Social Capital and Informal Social Protection In Mauritius. Assessing the Social resilience of youth and the sustainability of youth related social protection system.

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1. Abstract

The sustainability of the Mauritian social protection pension system depends on two main elements in Mauritius: first, the amount contributions of employees and employers from the different sectors and secondly the social policies put in place by government to manage the different schemes. Mauritius excites one of the few comprehensive social protection system in the sub-Saharan region. However, the current level of unemployment together with the speed at which Mauritius is becoming an aging population has become a real threat to our social protection stability and sustainability. Actual and injected social security ratio has become alarming and is currently the main item on the agenda of our decision makers. The level of unemployment among youth in Mauritius is currently forcing people to return to informal mean of social protection to sustain their daily living. Thus social capital has become very important despite the high level of planned initiatives to cater for youth. This study will show that the youth are going back to informal mean of social protection and social security as a mean of sustaining their daily life. This study, qualitative in nature will analyze the existing bonds and social cohesion that exist in the form of social capital among the new youth generation of the country and their importance in providing social security when official means failed. Results obtained will show among other issues that social capital is still a very sustainable mean of social security for unemployed youth. Thus ensuring social capital in the country means that relationship matters. 99 young persons from both rural and urban region were interviewed for the sake of this research in order to assess the relevance of informal social security in Mauritius when there is high youth unemployment. Thus social resilience of youth depends on social capital.

Keywords: youth , social capital, networking among youth , youth unemployment, social capital and informal social protection.

1. Introduction

(i) Today Mauritius is proudly known as a new upper middle income country in the Indian Ocean (UNCTAD, 2014)

(ii) social capital is being given utmost importance and is considered as one of the key pillars of social protection among the developing societies. Since colonization period, survival has been only possible through the coexistence of different group which emerges with the interactional aspect among diverse cultural orientations, which according to authors such as Fine (2010) have glided the present society.

(iii) Coming up with a broader explanation on social capital, Putnam (1993) believes that social capital contributes towards norms of reciprocity and cooperation of people whereby to meet certain objectives there should be the flow of information. At this onset, the likelihood of “bridging social capital” arises where various cultures, norms, values and diverse groups' people consolidate a network to achieve certain goals also known as outward looking network. As a result, this bridging social capital has enabled the Mauritian island towards its gradual economic success where helping behaviors are mostly conveyed to different vulnerable group that is elderly, youth or other needy groups.

(iv) However, with neo liberalism form of globalisation informal social protection has become more and more important just as formal social security.

(v) Unemployment is a complex issue as it is easy to notice but difficult to define it (Doya, 2014), O’Higgins (2001) stated that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines unemployment as people who are actively looking and available for taking up a job and for the past few weeks or days they were not given an opportunity to work for more than one hour. How can we talk about DECENT WORK FOR ALL when the group in need of sustainable employment, that is our youth, are themselves unemployed.

(vi) “The Mauritius National Youth Policy” (2014). The same Policy defines youth as the person who are between the ages categories of 14 to 29 years of living age in Mauritius.

(vii) Together with the actual ageing population increase and the dilemmas we are facing in Mauritius, the growing youth population pointed out from the Digest of Statistics (2014) is also a matter of concern when it comes to the sustainability of our social protection system.

(viii) Report showed that as at 1st July 2013 the number of youth present in the country were 283,649 while in 1st July 2014 this data was 284,119 showing a slight increase among the youth population. Future prediction reveals that there might be an increase by 2019 where the figure will turn to 284,119. The resulting effect has been abhig rate of unemployment. Figures reveals that in 2010, the unemployment rate in Mauritius was 4.7% and as at 2014 this data has shoot to 448 000 that is 7.8% (Digest Social Security, 2014).

(ix) Formal system provides only an Unemployment Hardship Relief (UHR) Act since 1983 but given only to head of households and we can rarely consider a Youth by definition to be heading a household. Thus the unemployed youth has only his informal network to rely on.

(x) Following these concerns, there is an urgent need to qualitatively assess the sustainability of informal social protection in Mauritius and the social resilience of this age bracket to cope with rising unemployment hazards.

Methodology

Method : qualitative approach was adopted to assess the social resilience of youth in Mauritius by focusing on related features of social capital and informal social protection in Mauritius.

Tools for the Research Approach: A questionnaire was divided into various parts:

Section A: General Information on the respondent

Section B: Employment History

Section C: The Importance of Informal Networks in the life of the youth and in accessing the Social Security Services

Section D: Assessing the effectiveness of Unemployment benefits

Analysis:

Results obtained showed that :

- Youth relies mainly on parents in Mauritius for social protection when unemployed. The Mauritian family system is principally Modified Extended and the nuclearisation that has taken place in urban regions demonstrated that youth faces the difficulty of having to face unemployment on their own.
- Informal Social protection takes up the form of pocket money, financing of courses, financial help, food and clothing and financing of other activities by parents.
- Youth in urban regions relies mainly on the main breadwinner of the family compared
- Youth where parents have lost their jobs due to different circumstances are living in more difficult conditions than those who have both parents working.
- This can explain the high rate of suicide among youth in Mauritius. Thus social capital and informal social protection is still a major force in helping sustain our youth.
- Youth who had the support of the parents had higher self esteem than those without any support.
- Some of the youth have been forced to take up small manual jobs despite having graduated from university.
- They mentioned the lack of different initiatives from Government to put some form of formal social protection at their disposal. However, government is currently running and financing on the job training and workfare programs for unemployed youth.
- The law presents youth under the age of 15 to work, however, many were out of school and working in informal sectors.
- The majority agrees that they have very often contacted someone outside the family for financial help.
- The person they contacted was usually a next to kin family member or a neighbor or friend who is at work.
- The youth explained that many of their friends were living in utmost despair because of lack of informal support from parents and other networks.

Recommendations

There is a need to reasses and give importance to informal social protection as an alternative to formal social protection system as in Africa we can still rely on our network

The informal system is still a strong form of social protection and it help to cater for youth in Mauritius they is a need to make appropriate policy to strengthen the relationship that exists in the formal system.

Government needs to view our networks as assets.

With globalization and relocation unemployment rate will increase in the future and this will be a higher burden for government , thus the sustainability of existing formal system will depend on participation of actors in the informal system, that is social capital.

There is need to find alternative method of sustainable employment for youth in Mauritius. Workfare is not enough. Employment guarantees the dignity of people. Thus a need for appropriate economic strategy is most welcome here.

Referencing:


