a special focus on:
 - a. Age differences according to gender, socio-economic class, area of residency (urban vs. rural), social opportunities or awareness ...etc.
 - b. Youth constitute a social group and a socio-cultural generation whose characteristics, status and ambitions are determined based on the current structure of society and its relationship with previous historical periods. Today's youth were the children of previous historical eras which influenced their education, opportunities and ambitions; and subsequently influenced their lives today. Moreover, their education, opportunities and choices in the present influence their status, characteristics and actions in the future.
4. Analyzing the research and surveys approaches to determine their referential epistemology, ontology and ideology towards the youth⁽¹⁾
5. Analyzing the research and surveys types** and methodologies by focusing on their concepts and research approaches, data collection tools and sources, and the data analysis techniques.

⁽¹⁾ Epistemology means the knowledge. Ontology is related to youth presence. Axiology is related to values and beliefs on which these researches determine youth: features and behaviors.

First: Major Findings and Results

First- Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Arab Youth Research

1- It is very rare to find research and surveys adopting a well-defined theoretical vision, or holistic or diverse level of analysis and interpretation. An empirical pragmatic tendency prevailed in most of the national and individual surveys.

This resulted in the following:

- a. Lack of surveys and research concerned with historical changes in youth status, according to specific historical stages in Arab states.
- b. Lack of surveys and research on youth issues in light of wider social structures and different economic, political and cultural levels. Thus, research and surveys were not holistic.
- c. Disregard of major issues related to youth's human rights, civil and political rights.

2- In terms of methodologies, especially data sources, collection tools and data analysis, the following aspects were noted:

- a. Intensive attention was given to quantitative researches whereas qualitative and in-depth studies were in decline.
- b. Although quantitative researches are important and necessary, they monitored specific reality at a specific point of time. They were not followed by other studies to monitor changes in youth conditions and status over time.
- c. Many surveys lack the following:
 - Accuracy and comprehensive questionnaires
 - Examination of questionnaire' s scientific validity
 - Lack of statistical analysis

It was noted that qualitative and in-depth studies – whether appended to surveys, or depended by raw data, or were the only type of research conducted- were carried out by people who are not specialized in qualitative research.

- Lack of creativity in identifying new research tools and sources of data, such as media content analysis, youth literature analysis, youth speeches and analysis of their policies. There was no evidence of the existence of participatory researches in which youth participated by sharing ideas, designing, collecting data and report writing.

Most of the youth-related researches conducted around the world did not adopt a comprehensive dynamic historical vision. Some of these researches focused on youth as consumers to support new marketing decisions. Other researches focused on youth at risk, while the rest considered youth as a group of marginal and vulnerable people facing many social problems. Thus, few researches focused on talented youth, who are active social agents or those leaders in the IT field. Also, youth were deprived from participating in the design or data collection or findings analysis of youth related surveys. .

J. Corriero, Role of Youth Survey, Taking it Global, January 2004,
www.taking.Gtlobal.org. PP. 13.

Second: Factors that Affected the Current Status of Youth Research

Interaction between two groups of factors created the current Arab youth research literature, qualitatively and quantitatively.

The first group focused on the factors influencing all types and fields of scientific research in the Arab countries, including youth research and it encompassed:-

1. Lack of strategies or clear scientific policies with specific objectives and priorities in the scientific, technical and social fields.
2. Lack of basic principles encouraging scientific research activities and contributing to innovation and development. Among these principles are: freedom of thought, freedom of research, appreciation of scientific research and researchers, provision of opportunities to pursue scientific surveys.

The second group of factors is concerned with attitudes towards youth, either theoretically (by theorists) or politically (by politicians) or socially (by older generations)

1. Theoretically, youth research prevailed compared to research on other social groups such as children and women . This approach focuses on youth as a category having specific requirements and problems including risky attitudes, delinquency and unemployment, and lacked the consideration of youth as an agent for developmental change, innovation and creativity.
 2. Politically, political figures – who are usually of an older generation in most of the Arab countries – kept considering youth and defining their priorities in a language that is paternalistic and condescending. These figures neglected youth interest in politics; they didn't listen to youth or allow them to express themselves. Moreover, if youth were invited in national or sport events, it was merely to serve the hidden agendas of specific political figures.
 3. At the generation level, youth were metaphorically seen as the mezzanine floor⁽¹⁾ in which the elevator of public and private development doesn't usually stop unless electricity is cut down or the elevator breaks down (i.e. when a crisis or violence takes place). Thus, defining youth issues was carried out by an older generation still holding their positions and closing all the doors of development in the face of the youth.
- Change in the perception of people and decision makers about youth aims at identifying youth as potentials for social development and creativity
 - Towards a change in perceptions about youth from problem makers to developmental agents and sources of creativity and innovation.

Third: Frequent and Relatively Abandoned Research Subjects and Fields.

Research institutions, youth organizations and some researchers focused on the following research subjects and issues (mentioned according to research interest)

- a. Issues related to youth public health, reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- b. Education and training issues
- c. Unemployment and employment issues
- d. Social and political participation
- e. Other issues (in no particular order): political and economic participation, gender issues, poverty issues and their impact on youth conditions and opportunities, family

⁽¹⁾ Ali El Sawy, "Youth, good governance and freedoms", stated reference

relationships, the influence of media, global changes: their impact on youth conditions, the risks and challenges youth have to face including possible and potential empowerment opportunities.

A. Research Interest in Youth Reproductive Health and Rights

- Most of the research studies focused on youth awareness, attitudes and practices. They also focused on major reproductive health services available to youth and the services that need to be provided. In this context, a new vision emerged to monitor dangerous behavior that faced or might face youth. This implies more focus on youth issues.
- Major attention went to the teenage stage with all its age brackets, and stopped at the age of 19. Less interest was given to other youth age groups.
- Despite the large amount of money spent on reproductive health researches and surveys, some issues were neglected even though they are important and have an impact on the current and future of youth health such as:
 - o Youth hesitation in admitting their infection with HIV/AIDS and the absence of accurate and detailed information about affected cases.
 - o Decreased interest in sexual rights and relationships – whatever its form and our moral perceptions – especially in a context where cultural values consider these relationships as taboos even from a research standpoint.
 - o Despite the frequent media speeches and advocacy programs on reproductive health and the importance of cultural characteristics in hindering the delivery of detailed health information to youth, especially females; there is no evidence of any research activities contributing to the improvement of reproductive health and supporting youth reproductive rights.

B. Education and Training

Education issues drew the attention of many Arab researchers specialized in pedagogy and education. Most educational research focused on education techniques: its inputs and outputs. Less focus was given to critical research, which linked education to its social context: economically, politically and socially. This was reflected on educational studies which represent at the same time studies on youth education, to match the enrollment age in all educational institutions.

- Rarely was research conducted on a regular basis and focused on youth education issues. However, there are many researches on labor force, employment, unemployment, income and expenditure.
- Direct or indirect youth surveys – such as family health and demographic health surveys – focused only on the characteristics of youth education without specifying these characteristics socially, economically and urban vs. rural.
- There are some pioneering experiences in education, such as open education, distance learning and experiences carried out by some governmental and non-governmental institutions. These practices were assessed to draw conclusions about their impacts that can be used in other national and Arab contexts.
- Some of the studies and researches on education, such as studies focusing on gender gaps, socio-economic classes, or areas of living (urban vs. rural) and studies focusing on failure in schools and dropouts; these studies were not utilized in developing other research projects or designing related programs and projects.

C. Unemployment Issues

- There is a growing interest on studying youth unemployment. However, available studies:
 - Dealt with unemployment merely as a case or a phenomenon which has unknown origin and determinants. Studies have overlooked the monitoring and interpretation of unemployment as a social phenomenon resulting from public and sector development policies.
 - The focus was on the rate of unemployment and some differences, such as:
 - o Female unemployment is higher than that of males
 - o Rate of unemployment among the highly educated is more than those with lower education level
 - o Unemployment rate increased among adults and youth, in addition to the increase of child labor in many Arab countries.
 - o The huge difference between national surveys and reports or other studies when estimating unemployment rate within the same country.
 - o Lack of qualitative research exploring the daily life of an unemployed young person, and how unemployment influenced most of his/her health-life interests, ambitions (psychologically, socially, economically and politically), opportunities available for recruitment, and his/her opinions regarding how to face this issue.
 - o Lack of an assessment of youth employment projects, especially those implemented by social funds, micro-credits and self employment.

D. Social and Political Participation

Little interest was given to researches and studies focusing on youth social or political participation... Thus, there are not that many studies in this field except a limited number of individual studies carried out by specialists in political science and political sociology⁽¹⁾. In addition to the Jordanian survey focusing on youth participation within the family or civil society organizations⁽²⁾.

E. Other studies and researches concerning other fields

There are separate studies focusing on qualitative issues which did not contribute to the available data and information. Some of these studies were concerned with poverty and its influence on opportunities for youth preparation, some were related to communication issues between different generations within the same family, and some were concerned with youth daily lives and the new vocabulary they developed to communicate with each other detaching them from the older generation. Dominant paternal perspectives still dictate the older generation's ideas, behavior and management of youth matters. Parents usually describe the youth as reckless, superficial, romantic and a dreamy generation.

- **Provide a supporting environment for research, creativity and innovation based on freedom of thinking, freedom for researchers, appreciation for scientific research and researchers, and opportunities to pursue scientific research.**
- **Reliable and updated evidences and data are major assets for effective youth empowerment and participation policies**

⁽¹⁾ Ali El Sawy, "Youth, good governance and freedoms", stated reference.

⁽²⁾ UNICEF, Jordanian Youth: Their lives and Views, Op. Cit., PP. 111-139.

Fourth: Trends for Alternative Policies : Research Priorities

The following are priority research fields which can be carried out in light of the evaluation of research output in each Arab country, and in light of the social and economic development of each country that might imply some new priorities compared to other countries.

The First Aspect: Globalization: Risks, Challenges and Opportunities in Youth Empowerment

Globalization with its determinants, intertwined consequences and various repercussions impose a reality full of contradictions. It is difficult to identify its positive and negative aspects. It represents two sides of the same coin. Inasmuch as globalization offered interms of various communication tools, genetic engineering and new resources that changed the techniques of production and consumption; and treatment of hopeless diseases in the past. Globalization, on the other hand, raised challenges and risks in southern communities – especially in the Arab states. Different countries dealt with these challenges in so many different ways. Explicitly, some countries were faster in reaching the desired economic and population growth rates. Others suffered from poverty. At the level of youth status and problems, the impact of these challenges differed from one country to another, depending on its sectoral and general policies, its development performance and its qualitative vision of youth capabilities. Therefore, poverty and unemployment rates especially feminization of poverty among youth increased within the same community or among different communities. Accordingly, the current report and the regional workshop acknowledged globalization as one of the most important youth-related research priorities, among which are other secondary issues such as:

1. The impact and influence of cultural differences resulting from globalization – especially in information and communication – on Arab youth cultural identity and values.
2. The impact of rapid changes in production and labor techniques on Arab youth employment opportunities, and the unemployment of educated youth.
3. The relationship between local and international labor markets and youth immigration flows outside the Arab world, with a special focus on immigrants characteristics: education, knowledge and skills.
4. How skillful Arab youth immigrants can be utilized in knowledge and IT development in the Arab world?
5. The extent of national and regional interaction with the new development principles and concepts raised by globalization, especially those related directly to Arab youth empowerment. These most important principles include:
 - a. The importance of widening choices on the legislative and practical level as an important aspect of sustainable human development.
 - b. Support and formulate holistic youth human rights.
 - c. Development necessities, whether political, economic or social. These entail the shift from just listening to youth, to activating their participation in the decision making process for crucial decisions affecting them or their societies.

The Second Aspect: Youth Social Education

In light of social education as a process from cradle to grave, all society's governmental and religious institutions started to contribute to this major process. Education institutions – from pre-schooling to university – in addition to religious, cultural, health, sports entertainment and labor institutions have their special role in social education. Research fields concerned with these issues are very vast; as they consider youth from his birth to adulthood. The current report focuses on some research problems that are seen as priorities for most Arab countries:

1. The impact of the family's economic and social conditions on upbringing youth, their health, education and employment.
2. Communication and interaction between generations within the family: Its types and characteristics, its impact on youth awareness and youth social, economic, religious and political attitudes.
3. The relationship between family values and values acquired or rejected by youth; and their interaction with other important sources formulating their social and cultural values: such as the surrounding environment, friends & relatives; national, regional and international media tools.
4. Forms of direct and indirect violence within the family; and its influence on teen and youth behavior.
5. Psychological and behavioral influence of late marriage on youth.

The Third Aspect: Youth Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

1. Despite the various surveys and studies concerned with Arab youth reproductive health, there are some gaps that still need to be addressed such as:
 - a. The need for studies on youth awareness of reproductive health using qualitative techniques to explore what youth are aware of and share with them alternative sources of awareness, and the appropriateness of these sources to their psychological, social and cultural growth.
 - b. Priority interventions to support the role of the family, educational institutions and media in increasing youth awareness, changing their attitude and creating desired behavioral patterns related to reproductive health.
 - c. The need for studies and research focusing on youth reproductive rights. Although much of these debates deal with the importance of reproductive rights, official and non-governmental researches concerned with increasing awareness of reproductive rights are still limited. Thus, there is a need for research studies to assess the level of reproductive health awareness. Such studies develop and identify inputs and findings to be used in data base and information banks for advocacy and dialogue to foster a common responsibility among various stakeholders.
 - d. The need for an in-depth study on youth perceptions and visions about marriage, relationship with the other sex, new forms of marriage, the consequences of late marriage.
 - e. Studying the relationship between youth reproductive and sexual health and their psychological (emotional) and social health.
 - f. The impact of cultural changes – especially the values – on youth awareness and behavior related to reproductive and sexual health.
 - g. Assessment studies to evaluate legislations and laws related to reproductive health and rights. In addition to assessing youth and parents awareness of reproductive health rights.

The Fourth Aspect: Education, Training and Employment

Many national and regional researches, surveys and reports confirmed the existence of a huge gap between education outputs and development needs in the Arab world. This gap resulted from many complex and overlapping factors, such as the quality of education, common specializations among graduates, education methods and curricula, and the assessment of the education process (UNDP, Arab Human Development Report 2002 & 2003). Another factor affecting youth status in labor market is related to the Arab economic conditions with regard to: investment trends and fields, selected production techniques, sources of national income, consumption patterns, exports and imports etc. (The League of Arab States General Secretariat et al., Arab Economic Report 2002). Although there

are researches and studies related to education assessment, training needs, labor market conditions, employment and unemployment; these studies lack a holistic approach. The studies were not related to each other on one hand, and on the other hand they were out of their political and social context; notably the repercussions of globalization on labor market and the opportunities that national political and social policies provide to youth. As a result, recommendations regarding policies and projects focusing on education, training and unemployment are incomplete. Moreover, youth unemployment rates – especially among educated youth – increased instead of decreasing; it reached, according to some estimates, two thirds of educated youth (Arab Human Development Report 2002, appendices table No. 25).

1. Youth unemployment needs to be covered through quantitative and qualitative research in order to understand the following:
 - Arab Labor market conditions, to include characteristics of labor demand in terms of education, skills and knowledge required; and issues related to age, gender, and employment prerequisites whether in the public or private sectors.
 - Most important economic, educational and cultural factors creating and influencing the unemployment phenomenon.
 - Youth awareness about jobs and professions, especially the relationship between their favorite jobs and the economic status such as salaries, taking into consideration cultural and social factors affecting the social assessment of jobs and its associated social prestige.
 - A full analytical and critical review for youth employment and recruitment policies, in addition to assessing the objectives of youth employment programs and projects, especially those implemented by social funds and micro-enterprises.
 - The psychological, social and political impacts of educated youth unemployment, especially on marriage, participation, career, social and political mobility, satisfaction with the status in Arab countries, youth inclination towards immigration notably the skillful youth caliber.
 - Youth opinions and suggestions to face their unemployment. In addition to youth assessment of related policies and projects.
 - Child labor is considered a social paradox in Arab society comparing to youth unemployment. This phenomenon indicates an imbalanced structure in social policies as a whole (including education, training, health, work, etc.). Thus, there is a need for qualitative and quantitative studies on child labor issues given their impact on children when they become youth. These studies should highly consider children's rights, their physical and psychological preparation, and the development of their capabilities, reasons for violence within the family, at school, on the street, and at work; in addition to other related issues.
2. Review current education policies, and document pioneering education experiences – especially those related to mental and professional – in the Arab world in order to extract some lessons regarding the development of education in other Arab countries.

We have to start our work on youth very early, starting from 3 to 4 years old, even if our job is only to teach them a new language.

Amberto Ecko
Human Diversity Report
Cited reference

The Fifth Aspect: Gaps among Youth

The conceptual framework and theoretical research and fieldwork on youth led to considering them a general group of people as conveyed by many national and regional studies. This approach overlooks many aspects such as: the differences and gaps among different youth groups, clear differentiation between youth groups, and difficulties in identifying groups that need more help than others. The current report suggests conducting more qualitative and quantitative researches in order to understand the following aspects and gaps among youth:-

1. Gender gap, that starts culturally and socially before the birth of males and females and continues throughout the life cycle. The gap widens relatively to be in favor of males against females in some education stages – secondary and university – in employment, salaries, and political participation.
2. Influence of poverty on youth conditions, especially on the opportunities of their health, educational and professional preparation, in addition to their participation in development programs and projects.
3. Influence of the gap between educated and uneducated youth – males and females – on the opportunities of their preparation and participation in development.
4. Influence of the regional gap – among urban vs. rural areas, slums and poor areas – on youth opportunities and their social, religious and political awareness.

The Sixth Aspect: Youth Social Participation

Researches and studies related to social and political participation were the least in number compared to researches related to other fields. Arab political standpoints – national and regional – agreed on the need for political reform in Arab societies taking into account the characteristic of the Arab region and global changes. Hence, youth participation is a major and necessary aspect to be considered if reform is to succeed. The current report suggests studying the following issues and subjects:

1. Carrying out analytical studies for youth-related legislations, especially legislations concerned with voting, candidacy to parliamentary and legislative councils and civil society organizations.
2. Social, political and personal factors triggering youth to –relatively- give up participation.
3. Characteristics of volunteerism culture, mechanisms and requirements for its development and growth.
4. Youth perspectives on the development of their empowerment including mechanisms and fields of their social and political participation.

The Seventh Aspect: Media & Communication and Youth Social Awareness

Media and mass communication – especially TV, Satellite TV and global information network (internet) – play an unprecedented role in formulating many aspects of youth awareness including values and knowledge especially at the health, social and political levels. Thus, the report discusses the role of media and communication in preparing youth and increasing their awareness by focusing on the following issues:

1. The impact of cultural contents of media and mass communication on youth cultural identity.
2. Evaluating youth image in national and regional media.
3. Studying youth participation in the composition of media messages related to youth taking into account the characteristic of their age, gender, education, and urban vs. rural environments.

4. Exploring the reasons of youth attraction towards international media compared to national and regional media.

The Eighth Aspect: Evaluation of Current Youth-Related Policies

Available data and information about Arab youth characteristics and their educational, economic, social and cultural conditions confirmed that these conditions resulted from general or sectoral development policies: whether related to economic, political or social aspects; or whether fruit of combined interaction as is the case in poverty, unemployment and gender gaps. Hence, we prioritize the following issues:

1. Evaluate different policies related, directly or indirectly, to youth in order to develop them and suggest alternative policies.
2. Evaluate policies and systems regarding service provision to youth, quantitatively and qualitatively, and the status of institutions providing such services: structure, staff and capabilities.

The Ninth Aspect: Youth and Conflicts, Wars and Crises

The Arab region witnessed – in the past decades – many conflicts, wars and crises resulting from natural or political, sectarian, foreign interventions, which increasingly affected youth in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, research rarely focused on these issues. Hence, there is a need for various qualitative and quantitative studies focusing on the following:

1. Evaluate legislations affecting directly or indirectly the use of youth in wars and armed conflicts.
2. The impact of wars and armed conflicts on the health development of teens and youth – psychologically, physically and socially.
3. Evaluate rehabilitation programs of youth victims of war and armed conflicts psychologically, physically and professionally; at the national, regional and international levels.

This list of research priorities is identified in light of the report's findings. They are open-ended priorities which can be edited and modified. In order to formulate these priorities theoretically and practically, we will provide readers with examples of initial suggestions attached to the current report.

Towards a holistic approach to study Arab youth issues based on human rights while focusing on the historic characteristics and community context. It considers youth an agent and partner in development.

Invite donors and funding institutions to enhance budgets for data collection and analysis, and creation of updated and credible databases on youth and teens in Arab countries.

Accurate, credible and updated quantitative data is a prerequisite to set effective plans and strategies for youth empowerment

Listening to youth voices is a condition to understand their knowledge, trends, values, perspectives and status and a necessity to set youth development policies.

Create mechanisms for youth participation in youth research and formulate, collect and analyze data.