



**FEMINIST YOUTH**

**LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME**

**A REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Founded as a nonprofit trust in January 2015, Gender at Work India uses an intersectional feminist approach to raise institutional standards by building architectures for diversity, gender, equity and inclusion within workspaces in India.

This work is supported by UN Women India.

Conceptualised by: **Gender at Work India team**

*(in alphabetical order)*

Arundhati Sridhar, Jyotsna Siddharth, Shambhavi Shukla, Shruti Sharma,  
Sudarsana Kundu

Co-authored by:

Ketaki Hate and Parvathy J

© Gender at Work India 2022. All rights reserved.

This publication can be reproduced in whole or in part with due acknowledgment to Gender at Work India. You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

*Designed and Illustrated by ArtAasom*



[www.genderatworkindia.org](http://www.genderatworkindia.org)

---

Instagram : @genderatworkindia

Twitter : @GenderatWorkInd

LinkedIn : Gender at Work India

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Introduction

---

04

## Youth

---

07

- Youth: beyond numbers?
- Youth and the problem of contradictions
- Commodification of youth
- What does it mean to be a youth?
- How do we address problems unique to the youth?

## Feminist Leadership

---

40

- Definitions of feminist leadership
- Elements of feminist leadership

## Discussion

---

55

## Bibliography

---

61

## Appendix A

---

70

# INTRODUCTION

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF), convened by UN Women in 2021, kickstarted a five-year process of intergenerational, multi-stakeholder convergence around the goal of achieving irreversible gender equality. In undertaking this process intervention, Gender at Work India hopes to advance the GEF mandate by strengthening action coalitions of selected pan India youth leaders to build secondary and tertiary impacts, and promote just, equitable, intersectional feminist agendas.

This process intervention is specifically located in the context of a shrinking civil society, a nation mired in deep chasms, and several draconian laws and policies clamping down on movement-building. With a constantly shifting landscape of political realities, youth activism has also morphed and adapted to be more effective, while simultaneously 'calling in' their own movements for lack of diversity and substantial representation.



The goal of this undertaking, then, is three-fold.

- 01 The first is to map and improve our contextualised understanding of what feminist youth leadership in India may look like in its many current iterations, with a focus on marginalised identities and assertions. This will be done through a rigorous and iterative needs assessment which includes a literature review of secondary sources, a mapping of curriculums developed for youth and feminist leadership in India, and detailed interviews with youth leaders to understand where the gaps lie, vis a vis access, resources and perspectives, in the praxis of feminist leadership.
- 02 The second goal is to borrow the gap analysis from the needs assessment to build a curriculum and pedagogy for feminist youth leadership in civil society in India. The curriculum will be co-created with the respondents to the needs assessment, as well as other youth leaders involved at the conceptualisation stage. The construction of the form and pedagogy of the curriculum will bring in artists and other non-development practitioners to help break out of 'normative' molds of design, delivery, and dissemination.
- 03 The third goal is to pilot the curriculum and pedagogy, and to document some of these process learnings through a white paper. A feminist lab will bring together 30-35 youth leaders to interact with and help further nuance the curriculum developed, and act as a pilot from which specific learnings will be gleaned and documented. This cohort of 30-35 leaders will also consciously plug into local, national, and inter-governmental spaces of policy advocacy to further the Generation Equality Forum aims and Sustainable Development Goals.

Thus, the process intervention will take a ground-up approach to understanding, operationalising, and building resources for feminist youth leadership in India, while simultaneously unpacking the context in which these are embedded. The research (needs assessment, white paper) will constantly inform and be informed by the praxis (curriculum building and piloting), in an attempt to build a process composite that is at once iterative and intentional.

This paper is an integral part of the needs assessment; here we have conducted a systematic literature review on the **two main theoretical components** within the project – youth and feminist leadership. In the first part of this paper, we discuss the most pressing arguments vis-à-vis the very definition of youth. We problematise the concept of youth as understood in everyday life through a lens that critiques its commonplace associations with chronological age and able-bodied heteronormativity. In this process, we highlight how youth is experienced by different populations across geography, gender, class, caste, religion, ability, and sexual orientation. We do our best to highlight literature coming from the Global South in order to rectify traditional imbalances that give precedence to lived experiences in the Global North. Our attempt here has been to construct a picture for the reader that is geographically and socially inclusive in nature.

The second part of the paper focuses on the concept of feminist leadership. In this section, we have amassed definitions of feminist leadership from the academic world and the development sector over the last five decades. One of the larger goals of this project is to come up with our own understanding and thereby our own definition of feminist leadership by conversing with community leaders across India. Considering this larger goal, we have identified and classified definitions of feminist leadership to understand the elements embedded within these definitions. The goal of this section is to capture the ethos behind what most experts consider to be the principles and philosophies of feminist leadership.

Lastly, we embark on a discussion about the onus of creating safe spaces for feminist leadership to take root, grow, and sustain.

# YOUTH

*What does it mean to be a youth? This question can essentially be unpacked from two perspectives – the societal and the personal.*

The societal understanding of youth involves understanding the normative and cultural constructions that together create the perceptions of and expectations from youth. The personal, on the other hand, refers to the meanings and interpretations behind these constructions – that is the lived experience of being young. In this report, we try to put together the former – how have we as a society created, sustained, and critiqued the concept of youth? Moreover, what are the meanings attached to the normative and non-normative aspects of youth? How can these descriptions and meanings help us to navigate problems that are unique to young people?



## Youth: beyond numbers?

---

In 2019, the United Nations projected the world population for the year 2020, where **1.2 billion people would be between the ages of 15-24**. The same source projected the population of young people in South Asia to be 351 million, out of which **248 million were from India** (United Nations, 2019). The population most likely has witnessed an upward trend over the last two years.

We looked at 33 sources including governmental and non-governmental organisations across the Global North and Global South to understand how these institutions define youth based on age as the main criteria. Some examples of organisations include governmental ministries and departments focusing on youth, education, women, etc. and non-governmental organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and others. For the entire list, please see Appendix A.

To understand the average age of youth according to these classifications, we calculated the overall mean of the age range and the mode of the lower and upper values respectively. The overall mean of age of youth globally is 22. The mode of lower values is 15, and that of the upper values is 29. In other words, based on the age criteria defined by governmental and non-governmental organisations across the globe, the average age of youth is **22 years**. As you can see in Figure 1 below, 15 years is the most repeated age among the lower ages and 29 among the upper ages. Based on this, it can be inferred that most governmental and non-governmental agencies recognise people between the ages of 15 and 29 as 'youth'.

### WORLD:

1.2 BILLION  
(15-24 AGE)

### SOUTH ASIA:

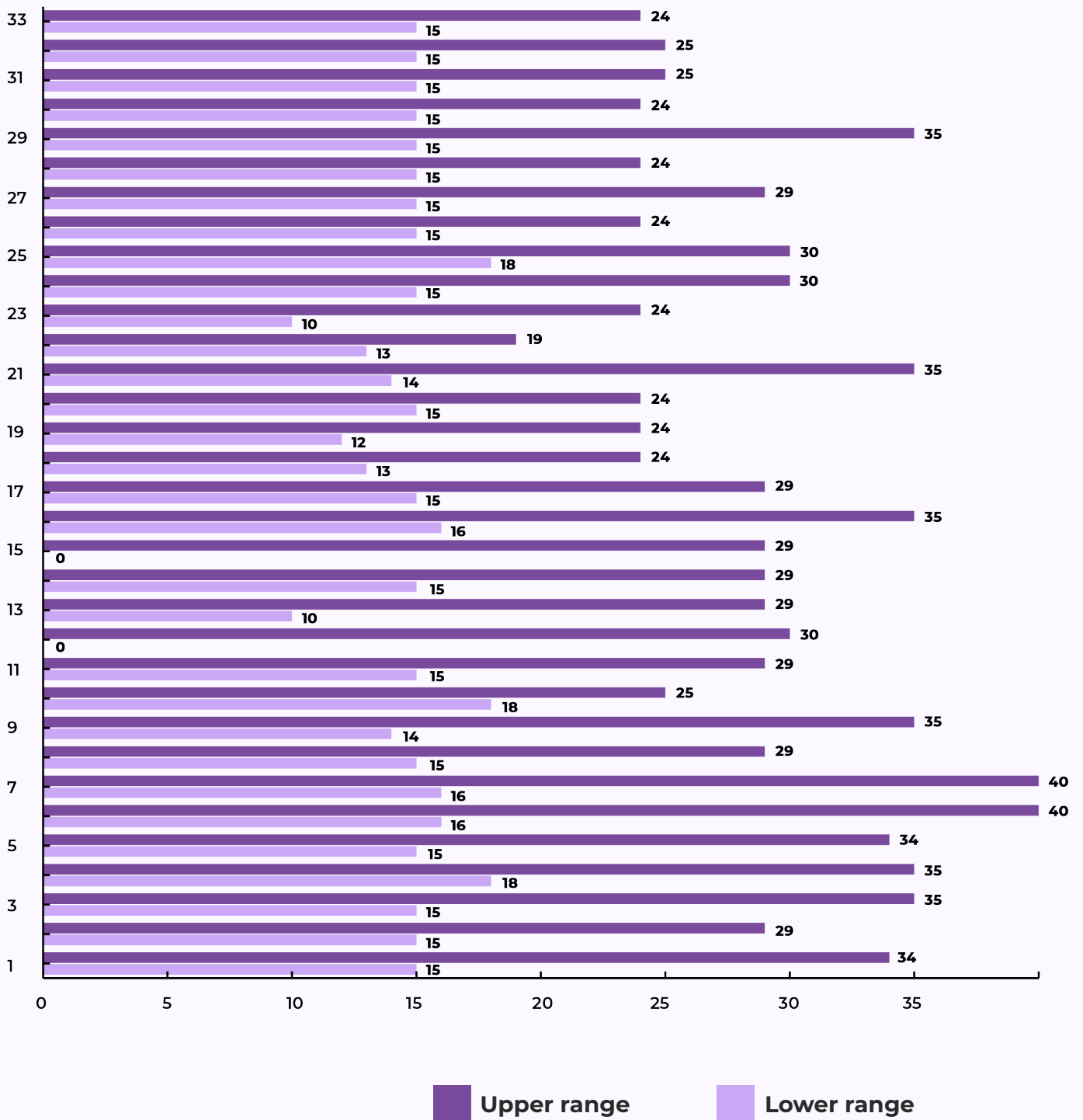
351 MILLION

### INDIA

248 MILLION



Mode of the upper and lower range of the age criteria of 'Youth' as defined by governmental and non-governmental agencies world-wide.



Having presented the above age criteria, it is important to examine youth not merely as numerical age, but by contextualising young people's lives and experiences. There is no refuting the fact that people have different sets of experiences, problems, and a worldview in relation to their chronological age. However, it's also important to note that these experiences, problems, and worldview are influenced by geography, gender, caste, race, class, ethnicity, class, and other sociocultural factors.

Nandigiri (2012) for instance, struggles with youth as a category and argues whether it should be a category by itself or as part of "broader constituencies – young women, young LGBTQI, young workers, young migrants" (p.120). They argue that the identity of youth is constantly in flux and is "so susceptible to shifts and change that it makes it extremely difficult to work and theorise on" (p.120).

Youth becomes a complex category to understand because it is as much a product of chronological age as it is a social construct. To illustrate this complexity, we use multi-disciplinary literature to understand youth beyond its arbitrary conceptualisation bounded by chronological homogeneity. An interdisciplinary perspective on youth informs us that most theoretical persuasions understand it as a stage of transition. Baron, Riddell, and Wilson (1999) present to us how the category of youth is understood by developmental and psychoanalytic psychology, functionalist sociology, and cultural studies.

“

The understanding of youth by these disciplines is underlined by a common assumption that *“transition of youth is, in general, a transition to a relatively stable adult status and identity which will provide the basis for the rest of the life course”*

(Ibid, p.484)

For instance, developmental psychology understands the transition from adolescence to youth as a period of cognitive development, where the individual develops scientific and logical reasoning, and new forms of moral reasoning become available to them (Piaget and Inhelder, 1958; Kohlberg, 1969; Baron, Riddell and Wilson, 1999).

Psychoanalytic psychology tasks adolescent identity crisis with the formation of the adult identity; it is assumed that the transition from adolescence creates an adult with a lasting and unchanging set of values (Eriksen, 1968).

Socio-cultural studies is another major approach within youth studies which involve the study of the intersection of culture and social structure, and the ways in which young people make sense of, or react to their contexts. This approach focuses on the study of youth cultures/sub cultures, and emphasises on the agency of youth, as they respond to larger social structures through various practises (Cooper, Swartz and Mahali, 2018).

The discourse around youth cultures and sub cultures for long were dominated by the practices and experiences of white, able-bodied, young men.

Keeping aside a functionalist understanding of youth that emphasises norms and maintenance of social order, it is important for us to identify the meaning and consequences of these constructs. As discussed later, classical and to an extent contemporary formulations of youth are based on the study of a physical body that is male, able-bodied, and heterosexual (McRobbie, 1991; Slater, 2012; Ljuslinder, Ellis and Vikström, 2020).

We present these arguments to problematise the conception of age only through numbers and chronological age. Ageing and experience of time, unlike dominant social assumptions, is neither universal nor uniform. Before we address the differing experiences of being young, we present the various contradictions inherent in the representation of youth culture – and – the commodification of youth in a global neoliberal economy.

## Youth and the problem of contradictions

---

There are inherent dichotomies in the representation of youth.

**Slater (2012, 2013)** asserts that young people are represented through conflicting discourses that are closely related. For instance, they point out that young people are represented as both risky and rebellious, while at the same time facing criticism for being lazy and apathetic.

**Nandigiri (2012)** critiques the confused amalgamation of youth being a homogenous category, which is at once both politically apathetic and political game-changers; “from needing their innocence protected to wildly promiscuous with no moral compass” (p.114).

Similarly, we can observe that young people are demonised for being lazy while simultaneously being hyperactive. They are laden with the burden of being simultaneously mature and immature. Their age of transition makes them susceptible to being occasionally infantilised while being expected to exhibit ‘grown-up’ behaviour and traits. Pushing this critique further,

**Slater (2012)** in their examination of adulthood ideals, argue that youthfulness is often the goal of adulthood, that is adults compounded by the forces of neoliberalism constantly seek eternal youth.

## Commodification of youth

---

Neoliberalism has an intricate relationship with both the framing of the category of youth and its dominant social understanding.

**Slater (2012)** using a feminist disability lens examines youth not merely as a stage in an individual’s life, but also as an abstract concept, its social construction, and the underlying societal aspirations. They point out that neoliberal forces construct an idea of youth that encourages it to become exceedingly commodified and marketable. This process has enabled the growth

of a newer form of economy – one based on maintaining one’s youth, and the constant promotion of chasing eternal youth. In the process of marketing a youthful being, youth as a category is fetishised. Dominant social construction portrays youth as a group of people who are immature, however neoliberal commodification of youth encourages ‘mature’ customers, who have an increased ability to contribute to the economy, to chase the same. In this process, “the body becomes an aesthetic project, and youth a desirable outcome” (Slater, 2012, p. 196).



*“the body becomes an aesthetic project, and youth a desirable outcome”*

(Slater, 2012, p. 196).

When the body itself becomes a site to play out desirable and undesirable outcomes, different stages of ageing similarly comes to be associated with varying degrees of desirability. For instance, ageing of children’s bodies into adolescents and then young adults is considered as positive ageing (for e.g., getting stronger and taller). On the other hand, the ageing of adult bodies is often perceived negatively as this form of ageing is often accompanied by changes not deemed aesthetic in neoliberal economies. In between of these stages, is the ideal body – the young body, leading to its fetishisation and commodification (Ibid.).

*As youthfulness is another expectation of the ideal body, youth becomes equated with bodily perfection, with hairless legs and flat stomachs; the aesthetic project of youth, therefore, is one of meeting modelling conventions; youth comes to stand for, the tall, the slim, the beautiful. Youth is abstracted from the lived realities of being young ... Although youth is a desirable outcome of the aesthetic project we are encouraged to set out upon, this does not mean young people themselves are positioned as the ideal. Youth for Sale leads the enfreakment of non-normative youth, as although the ideal body is always young, the young body is not always ideal*

(Slater, 2012, p. 201)

Slater further illustrates how societal norms about beauty combined with medical discourse on a healthy body leaves disabled youth in a paradoxical position – disabled bodies are infantilised; they are positioned as forever young. If disabled bodies are forever young, then do they hold the secret of eternal youth? However, this goes against the cultural understanding of beautiful and healthy (that is being young). We all will become disabled if we live long enough. The chasing of a youthful body is an attempt to deny our own mortality and “the desire for eternal youth is an attempt to disavow disability” (Ibid., p. 205). Youth, thus emerges not merely as a construct signifying vitality and health, but also as a commodity by itself. Slater compares this commodification with the fetishization and commodification of autism.



*The chasing of a youthful body is an attempt to deny our own mortality and “the desire for eternal youth is an attempt to disavow disability”*

*(Ibid., p. 205).*

**Mallet and Runswick-Cole (2012)** use Marxist theory to look at the fetishisation and commodification of autism through popular media and academic research. They illustrate how autism has become an abstract and a homogeneous commodity that is produced, traded, and consumed within social sciences and media through academic research and activities. The argument here being that autism has come to be understood as an abstract, “homogenous ‘thing’ which is separated from and ‘stands over and above’ individuals and their specific socio-cultural contexts,” (p.39) and which is uniform across geographies.



*“homogenous ‘thing’ which is separated from and ‘stands over and above’ individuals and their specific socio-cultural contexts,”*

*(p.39).*

This homogenous abstraction of autism has promoted its understanding, making it external to the subjectivities of all parties involved in the production of knowledge on autism, including autistic people, their families, medical professionals, experts, and academics. Even though autism is consumed differently by various actors across space and time, it remains fixed or unchanging – “as an abstracted biomedical entity” (p.45). Mallet and Runswick-Cole argue for ‘defetishisation’ of autism to rescue it from its totalizing identity and provide space for subjectivities of both autistic persons and other disabled people.

“

*“as an abstracted biomedical entity”*

(p.45)

Using a similar critical lens, one can see how ‘youth’ is construed as an abstract, universal, and homogenous commodity that is distant from the subjectivities of the young. The abstraction reduces youth to a set of attributes that can be achieved through market exchanges. Any attempt to understand various facets of youth must then acknowledge the fetishization of youth, its impact on the predominant discourse on youth, and the role the capitalist market plays in reproducing and sustaining the said discourse.

## **What does it mean to be a youth?**

---

Crip and queer theories point out that the definition of youth has been for long a result of the fixation on normative age transition within the Western context. By arguing that linear age cannot be the only defining criteria that constitute the category(ies) of youth and highlighting that different bodies experience time and youthfulness differently, these theories widen the scope of youth studies. In the following sections we look at multiple meanings associated to youth across various contexts with special focus on youth studies from India. Along with populating the category of youth with numerous variables, this exercise also reveals the underlying politics of knowledge production within the domain of youth studies.

Scholars of disability studies and queer studies critique the ableist and heteronormative conception of time. This critique strongly opposes the most prevalent understanding of the passage of time – the assumption that people relate to and live through time universally and uniformly through the courses of their lives **(McRuer, 2002; Slater, 2012, 2013; Ljuslinder, Ellis and Vikström, 2020)**.

Life-course theory offers a linear transition of individuals through life stages of dependency in children to independence in adulthood. This theory is based on the organisation of time around heterosexuality, reproduction, family, labour, and productivity **(Ljuslinder, Ellis and Vikström, 2020)**.

This has major ramifications towards our understanding of youth. When we undo and question the assumption of universal and uniform experience of time, it introduces nuance into our understanding of the passage of time, and by extension the transition from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood to adulthood. This nuanced understanding helps us to comprehend the lives of young people through the complexity it deserves; questioning the able-bodied heteronormative conception of what youth ought to look like brings us one step closer to embracing the term's complexity and inherent inclusivity.

***Ljuslinder, Ellis, and Vikström (2020)*** illustrate how disability activists and the disabled community in general have reclaimed the pejorative term 'crip' to show that disability is culturally defined in opposition to the 'normal' state of being able-bodied. Crip time is an analytical concept that unravels the ableist construction of time. It challenges ableism and reorients time to hold space for diverse bodies and minds **(Ibid)**.



Ljuslinder, Ellis, and Vikström (2020) bring attention to Baril's (2016) three ways to understand crip time:

#1

First, crip time can mean the extra time needed to perform a task compared to ableist time. People with disability experience a compulsory meaning of this crip time, extra time, as a deviation from what is normal. This extra time does not only depend on a person's slower pace but just as much on ableist barriers that make things take longer, for example, inaccessible buildings or waiting for transportation to come.

#2

Second, crip time can mean, according to Baril (2016), society's dominant understanding of this extra time as wasted time, in the sense of being slow and unproductive and not living up to the norm.

#3

Finally, crip time can be used as an analytical tool for understanding *flexible temporalities for different people* and not one fixed normal temporality (Ljuslinder, Ellis and Vikström, 2020, p. 36 emphasis added).

**Kafer (2013)** complicates the understanding of crip time as the time of recovery. By examining the concept of queer temporality through the lens of disability in an attempt to expand both queer and crip time, Kafer argues that crip time is not merely an accommodation to disabled individuals who require extra time, but a broader challenge to the normative expectations of pace and schedule. They describe it as – ***“rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds.”*** (Kafer, 2013, p. 27) Throughout this paper, we use crip time as an analytical tool to critique fixed normal temporalities.

**Freeman (2010)** in their examination of queer temporalities and histories critique traditional writing of history, pointing out that these historiographies fail to accommodate queer histories. The argument here being that queer temporalities are construed around non-sequential time, which is in opposition to the normative, state-approved life circle that revolves around heterosexual coupledness and reproduction. Freeman arrives at the concept of **'chrononormativity'** to elucidate queer temporalities by borrowing from

1

“

**Bourdieu's idea of habitus**  
*“cultural competence and thus belonging itself are matters of timing”*

(Ibid., p.4)

2

“

**Judith Butler's conception**  
*“rhythm of gendered performance”*

(Ibid., p.4)

3

“

**Dana Luciano's idea of chronobiopolitics**  
*“the sexual arrangement of the time of life of entire populations”*

(Ibid., p.3).

Chrononormativity, according to Freeman is *“a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts”* (Ibid., p. 3). Belonging is achieved through aligning the distribution of one's time with societal and cultural expectations. Flesh and bodies become meaningfully socially embodied through the process of chrononormativity, or “the use of time to organise individual human bodies toward maximum productivity” (Ibid., p. 3). In such a society, bodies subscribe to the temporal rhythm that follows birth, marriage, accumulation of wealth, reproduction, childrearing, and death. Consequently, the ones who refuse to or do not follow the normative chronology are considered “out of time” (Ibid., p.19).

Similarly, **Halberstam (2005)**, half a decade before Freeman zoomed into queer subcultures to theorise queer temporalities. They assert that queer temporality disrupts the normative framework of time. Here, queerness is not defined solely on basis of one's objects of desire but is understood as a way of life. They argue that in western cultures, the transition from rebellious adolescence to that of orderly adulthood is the desired form of maturation. In this process, a person moves from a state of childish dependency to that of adult responsibility through marriage and reproduction. By opting out of heteronormativity, queer culture-makers disrupt this linear passage of time and embrace an extended period of adolescence.

Halberstam thoroughly analyses subcultural theories and argues that youth subcultures are coded as a site of protest towards parent cultures, participation in which is limited to an acceptable period of time, marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The binary of traditionally understood youth culture raging against parent culture does not hold true for queer subcultures. Queer subcultures redefine the binary between adolescence and adulthood as queer participation in subcultures is non-linear and longer in duration.

This articulation provides the scope to expand the understanding of youth beyond characteristics and attributes that are tied to heteronormativity, and to understand non-normative models of youth cultures and different forms of adulthood. Departing from normative adulthood marked by maturity and progress, these subcultures urge us to think of youthfulness for example, boyhood, girlhood, tomboyhood, as identities that are not fully formed. The queer participation in youth culture, Halberstam argues, is not merely a temporary phase. This evolves into spaces for community formation and forging alternate, non-normative life narratives. They argue that the queer subcultures negate the binary between youth and maturity and allow us to imagine an alternate understanding of adulthood.

**McRuer (2002)** juxtaposes the systems of compulsory able-bodiedness and heterosexuality that respectively produce disability and queerness, and argues that they are contingent on each other. They illustrate that the institutionalisation of heterosexuality as the “normal” positions homosexuality and bisexuality as its subordinate deviant or abnormal, creating a system of compulsion to aspire towards normalcy, while being non-heterosexual is construed as a choice. Able-bodiedness is also similarly coded as the normal state of being free to sell one’s labour in the industrial capitalist system, in opposition to disability. As discussed above, neoliberalism plays an important role in not only defining what is desirable – able-bodied youth, but also in commodifying youth, (Slater, 2012) thereby continuing a cycle of demand for able-bodied eternal youth.

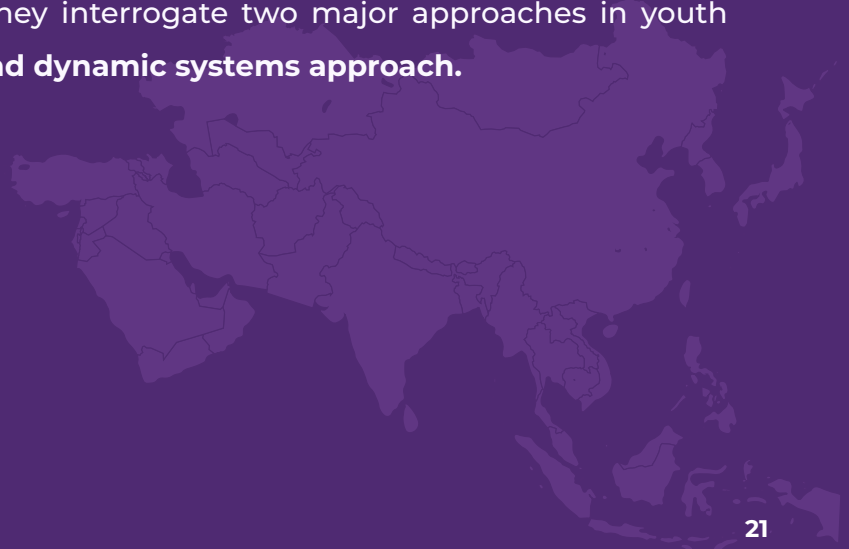
Within such a system, disabled people are often removed outside the realm of heterosexuality – equated to being queer – that is, displaying traits of asexuality or hypersexuality. Similarly, queerness is understood as a disability, especially through the discourse of finding cure through medicalization. Both conditions disallow the individual from participating in the labour market, that is, both labour in exchange for wages and reproductive labour. This exemption of disabled and queer individuals thus alienates them from the basic tenets that form the basis of societal and cultural functioning (McRuer, 2002).

**Kafer (2013)** too draws parallels between queer and disabled temporalities. While they agree that queerness is in opposition to hegemonic norms of reproductivity, they refrain from wanting this opposition to mark queerness in opposition to longevity. Disability has been conventionally understood as a death sentence, which conforms the disabled community within walls of hopelessness and a lack of future. Hence, embracing the opposition to longevity would mean falling back to ableist norms.

Most studies that speak from the intersections of sexuality, disability, and youth come from the Global North. The comparative low volume of research on these topics in South Asia for instance, is perhaps indicative of the dominant cultural norms that inhibit discourse on sexuality and disability. There is a burgeoning need to address these topics from a South Asian perspective as the lack of knowledge and representation only works against queer and disabled young people. Theories produced in and for the Global North cannot adequately represent the experiences of young people from the Global South because of differing social, economic, and cultural norms.

Most studies that speak from the intersections of sexuality, disability, and youth come from the Global North. The comparative low volume of research on these topics in South Asia for instance, is perhaps indicative of the dominant cultural norms that inhibit discourse on sexuality and disability. There is a burgeoning need to address these topics from a South Asian perspective as the lack of knowledge and representation only works against queer and disabled young people. Theories produced in and for the Global North cannot adequately represent the experiences of young people from the Global South because of differing social, economic, and cultural norms.

The limitations of theories that originated from the Global North in explaining the lived realities of being young in the countries from the Global South is best illustrated by **Cooper, Swartz and Mahali (2018)** in their work on Youth Studies for the Global South. For this purpose, they interrogate two major approaches in youth studies – **socio cultural studies and dynamic systems approach.**



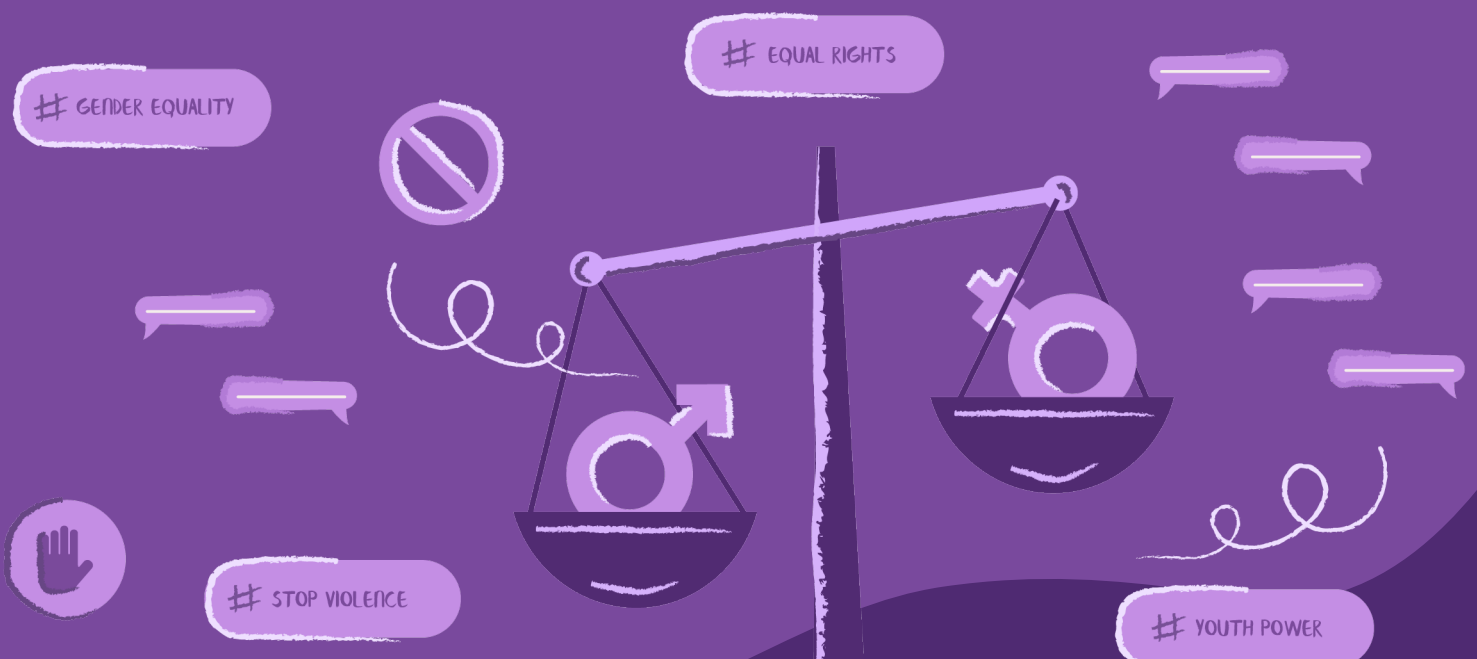
## Dynamic Systems Approach

The dynamic systems approach “looks for solutions to material problems, often devising interventions to ameliorate the challenges youth face” (Cooper, Swartz and Mahali, 2018, p.6). This approach acknowledges material realities and talks about risks, protective factors, healthy development, and pathways. However, the interventions emanating from this approach tend to be prescriptive and Eurocentric, leaving no scope for addressing nuances of the experience of being young in the Global South.



*“looks for solutions to material problems, often devising interventions to ameliorate the challenges youth face”*  
(Cooper, Swartz and Mahali, 2018, p.6).

This leads us to the argument that it is necessary to study youth within the context of multidimensional constraints including inequality, low access to resources, higher exposure to violence and adversity, and specific histories of colonialism in Southern countries. **Cooper, Swartz and Mahali (2018)** contend that youth studies emerging from the unique context of the Global South hold the potential to explain youth experiences beyond the geographical South, given the present context of growing economic and political instability in the North.



With the need for a localised study of youth established, we now intend to uncover the existing discourse on youth in India, and how these came into being in order to understand what youth studies for India would mean. To this end, we begin by looking at the context in which lives of young people are situated. The discourse around youth in India has predominantly to do with reaping benefits of its demographic dividend, or the economic potential offered by a relatively larger proportion of working age population. However, the political economy of the country has not provided a suitable environment for its young population to flourish.

A pan-India study based on a sample survey of 6122 respondents aged between 15-34 years across nineteen Indian states shows the persistence of unemployment and job-related anxiety (**Kumar, 2019**). In the survey, more youth categorized themselves as students in comparison to the previous decade. It is seen that educated young people are opting to extend their years of education, given the dearth of job opportunities, to delay entry into the workforce. This period is also marked by preparation for government or bureaucratic jobs. The jobless growth in the country has led to prolonging the years of education without a congruent hike in employment or reduction in poverty.



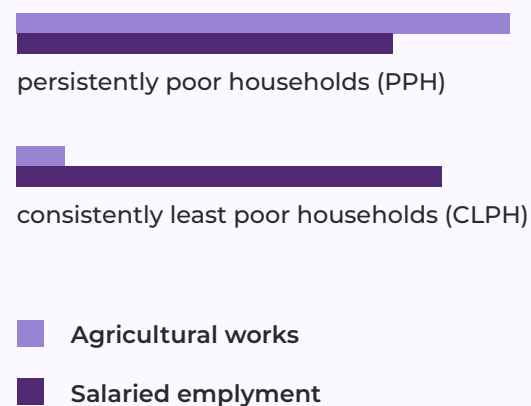
Using employment data from 2000-2019, **Majid (2021)** examines the group of young persons who are not in employment and education (NEET) in India. Empirically, India has seen a significant rise in unemployment in the last decade, and the share of labour force among youth is far lower than their population share. This incongruence is attributed to the rise in education among youth in the country. A significant majority of the total population of unemployed in the country are young, educated, and male. However, women dominate the category of population that is not employed or in education, and out of labour force (NEET-OLF). The unemployed men belong to households with higher per capita consumption expenditure. The asymmetry between these categories has serious repercussions on the well-being of young women as they tend to be poorer than their male counterparts.

Drawing on longitudinal data from India from the 'Young lives study on childhood poverty' that was conducted in Ethiopia, India, Vietnam and Peru, **Singh and Mukherjee (2019)** tracked children from 2002-2017 to understand child development and their growth from childhood to young adulthood. They also used the results to understand the differences in experiences and life outcomes based on social locations of the participants to understand how poverty is transmitted intergenerationally in the country. The results of the study show that children from persistently poor households (PPH) continue to be poor, despite enrolment in primary education. Poor quality of public education, and the burden of paid work and domestic chores, contribute to worsening the situation for children, especially in dalit and adivasi communities.

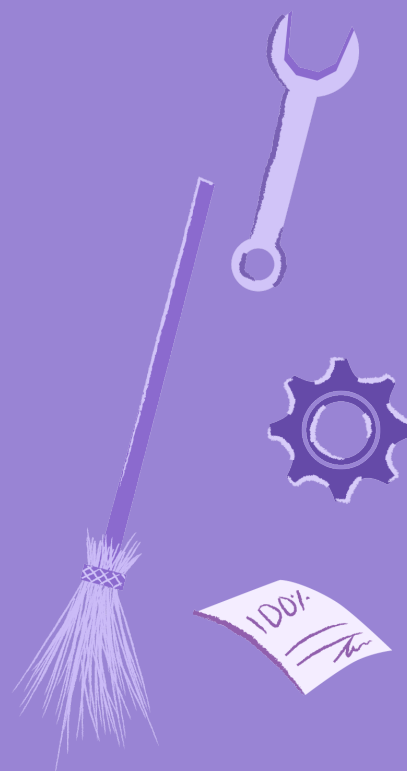
The results of the study show that children from persistently poor households (PPH) continue to be poor, despite enrolment in primary education. **Poor quality of public education, and the burden of paid work and domestic chores**, contribute to worsening the situation for children, especially in dalit and adivasi communities.



This disparity is persistent across a lifetime - 1/3rd youth from persistently poor households were found to be engaged in agricultural work, and only 1/4th were engaged in salaried employment, while their counterparts from consistently least poor households (CLPH) were barely engaged in agricultural work, and more than half of them were engaged in salaried employment. Further, the daily earnings of youth from PPH are much lesser than those from CLPH, even when they had the same educational qualifications. The case of girls was further worse. Their youth was marked by conditions that push them towards the cycle of intergenerational poverty – child marriage, early child bearing, etc. (Singh and Mukherjee, 2019).



Early initiation of children from poor income households in India into work was also reported by **Morrow and Boyden (2018)** in their study conducted for Young Lives research on childhood poverty. While children are increasingly seen to be spending time in both school and work, the proportion of children engaged in paid work is relatively smaller. Majority of the children undertake unpaid work. While girls are required to take on domestic and care work, boys are expected to engage in farm labour, or migrate to contribute to family income in times of financial crisis. This results in higher attrition rates among boys than girls. However, this study excludes any analysis of dangerous or exploitative work.



This evidence problematises the homogenisation of youth as a category. The disadvantages of caste, gender, and poverty shape the life experiences and outcomes of children, and mark their transition from childhood to adulthood. This calls into question the very use of the age-based category in understanding well-being of the cohort.

The findings also provide further basis to **Lukose's (2014)** argument that usage of the category of youth is an attempt to mask the marginalities and indices of social inequalities prevalent in the country.

It is in this context that we look at the analysis of programmes implemented by the Central Government of India to understand the State attitude towards the youth (**Kumar, 2013**). Young people are mobilised and called upon to engage in nation-building activities. This role of youth is intrinsic to every programme engaging young people. The programmes mobilise youth either as volunteers for labour intensive work of spreading public awareness, literacy, or rural development, or as recipients of various skill-building exercises. The programmes are designed in a way that posits young people as passive sources of labour who need to be mobilised, taught, and disciplined to assume the role of active citizens. This conception reflects a lack of rights-based perspective in its understanding of youth and development. When it comes to attitudes and lifestyle,

**Kumar (2019)** argues that despite high affinity towards modern lifestyles and consumption patterns, attitudes of Indian youth are still rooted in conservative and traditional ways of thinking. While a majority held liberal values and advocated for women's education, their beliefs on marriage, household labour, and interpersonal relationships were still governed by caste-gender-religious norms.

This conflict is further examined by **Bhatia (2018)** in his book ‘**Decolonizing Psychology: Globalization, Social Justice, and Indian Youth Identities**’. They use a narrative approach to present ways in which Indian youth from various classes build their sense of self in a postcolonial, globalised society. It is seen that youth redefine local and global markers to construct self-identities. However, this process is shaped by neoliberal policies and unequal flow of capital. Through contrasting narratives of upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class youth, Bhatia (2018) refutes the theory of emancipatory potential of globalisation, and argues that regional and class differences shape the ways in which young people relate to the changing economy.

- While upper-class youth manage to reap benefits, and position themselves as global citizens

- Middle-class youth navigate between empowerment provided by employment in call centres, and disempowerment of having to bear the burden of emotional labour that is involved in their work.

- In the case of lower-class youth, it is seen that social location, inequalities and lack of access to opportunities deny them the benefits of globalisation, unlike their upper- and middle-class counterparts.

Another significant discourse on youth that needs to be examined is the question of girlhood. Tracing the history of legal ages of consent and marriage, **Tambe (2020)** provides a comprehensive history of the construction of the category of girlhood in India; legal definitions were formulated and reformulated to serve national interests. They argue that the boundaries between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood were drawn over bodies of girls to cater to the interests of population reduction lobby or to reflect superiority of the country among its international counterparts, and never considered young women or girls as central to this process.

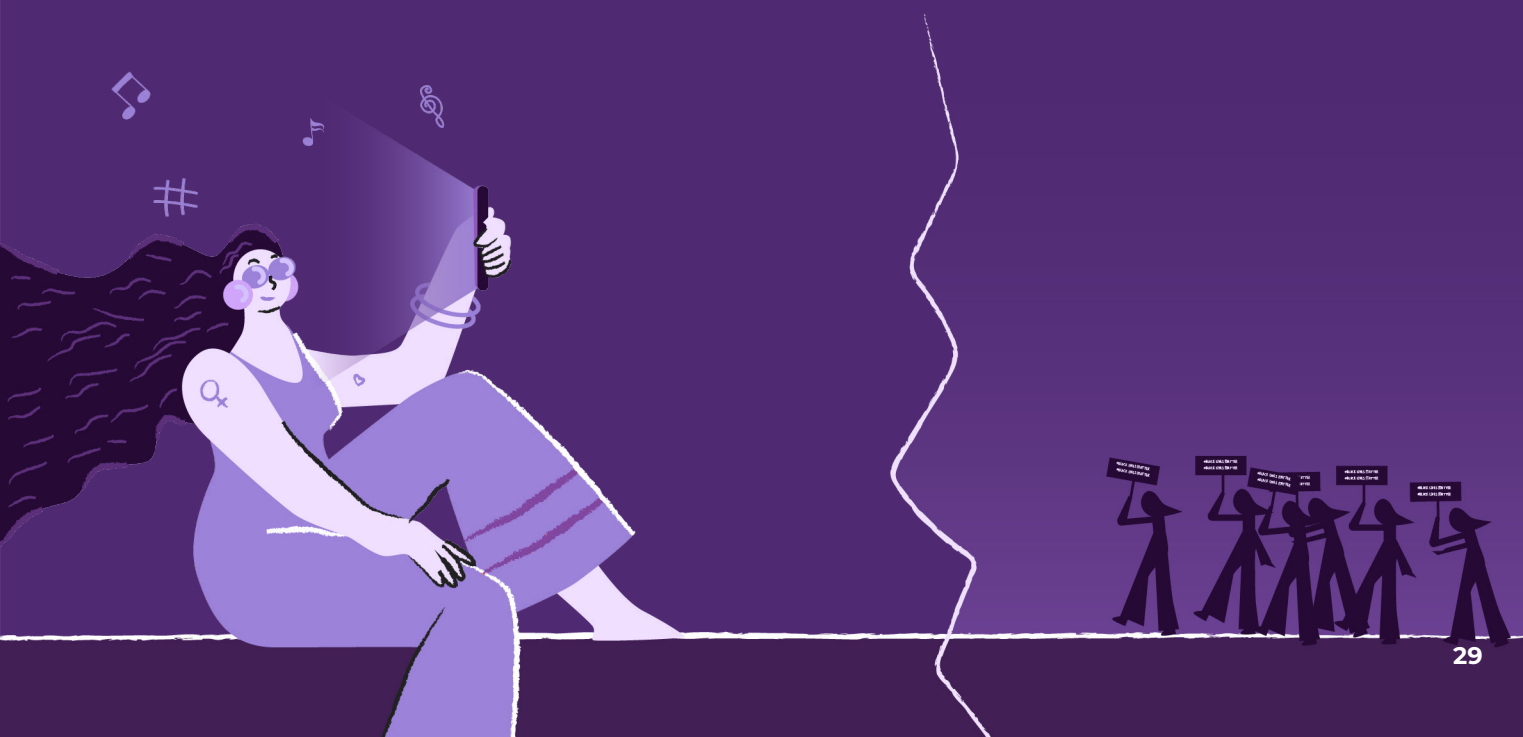
A similar trend of erasure of voices of young women and girls can be observed within the domain of youth studies in terms of defining girlhood. Here, the category of girlhood is constituted through knowledge production and development discourse with specific focus on the Global South. Even though the unsuitability of theories emerging from the North to explain the lives of young people in the Global South has been mentioned already, the gendered constitution of the image of a young woman is further complicated within the current debates around development.

With the proliferation of philanthropy and aid-based development interventions in southern countries, especially India, we see a growing focus on girls (**Koffman and Gill, 2014**). Devoid of the context of global inequalities, colonialism and violence that underpin the marginalization of women in India, this Northern discourse on female youth in the South produces an image of the young Indian girl as a victim, in need to be saved through interventions.

The discourse of victimhood of the girls in the Global South informs the development programmes and interventions that market the notions of agency and empowerment to girls in India. This depoliticised approach counts on the girl – empowered through interventions – to further solve the development issues around her. Campaigns such as Girl Effect best illustrate the underlying saviour fantasies of such a conception (Koffman and Gill, 2014).

Based on their research with girls participating in an intervention that caters to children of sex workers in Kolkata, **Romani (2015)** argues that while such interventions manage to develop rights-consciousness among girls, they rely on norms of respectability. These norms are constructed in opposition to the image of the subaltern woman, thereby reproducing gendered inequalities. Even though few girls manage to subvert and creatively appropriate the norms of respectability to claim urban spaces in their everyday lives, this notion of femininity fails to act as means for social mobility for young women living at the intersection of marginalities of caste, class, and gender.

The binary of the developed and undeveloped obscures the lived realities of young women in both the Global North and the South. **Kennedy's (2020)** examination of the celebration of girl Tik Tok-ers in the United States during the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is an apt example here. The rise of white, conventionally attractive, upper class young girls as the face of girlhood during the pandemic renders invisible all other experiences of being a young girl. The commodification of normative femininity (defined as white, upper class, conventionally attractive), suppressed the visibility of young women who were using the same media platform to organise against Trump or mobilizing support for Black Lives Matters movement within the same country in the same time. This trend of erasure obscures oppression, and also the creative ways in which young women negotiate their lives and identities.



Disability is another such intersection that is pushed to the margins of discourse on youth. There is an observable difference in how men and women experience youth, this experience is further compounded by disability. Young women in this case, perform more body work than young men (**Slater, 2012**). This stands particularly true in the case of South Asia, where girls and young women are expected to do more domestic and emotional labour than their male counterparts.

**Slater, Agustsdottie and Haraldsdottir (2018)** use a feminist lens to critically explore the intersection of youth studies, crip theory, and critical disability studies. Drawing on in-depth case narratives of two disabled young white women from Iceland, the authors argue that adulthood is an embodied experience as well as a site of conflict, negotiation, and resistance for disabled young women who are excluded from the normative category of youth. Disabled young women are more often than not infantilised, and considered perpetual dependants who are in need of care, hence unable to achieve adulthood through heterosexual coupledness, reproduction, or paid work.

The authors argue that adulthood is by definition equated to being 'able', hence excluding disabled women entry into the category. This exempts them from expectations of heterofemininity, while positing them in an asexualized limbo – subjected to ownership, intervention, and violence. Young disabled women resist ableist norms by performing their gender and sexuality. However, such resistance is heavily dependent on “passing” as heteronormative, further invisibilising queer disabled women (**Slater, Agustsdottie and Haraldsdottir, 2018**).

Through a detailed study of youth subcultures, **McRobbie (1991)** argues that while subcultures provide their members a sense a freedom and access to pleasure, identity and collective fantasies, such a space is only available for young men. Young women do not get to partake in the same as they are pushed from adolescence to adulthood, relinquishing their youth for premature middle-age through housework and motherhood.

While this aspect often holds true for young women universally, we are mindful of the dangers of assuming the homogeneity of the social category of young women or the liberating potential of youth subcultures. **Hollingworth's (2015)** analysis of subcultures in an urban school in London shows the centrality of race, gender and class in determining youth subcultures. Through an ethnography of subcultural practices in schools, they show that these practices also reproduce the social structures through embodied performance of normative gender, class, and race subjectivities. This observation marks a departure from the conception of youth subculture as solely a means to accrue cultural capital through subversion of dominant/parent cultures.

## Socio-Cultural Theories

---

Given the importance of critically examining the political context, social structures and identities in which evolution of subcultures are mired in, we now look at to what extent can the socio-cultural theories imported from the Global North meaningfully explain youth subcultures of the South.

**Cooper, Swartz, and Mahali (2018)** argue that this approach succeeds in combating negative stereotypes typically associated with youth from the South.

However, an approach that merely examines the symbolic realm of culture is unsuitable to understand the nuances of young lives in the South without an analysis of the particularities of their contexts.

Even though we challenge a universal conception of youth culture, we acknowledge that a global youth culture characterized by a common language and consumption of certain media products has evolved in the recent past due to percolation of media and technology (**Buckingham and Kehily, 2014**).

However, contrary to the claims of Northern sociocultural theories, the use of media or technology in itself is not an act of subversion. The usage of media by youth in the Global South is not exotic or revolutionary, but often banal. It is these every day practices that holds the key to understanding youth cultures in the South. Hence our enquiry is directed towards understanding the mundane, every day practices and expressions through which different groups of young people assimilate, localise, and subvert this larger culture.

By focussing on the embodiment of global consumerism through bodily practices, style and self-fashioning, mass media, and dynamics of consumer spaces such as beauty pageants, **Lukose (2014)** offers an important lens to understand youth culture. Consumer citizenship explores the impacts of globalization on local contexts and tries to uncover how belonging is construed through consumption. This concept



moves away from the typical framework of youth culture framed around identity, resistance and agency. In the specific context of their research among college-going young men and women from marginalised castes in a town in Kerala, they contend that the experience of being young is shaped by a lack of job prospects, extremely high rates of education, prospects of migration, and negotiating marriage and job market. Here, the meaning of fashion is inextricably linked to the embodiment of caste and gender norms within colonial modernity in the region.

They argue that the implicit assumption of cultures mediated by consumption so naturalised within Euro-American youth studies fails to capture the gendered notions of westernisation, tradition, modernity, and nationalist cultural projects that shape the discourse and attitudes towards consumption and consumerism in India (Lukose, 2014). In addition, we must iterate that just as studies based in Global North do not explain youth cultures of the South meaningfully, studies based on upper-middle class, urban Indian youth are also not representative of the diverse youth cultures in the country.

For example, a close reading of digital youth cultures in rural and small-town Gujarat shows that the local political economy and immediate social environment shapes the relationship between digital technologies and youth (Pathak-Shelat and DeShano, 2014). At the time of the study, strong inter-personal connection among young boys and girls in their teens, due to active school experiences and geographic proximity, were central to the youth culture in the region, and digital media was at the periphery of their lives. Collective social structures and access to technology determined the limited role of digital media in the local youth culture. Commodities themselves need to be contextualised within the landscape of cultural politics and histories of the region to understand youth culture.

Youth culture of consumption and practices also distinctly echoes the gendered, caste-based subjectivities and norms **(Lukose, 2014)**.

While youth subculture of self-fashioning through consumption in itself a way in which globalisation impacts young lives, we cannot reduce it to a negotiation between tradition and modernity. Masculinity studies in particular offers much insight into how consumption displayed on bodies of young men becomes their marker of status, especially when they find themselves in disempowering situations of unemployment and deprivation.

**Nakassis (2013)** illustrates this in their ethnographic study among college-going young men in Tamil Nadu. Men self-fashion themselves through usage of counterfeit brand products and English language, not to achieve status of being 'modern', but to negotiate their own particular ideas of status and anxieties surrounding them. In their attempt to navigate their position as youth – denied the innocence of child or respectability of adult – they turn to their peer groups to build their sense of self and status through embodied consumption of certain elements of global youth culture.

The above-mentioned study shows us why we cannot valorise such self-fashioning as intentional acts of subversion, and further pushes us to look closely at the power relations navigated by young people while experiencing youth. **Chakraborty's (2016)** in-depth account of the lives of young Muslim women belonging to slums around Kolkata also offers valuable insights on the centrality of Bollywood, the ways in which they negotiate everyday aspirations and gendered restrictions. Bollywood offers the young women possibilities of life beyond their imagination, and acts as a guide on what it means to be 'modern'. The women navigate the contradicting values espoused by Bollywood, parents, and religious teachings to express their desires, pursue romantic relationships and embody fashion, while also maintaining the identity of a **'good Muslim girl'**.

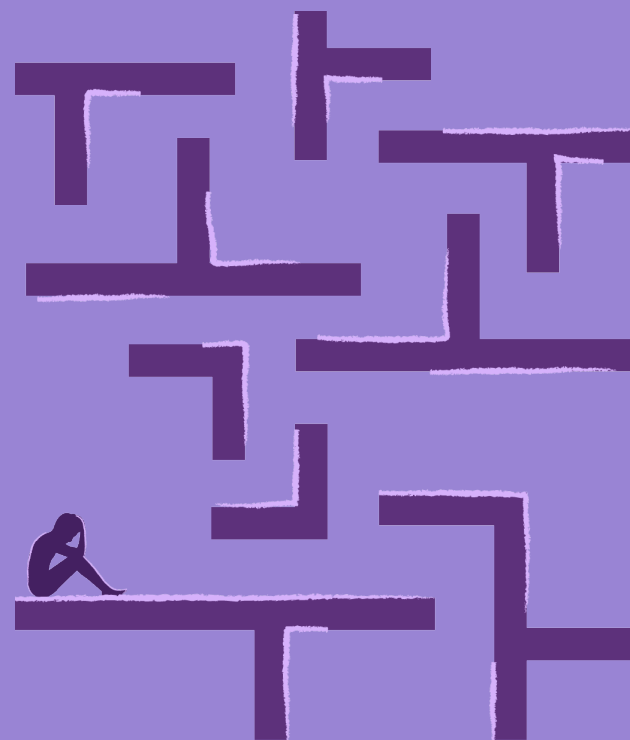
Unlike the characterisation of youth as a phase marked by risk-taking and individualisation, Chakraborty argues that while the girls negotiate risks to pursue their transgressive desires, they “experience individualised lives together. It is through group risk taking that young women are writing individualised identities” (2016, p.176). Female friendships enable the girls to pursue their desires and act as support systems. Even community leaders support consumption opportunities for girls through funding events in the slum. Such pleasure-seeking activities are socially accepted only within the period of youth. However, youth here is defined through cultural meanings attached to a child (unmarried) and adult (married and/or child bearing), rather than through fixed biological categories.



*“experience individualized lives together. It is through group risk taking that young women are writing individualized identities”*

(2016, p.176)

Through an ethnographic study of young men in Meerut, **Jeffry (2010)** shows how a youth culture was built around the idea of “timepass”. Situated within the context of failed neoliberal policies, formally educated young men, who failed to find employment and start a family in order to attain the status of a ‘successful man’, experience youth as a stagnant period. They navigate anxieties around employment through embodied practices of claiming public spaces, hanging out, using humour and aggression or what they called “timepass”. Young men used this gendered youth culture as a means to build a sense of self-worth and cultural distinction.



**Bottrell and Pessoa (2019)** through their case studies of young people in Brazil and Melbourne offer us a glimpse of another distinct youth culture that emerged within the context of structural violence. The authors use the theory of waithood, (i.e. the gap between youth and adulthood caused by the failure of neoliberal policies) to describe the situation of young people in these regions. Waithood is marked by a lack of education, unemployment, and the impacts of socio-political conflicts. In both contexts - marginalised youth in Brazil and Melbourne - it is seen that young people respond to waithood by participating in some form of social change agenda to bring about micro-transformations in their immediate surroundings such as schools and communities. Young people actively critique structural violence through protests against racial discrimination or privatisation of public schools. The authors hence contend that waithood is an active site where youth negotiate the impact of structural violence and express their aspirations through participation in youth movements.

**Waithood** - the gap between youth and adulthood caused by the failure of neoliberal policies

Youth cultures have also emerged through use of digital spaces for political mobilisation and expression. A study of youth political practices in Egypt and Tunisia conducted following the Arab uprising is a case in point (**Garcia and Sanchez-Montijano, 2019**). A youth political culture evolved in these countries as a consequence of massive demobilisation of youth from institutional politics. The youth do not find the conventional actors – state and police – or the conventional means of doing politics effective in addressing or representing their issues. The youth political spaces show a leaning towards inclusive politics rather than traditional politics based on a leader or single ideology.

This also marks an important shift in understanding youth participation in politics in the Global South, a group that is either characterised as passive and indifferent, or overly attached to traditional forms of politics, and in need of development. This shift is best represented by the case of anti-caste activism by Bahujan girls on TikTok.

**Subramanian (2020)** argues that Bahujan girls create a space for themselves within the larger anti-caste movement, from which their contributions have been erased, through creation of audio-visual content on Tik Tok. Using Bollywood songs that portray heterosexual romance as backdrops for videos featuring anti-caste icons such as Dr Ambedkar and Chandrashekhar Azad, the “girls assert intimacy as a possible feature of anti-caste assertions” (**Subramanian, 2020, p.2**).

“

*“girls assert intimacy  
as a possible feature of  
anti-caste assertions”*

(Subramanian, 2020, p.2)

Here we see Bahujan girls using digital media to create content that express political positions, and claim their status within larger movements. Such studies from the Global South situates experience of youthhood within local context, and inculcate socio-political and cultural nuances. This standpoint offers us a refreshing perspective on what it means to be young in the region, and is also a far cry from the assumptions within youth studies that mark the conception of young girls from marginalised communities in the Global South.

## How do we address problems unique to the youth?

---

Until now, we have presented literature that problematises the homogenous understanding of youth. From the works presented above, we understand that youth is more than a numerical age. Being young is about positionality and the experiences that come with that position. These experiences are contingent on one's body, geography, gender, religion, caste, class, race, ethnicity, and other factors that make an individual.

Having said that, we cannot ignore the role played by chronological age in the lives of young people. The challenges arising from one's age and the barriers put against in relation to the perceived ability of that age are very real, and a cause for concern. **Nandigiri (2012)** points out that established structures of power and dominance exclude young people, and stake control over their autonomy and access to resources.

*If challenging the dominance, the insidious theories and perceptions about young people needs to take place, then young people need to have separate and distinct spaces to understand and acknowledge their own needs, as well as strategise and actively question and challenge the dominant discourse. Politicisation and identification of their own ideologies needs space and time too. If building “future” (and present) leadership is imperative, then young peoples’ realities and needs must be looked at within existing structures too- and if the structures do not have safe spaces or cannot be shifted and changed from the inside alone; then young people need to create and have access to alternate spaces*

(Nandigiri, 2012, p. 120 original emphasis).

It is evident that young people have their own set of obstructions that need to be addressed at a societal level – problems plaguing an entire group of people need engagement with structural solutions. We acknowledge that young people need to be addressed as a separate group with their own agency who struggle with problems relating to autonomy, access to resources, and dissatisfaction with traditional structures of power and dominance. Even though numerical age is not the only category to identify youth, it continues to remain a very important and persuasive category if we are to find a recourse to problems plaguing youth.

To create safe spaces and opportunities, it then becomes important to identify youth; and age as of now remains the most convenient and replicable form of classification to design effective intervention programmes. As feminist practitioners, it becomes our responsibility to not view age as the singular criteria that defines youth. Identifying and classifying a group of people as young solely based on age does not comply with the principles of inclusivity and intersectionality. Our understanding of youth needs to be intersectional, drawing on the various problems illustrated in the section above; with goals of evolving inclusivity, incorporating reflexivity, and an active effort to disavow tokenism.

# FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

In this part of the paper, we have presented different definitions of feminist leadership that have come out in the last five decades. As mentioned in the introduction, one of the larger goals of this project is to come up with our own understanding and thereby our own definition of feminist leadership by conversing with young community leaders across India. Considering this larger goal, we have identified and classified definitions of feminist leadership to understand the components embedded within these definitions. Here, we try to distil the ethos behind what most experts count as principles and philosophies of feminist leadership.

## Definitions of feminist leadership

---

As you can see from the table below, we have compiled 22 definitions of feminist leadership, put forward by academics and gender experts from the development sector. We have presented these definitions chronologically to illustrate the growing understanding of not just feminist leadership, but also of feminism, community, and leadership in general. We discuss these definitions in the next section.



S.No	Source Name	Year	Author(s)	Definition
------	-------------	------	-----------	------------

1.	Leadership Growth & Spirit' in Quest.	1976	Flora Crater	[T]he question is not whether we should have leaders, but how we develop all women as leaders ... Leadership as a function of growth is also, then, the process of building confidence, not only so that others will follow, but also so that others will attempt leadership themselves ... it is especially important that leadership be considered a form of stewardship.
----	---------------------------------------	------	--------------	---

2.	Why Women? Is There a Special Quality in Women's Leadership	1995	Devaki Jain	Words like 'sacrifice', 'altruism' do not settle well with many feminists because these qualities have been abused by society... My argument is that we can make ourselves powerful by celebrating our very own strengths and not letting them be judged by the normative values of the male world... Why not suggest that leaders are those who can lead communities to well-being and peaceful living? Leaders are those who make sacrifices, who are altruistic and look after others? ... Unless we do that and raise our own consciousness of the quality and content of feminist leadership, putting ourselves in the place of men in a male-driven and designed political and cultural space is really quite pointless if not invalid.
----	---	------	-------------	---

3.	Leadership: Feminist, Spiritual, Political, in Woman of Power.	1995	Gerda Lerner	To create something that replaces and surpasses you, that has a life of its own because there are many people who will be drawn into it and who will give leadership to it as a group, even. The point is that wherever we are as women, wherever we
----	--	------	--------------	--

are situated in our lives, we can advance a feminist agenda if we stop thinking about how to be leaders and think rather about how to be doers, how to be agents if you move on or go away. To me, that has always been the measure of leadership.

- |    |                           |      |                 |   |
|----|---------------------------|------|-----------------|---|
| 4. | Are leaders made or born? | 2000 | Mary S. Hartman | We are not interested ... in leadership for leadership's sake. We are interested in bringing women's talents to bear, along with men's, in addressing major social, political, and economic concerns. |
|----|---------------------------|------|-----------------|---|

- |    |   |      |                |  |
|----|---|------|----------------|--|
| 5. | Transformational leadership: Advancing the agenda for gender justice. | 2000 | Peggy Antrobus | Transformational leadership is leadership concerned with causing social change; feminist transformational leadership is concerned with achieving gender justice. For any kind of feminist transformational leadership, leaders need to undergo a process of personal transformation, consciousness-raising, and internalization of feminism. |
|----|---|------|----------------|--|

- |    |   |      |  |  |
|----|---|------|--|--|
| 6. | Leading to Choices: A leadership training handbook for women. | 2001 | Mahnaz Afkhami, Ann Eisenberg and Haleh Vaziri | [G]ood leadership – leadership that serves both women and men, poor and rich, and the powerless and powerful– is inclusive, participatory and horizontal ... leadership should be about capitalizing on the ideas and skills of as many individuals as possible ... A good leader is also conscious that the processes – the means by which she carries out her objectives – are just as important as the objectives themselves. |
|----|---|------|--|--|

7. Power for What? Women's Leadership - Why Should You Care? 2002 Charlotte Bunch [S]ociety has tended to mystify leadership skills as somehow belonging only to a few people who are then seen as better than everybody else. But if we view leadership skills as something that many people have to varying degrees – skills that can be built upon, supported, and enhanced because they are needed in the world, not in order to make one person superior – then we might have a better way of dealing with leadership.

8. Feminism as Transformational Policies: Towards Possibilities for Another World. 2002 Peggy Antrobus Patriarchy, reflected through all the structures and institutions of our world, is a system that glorifies domination, control, violence, competitiveness and greed. It dehumanizes men as much as it denies women their humanity. So we need leadership that will explore and expose these links and challenge patriarchy. The only leadership that does this is feminist leadership.

9. Power for What? Women's Leadership - Why Should You Care? 2002 Charlotte Bunch There is a difference between women's leadership and feminist leadership because the latter has a particular political standpoint. Nevertheless, it is important to increase the number of women in leadership, period, regardless of their politics. ... Studies have shown that women tend to lead more inclusively. They have been peace-makers and reached across ethnic lines. Leaders are born in part, but leaders must be fostered; many people get discouraged from trying to be leaders. Women have led a lot, but their leadership is not recognized.

10. Conducted monotonies to coerced harmonies: A feminist (re)conceptualization of leadership addressing race, class, and gender. 2007 Karen L. Suyemoto and Mary B. Ballou Feminist leadership as coaction. "Coaction is leadership formed by values of social justice, egalitarianism, and recognition of the personal-political intersection. Coaction is collaborative, with people involved not as followers but as cooperative leaders themselves. Coactors step forward to meet particular contextual needs at particular moments through connecting their experiences with the needs of the context, in a considered and collaborative process".

11. In Talking Leadership: Conversations with Powerful Women. 2011 Peggy Antrobus [In building Feminist Leadership] I saw the need to work at two levels: first, building women's self-esteem in order to strengthen their leadership, and second, giving women the skills, resources, and access to decision making which would enable them to have more power to make a difference in their own communities. In other words, leadership for change.

12. Jacqueline Pitanguy: In Conversation with Barbara A. Shailor. 2011 Jacqueline Pitanguy If you want to do something big, it's not just you. You have to have people with you who see the common goal or objective. I think the most important thing in taking initiatives is to make people part of it so that all of them will feel that they are responsible... If you work to make something grow and to share the results with others, then the thing in itself has a life... So I understand that leadership is related to the possibility of creating solid initiatives that last. You can go away, and the structures or whatever you have created remain, they are there.

13.	Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud.	2011	ADMIRA, a women's organization in Bosnia and Serbia	Feminist leadership [is] oriented to a different arrangement of the human order: re-distribution of power and re-distribution of responsibilities. Fighting societal inequalities. Changing economic and social structures, beginning with the transformation of psychic structures. Bridging personal freedom with collective freedom. Aiming at cooperation instead of competition ... In feminist leadership equality, mutuality and absence of sex-role behaviour should be visible. Feminist leadership should promote (or even rehabilitate) emotionality and the values of relationships. Feminist leadership renounces external paraphernalia of power and their influence.
-----	---	------	---	---

14.	Management & Leadership: Feminist Leadership.	2011	ADMIRA, a women's organization in Bosnia and Serbia	Some people claim that feminist leadership and good leadership are synonyms. In a sense it is, as long as the beholder also claims that feminism, considered as a set of values, is THE good set of values ... Others think that feminist leadership is a kind of contradiction in terms, feminism being contrary to power and feminist equality contrary to leadership itself .... On behalf of the subject we renounce both positions, and define feminist leadership as leadership congruent with feminist principles.
-----	---	------	---	---

15.	Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud.	2011	Srilatha Batliwala	Informed leadership by the power of the feminist lens, enables the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppressions and inspires to facilitate the development of more inclusive, holistic communities. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice, and equity and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and ability at the forefront. The elements particular to a feminist leadership construction include - a focus on both individual or microlevel and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalized voices to the centre of the conversation, and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda.
-----	---	------	--------------------	--

16.	Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud.	2011	Dawn Ontario	... Feminist ... leadership is ... women and women's organizations sharing power, authority and decision-making in our common pursuit of social, legal, political, economic and cultural equality.
-----	---	------	--------------	--

17.	Women and leadership: Transforming visions and current contexts.	2011	Jean Lau Chin	We examined leadership among more than 100 feminist women leaders. While many preferred a feminist leadership style which was more collaborative and inclusive in nature, many felt this was not sanctioned within the institutions they led. Many feminist women often sought leadership Forum on Public Policy positions to achieve social justice
-----	--	------	---------------	--

goals, striving to be transformational in their vision, empowering in their actions, and upholding ethical principles. These principles often were felt to be at odds with strivings for power and status more commonly associated with men. Many of the women felt constrained to follow institutional rules defined by masculinized norms and needed to compromise feminist principles in their leadership styles to be effective.

18.	A Feminist Case for Leadership. Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present.	2014	Amanda Sinclair	Feminism brings with it an insistence on facing squarely several things. First, it demands we look at the sustained, yet routinised and systemic way in which women are demeaned, discriminated against and subordinated because of their sex. Second, feminism helps us understand why the special category of women with power (leaders) will attract particularly vicious and brutal efforts to drive women into silence or submission. Third, feminism brings us theories and ways of comprehending the 'underbelly' of leadership: the hubris that often takes sexually exploitative forms ... While leadership has become a popular ideal, there have been few explorations of both the problems with and the possibilities of leadership from a feminist point of view. If gender is recognised as an issue, it is through noting women's 'lack of fit' for leadership, or the need to make 'the business case' for appointing women more persuasive. It is understandable that women and especially feminist leaders and scholars have been wary of leadership.
-----	--	------	-----------------	---

Leadership as the lionisation of the achievement of individuals in powerful, privileged positions is the antithesis of what many women have fought for. Indigenous leader Lillian Holt echoes the views of many when she suggests 'leadership is a white male idea'.

19.	Theorizing after the postmodern.	2016	David M Boje	In modern leadership theory, the leader plays [a] star role (takes the lead, becomes the head), all others become bit players, supporting characters, and extras in the play, the theatrics of leadership. Modern leadership is by definition hierarchical, male and phallic spectacle. Feminist leadership is more circular, bottom-up and less male.
-----	----------------------------------	------	--------------	--

20.	Transform-ative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights	2017	Shawna Wakefield	Feminist Leadership (here) means - considering transformative and feminist leadership for women's rights as a relational process of people working together to transform systemic oppression, against women and other marginalized genders, for the realization of women's rights and social justice for all. The fundamental proposition is that Feminist Leadership is not an individual wielding power rather the use of power in solidarity as a collective through building strong relationships between practices of personal and collective transformation; using power for positive change; and creative collaborations that influence social norms, deep cultures, structures, and processes are necessary for transformative leadership to advance women's rights.
-----	--	------	------------------	--



21.	Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud.	2021	CREA	CREA visualizes leadership as a dynamic quality that is present and can be enhanced in most individuals ... [and] that enables people to live their lives as they choose, with dignity and with sensitivity to other people's choices and decisions. [CREA's] leadership programme works on the assumption that leadership is not a fixed state of being but a process through which women assert their rights by continually evaluating relevant experiences, questioning their roles in society, challenging power structures and effectively catalyzing social change.
22.	Feminist ethics and women leaders: From difference to intercorporeality.	2021	Alison Pullen and Sheena J. Vachhani	An alternative way of thinking about leadership and ethics; considering feminine leadership ethics arising from relations between living, breathing bodies, i.e., intercorporeality, which casts leadership as relational as well as embodied. This allows the consideration of women's subjectivity within a 'system of intercorporeality', wherein bodies in interaction with and dependence on other bodies create political and ethical possibilities for leadership.

Table 1: List of definitions of feminist leadership<sup>1</sup>

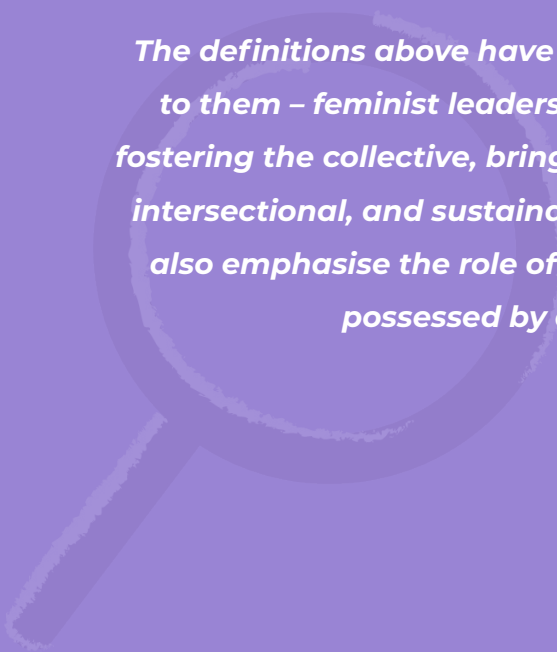
<sup>1</sup>Item numbers marked with an asterix (\*) are sourced from Batliwala, S. (2010) Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud. Bangalore: CREA. Available at: <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ucwc/docs/CREA.pdf>.

## Elements of feminist leadership

---

As mentioned previously, we aim to come up with a definition of feminist leadership based on data to be collected from interlocutors – young community leaders involved in movement building across India. These leaders will be from diverse regions, speaking different languages, with their unique positionality. In other words, we aim to harness the expertise of these young community leaders to build a definition of feminist leadership from the ground-up. The definitions presented above are a starting point for this exercise.

On reading the definitions, we noticed that they share several common underlying themes. We have used these common themes to create a matrix (see Table 2) that reflects, often verbatim, how these authors envision feminist leadership. Please note that the elements within this matrix are fluid and cannot be separated into water-tight compartments. For example, ‘focus on marginalised voices’ fits equally under ‘social justice’ and ‘collective’, as it does under ‘intersectionality’. The matrix below is a representation of the literature on feminist leadership – it presents the ‘is’ and not ‘the ought to be’.



*The definitions above have certain overarching themes common to them – feminist leadership is envisioned as transformative, fostering the collective, bringing matters of social justice to nature, intersectional, and sustainable in nature. Some of the definitions also emphasise the role of feminist principles and the qualities possessed by an ideal feminist leader.*

According to the literature, feminist leadership is transformative **(Crea, 2011; Batliwala, 2011)** in nature as it challenges hierarchies and power structures embedded within organisations **(Suyemoto and Ballou, 2007; Chin, 2011; Sinclair, 2014; Boje, 2016; Wakefield 2017).**

These organisations reflect structures of dominance and oppression within the societies they inhabit. These challenges facilitate to expose the links between patriarchal traditions and leadership principles **(Antrobus, 2002).**

The transformative nature of feminist leadership also connotes its participatory nature, where positive change is both personal and collective in nature **(Afkhami, Eisenberg, and Vaziri, 2001; CREA, 2011, Wakefield, 2017).**

Definitions of feminist leadership emphasise its collective power, where authority is used in solidarity with marginalised voices to pursue creative collaborations **(Barton, 2006; Batliwala, 2011; Wakefield, 2017).**

Feminist leadership also brings to attention both organisational and societal social justice concerns by identifying injustices and oppression **(Antrobus, 2000; Barton, 2006; Chin, 2011, Batliwala, 2011).**

It aims for the redistribution of power and responsibility by continually challenging dominant social, economic, legal, and political norms **(CREA 2011; Chin, 2011; Wakefield, 2017).**

It goes without saying that experts on feminist leadership envision it to be both intersectional and sustainable in nature. A focus on bringing diverse voices and marginalised identities to the forefront allows for the development of inclusive and holistic communities

**(Jain, 1995; Barton, 2006; Antrobus, 2011, Batliwala, 2011).**

The intersectional principles of feminist leadership also allow for its sustainability. Feminist leadership is not associated with one person or a single group – its principles are expected to be embedded within the very ethos of an institution **(CREA, 2021).**

These principles are nurtured in a way that they can remain within the organisation even if an individual cannot **(Ibid.).**

Feminist principles obviously play an important role within the literature on feminist leadership **(Suyemoto and Ballou, 2007).**

Feminist leadership is in harmony with feminist principles and calls for the internalisation of feminism within the philosophy of the institution

**(Antrobus, 2000; CREA, 2011).**

An ideal feminist leader is mindful of these demands, while simultaneously budling capacities of people to eventually encourage leadership **(CREA, 2011).**

Transformative	Collective	Social Justice	Intersectional	Sustainable	Role of feminist principles	Who is a leader?
Challenging hierarchies & power structures	Use of power in solidarity	Micro and macro social justice concerns	Diverse voices of women across identities	Structures remain even if leaders go away	In harmony with feminist principles	Possessed not by a few but many people in varying capacities
Personal and collective transform	Collective power	Identify injustice and oppressions	Focus on marginalised voices	Intercorporality	Breaking masculinised norms	Developing leaders who encourage leadership
Positive change	Creative collaborations	Pursuit of social, legal, political, economic and cultural equality	Development of inclusive & holistic communities	Has a life of its own	Internalisation of feminism	Recognition of women's leadership
Expose patriarchal links to leadership	Bridge personal & collective freedom	Redistribution of power & responsibility		Not a fixed state, but a process	Circular, bottom-up, and less male	Altruism and sacrifice
Participatory		Continued challenging of dominant social norms				Promote emotionality

Table 2: Matrix of elements of feminist leadership as presented

These elements present an interconnected and cohesive picture of feminist leadership as described within literature. However, we ought to be cautious towards the risk of essentialism and limited reflexivity. For instance, the emphasis on 'feminine leadership' and 'women's roles' in some definitions cannot be reduced to indulge in binaries of femininity and masculinity. Feminist leadership cannot be sustainable if it indulges in essentialism while simultaneously embracing intersectionality and collectivism.

Moreover, feminism as an ideology itself functions in opposition to structures of power and authority. The project of feminist leadership is embedded with an unresolved tension – traditional understanding of leadership is vested with power and authority – two concepts in opposition to the tenets of feminist struggle. Experts on feminist leadership would argue that collective leadership rather than individual authority to an extent resolves this tension. Addressing challenges posed by the risk of essentialism and power dynamics can be addressed head-on by incorporating reflexivity within the praxis of feminist leadership.

# DISCUSSION

The existing literature on leadership is primarily dominated by research and theorisation of leadership positions occupied by men (**Chin, 2007**). The focus on male leadership has come to define leadership through a male heteronormative perspective. The systematic elimination of women and disabled individuals is rooted in history; however, with changing norms and laws addressing discrimination, this wrong is somewhat being righted, however, there still is a long way to go.

When non-traditional bodies occupy leadership roles, they are constrained by cultural norms, influencing their decision-making and behaviour. For example, gender expectations force leaders to adapt their leadership style to suit their gender based on their societal norms (**ibid.**) This phenomenon is observed not only in corporate and managerial organisations, but also in participation of young people in civic and political movements.

**Gordon (2008)** points out that young people play an important role as political agents, however, their participation is profoundly affected by their gender.

Similarly, **Love and Duncan (2017)** argue that introduction of gender and race specific curricula exposes young girls of colour to radical feminist leadership.

**Sinha Roy (2020)** stresses that the characteristics of a leader need not be the same for both men and women.

They argue that ignoring contextual realities of femininity and masculinity could potentially reduce both to their social constructions. This becomes more imperative in cultures where gender is deeply embedded in the formation of individual and collective identities, like South Asian societies (**ibid.**).

Leadership theories have adopted two major approaches to define it – transactional and transformational (**Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008**).

The former has come under criticism by feminists as it focuses on individual characteristics of a leader; it fails to consider experiences and narratives of people who are not dominant male leaders (Ibid.).

Transformational approach, on the other hand, focuses on being a leader rather than defining characteristics of a leader. This focus highlights feminist, collaborative, and egalitarian leadership styles, which allows for a discussion of prejudicial behaviour towards young female leaders (**Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008**).



We observe that most discussions on feminist leadership puts the onus of transforming leadership on women.

**Chin (2007)** points out that feminist leaders struggle with conforming to cultural expectations while retaining their credibility. They further ask, can women use feminist principles and still be effective leaders? What happens when men adopt feminist leadership styles? However, women leaders have multiple identities outside their gender – their race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Feminist leadership cannot be homogenous; leadership styles, interpretations, and behaviours are rooted in cultural and contextual realities (**ibid.**)

For instance, women in India are conventionally portrayed as illiterate, dependent, victims of child marriage, and sati (**Sinha Roy, 2020**).

However, in reality, they have made significant contributions in caste- and class-based social movements.



*“Familial ties, caste status, social class, and sheer political acumen to manoeuvre in specific situations have been crucial factors in either catapulting women into leadership positions, or to pave a tenacious ascendancy within a leadership structure”*

**(Sinha Roy, 2020, p. 5)**

Given these multiple subjectivities and pre-existing hurdles to women becoming leaders, **Chin (2007)** says, for women leaders and feminist leaders, an effective leadership style is transformational. In this context, we raise questions about the onus of creating a culture that fosters feminist leadership, especially in the context of young people’s lived experiences.

Throughout this paper, we have presented the dominant discourse on both youth and feminist leadership. In the first section, we demonstrate how youth as a category is not homogenous in nature, it is an amalgamation of various positionalities. A young person's social location vis-à-vis their geography, gender, class, caste, religion, sexual orientation, and disability determine their advantages and disadvantages. Young people's lived experiences and problems are shaped by a combination of their age and their positionality. Their young age presents barriers erected by established structures of power and dominance that influence their access to resources and autonomy. Their social location and the power or lack thereof associated with their identities shape problems that are unique to them, and are not as homogenous as sociocultural norms and state legalese would suggest.

The evolving nature of discourse on youth studies presents both challenges and opportunities with regards to incorporation of feminist leadership. The diversity inherent within the category of youth makes it challenging to subscribe to any one specific form of feminist leadership. However, this challenge is not unique to young people, the intersectional nature of feminism has always contested homogenous representation of concepts such as gender and community. Just like embracing intersectionality has made feminism richer and more accessible, the acknowledgment of diversity among youth has the potential to make feminist leadership among young people more accessible. Incorporating diverse standpoints, after all is a hallmark of intersectional feminism.

Having said that, where and with whom does the responsibility lie to incorporate these diverse standpoints?

**Sinha Roy (2020)** for instance argues that concepts of power and leadership need to be restructured from current expectations of dominance, violence, and control.

For instance, an increased representation of women in governance is not enough without the redesigning of larger governance frameworks (Ibid.). We too argue that the onus of transformation should lie on structural change rather than burdening an individual or a group with expectations of change. It is the responsibility of the powerful to share power instead of duplicating the structures of dominance and control.

Groups that have been traditionally marginalised from power structures, especially young people who are women, disabled, queer, Adivasi, dalit, from low-income families, deserve an equal chance to be represented in leadership roles like their advantaged peers. However, this is possible only if an effort is made to transform cultural norms and structural procedures.

**Hoyt and Kennedy (2008)** for instance illustrate how even small changes increases participation in leadership roles by adolescent girls.

When adolescent girls, who participated in a leadership building programme, were exposed to a conducive environment and examples of women leaders, Hoyt and Kennedy recorded a shift in the girls' understanding of leadership. Initially the girls defined a leader using traditionally associated words (brave, good communicator, confident, etc.). By the end of the programme, they came to see leadership as collaborative work that required cooperation and motivation. They emphasised on self-identity, emotionality, and safe spaces rather than conventional demands of leadership. They also identified themselves as leaders, given their expanded definition of leadership that could fit many of the characteristics they possessed and exhibited.

This illustrates the role of structural and normative changes in redefining the notion of leadership. A mere seat at the table is insufficient without redistribution of resources, and internalised desire for change. Feminist leadership cannot sustain unless feminist principles are absorbed into institutional norms. The task at hand is as difficult as much as it is necessary.

In the current political climate where we increasingly see young people take up the role of changemakers, it is imperative to develop a contextualised understanding of what it means to be young, in order to map the aspirations and motivations that drive them. However, we see that age alone cannot be a criteria to mark youthhood. Literature alludes to the historical dominance of masculine leadership norms, ageism, lack of space for non-men, tokenism, and lack of resources and support. Feminist leadership, by definition stands in opposition to these practises, and needs to be adopted at multiple levels. For changes at a structural level, we need to look beyond individualised norms of leadership, and focus on building collective,

sustainable ways of being a leader who is rooted in the principles of social justice and intersectionality.

Working with young people on feminist leadership is an exciting prospect as it provides a great opportunity to transform emerging notions of leadership to make it more inclusive, collective, and reflexive in nature. Through this literature review we have offered a gist of existing discourse on youthhood and feminist leadership. The literature also speaks of the centrality of identities and socio-political contexts in shaping youthhood, while acknowledging age-specific challenges and needs that ought to be addressed. Rather than a rigid definition, we have presented a range of tenets pertaining to feminist leadership. However, there is little evidence on how young people from the country are practising leadership or the principles that anchor their leadership style.

As part of the larger project, we hence intend to explore the youth ecosystem and young leaders' relationship with feminism and feminist leadership through a needs assessment and a review of curriculums. This will allow us to understand what goes into the making of young leaders, their experiences of being a leader, evolution of their perception of leadership and resources or support mechanisms that can enable them to adapt transformational feminist leadership practises to take their work forward. While literature provides the key to understand the existing debates and critiques, the needs assesment would engage with the complex ways in which identities and social structures intersect to shape individual and collective politics, and the challenges one face in translating thought into action and being a feminist leader.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afkhami, M., Eisenberg, A. and Vaziri, H. (2001) *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*. Bethesda USA: Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP).

---

Antrobus, P. (2000) 'Transformational Leadership: Advancing the Agenda for Gender Justice', *Gender and Development*, 8(3), pp. 50–56.

---

Antrobus, P. (2016) 'Feminism as Transformational Politics: Towards Possibilities for Another World', in Harcourt, W. (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development: Critical Engagements in Feminist Theory and Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 583–592.

---

ASEAN Secretariat (2017) *First ASEAN Youth Development Index*. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/First-ASEAN-Youth-Development-Index.pdf>

---

Asian Development Bank (2021) *Covid-19 and Labor Markets in Southeast Asia: Impact on Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam*. Available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/758611/covid-19-labor-markets-southeast-asia.pdf>

---

Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka: Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2017) *National Youth Policy 2017*. Available at: [https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/policies/21e565b2\\_252f\\_4f80\\_bfce\\_31a1cb33163d/Draft%20English%20Version%20of%20National%20Youth%20Policy%202017%20\(1\).pdf](https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/policies/21e565b2_252f_4f80_bfce_31a1cb33163d/Draft%20English%20Version%20of%20National%20Youth%20Policy%202017%20(1).pdf).

---

Baril, A. (2016) “‘Doctor, am I an Anglophone trapped in a Francophone body?’: An Intersectional Analysis of “Trans-crip-t Time” in Ableist, Cisnormative, Anglonormative Societies.’, *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 10(2), pp. 155–172.

---

Baron, S., Riddell, S. and Wilson, A. (1999) ‘The Secret of Eternal Youth: Identity, risk and learning difficulties’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(4), pp. 483–499.

---

Barton, T. (2006) ‘Feminist Leadership: Building Nurturing Academic Communities’, *Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal*.

---

Batliwala, S. (2010) *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*. Bangalore: CREA.

---

Bhatia, S. (2017) *Decolonizing psychology: Globalization, social justice, and Indian youth identities*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

---

Boje, D. M. (2016) ‘Theorizing after the postmodern’ in Boje, D.M *Challenges and Controversies in Management Research*. Taylor & Francis Group.

---

Bottrell, D. and Pessoa, A.S.G. (2019) “Waiting, belonging and social change: Marginal perspectives from Sao Paulo and Melbourne,” in Hernan Cuervo, A.M. (ed.) *Youth, Inequality and Social Change in the Global South*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp. 129–145.

---

Boyden, J. and Morrow, V. (2018) *Responding to children’s work: Evidence from the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam*. Oxford: Young Lives.

---

BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University; Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC (2018) *Youth of Bangladesh: Agents of Change? Youth Survey 2018*. Available at: [https://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/YOUTH-SURVEY-2018\\_full.pdf](https://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/YOUTH-SURVEY-2018_full.pdf)

---

Buckingham, D. and Kehily, M.J. (2014) “Introduction: Rethinking youth cultures in the age of global media,” in David Buckingham, Sara Bragg, Mary Jane Kelly (ed.) *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 1–18.

---

Central Statistics Office Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India (Social Statistics Division) (2017) Youth in India. Available at: [https://www.thehinducentre.com/multimedia/archive/03188/Youth\\_in\\_India-201\\_3188240a.pdf](https://www.thehinducentre.com/multimedia/archive/03188/Youth_in_India-201_3188240a.pdf)

---

Chakraborty, K. (2018) Young Muslim women in India: Bollywood, identity and changing youth culture. London, England: Routledge.

---

Chin, J.L. (2007) 'Overview: Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Diverse Voices', in Chin, J.L. et al. (eds) Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Diverse Voices. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 1-118.

---

Chin, J.L. (2011) 'Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Current Contexts', Forum on Public Policy Online.

---

Cooper, A., Swartz, S. and Mahali, A. (2019) "Disentangled, decentred and democratised: Youth Studies for the global South," Journal of youth studies, 22(1), pp. 29-45.

---

Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2021) Australia's Youth Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.dese.gov.au/australias-youth-policy-framework/resources/australias-youth-policy-framework>

---

Department of Education, United Kingdom. (2011) Positive for Youth: A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-for-youth-a-new-approach-to-cross-government-policy-for-young-people-aged-13-to-19/positive-for-youth-the-statement>

---

Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan (2011) National Youth Policy. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Bhutan\\_2011\\_National\\_Youth\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Bhutan_2011_National_Youth_Policy.pdf).

---

Emirates Youth Council (2021) UAE National Youth Agenda. Available at: <https://councils.youth.gov.ae/en/download-file/183>.

---

Eriksen, E. (1968) Youth, Identity, and Crisis. New York: Norton and Company.

---

Freeman, E. (2010) *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

---

Garcia, J.S. and Sánchez-Montijano, E. (2019) “Beyond the Nizam: Youth political practices in Egypt and Tunisia after the 2011 uprisings,” in Hernan Cuervo, A.M. (ed.) *Youth, Inequality and Social Change in the Global South*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp. 207–222.

---

Generation Equality Forum. What is the Generation Equality Forum? Available at: <https://forum.generationequality.org/forum>

---

Gordon, H.R. (2008) ‘Gendered Paths to Teenage Political Participation: Parental Power, Civic Mobility, and Youth Activism’, *Gender & Society*, 22(1), pp. 31–55.

---

Halberstam, J. (2005) ‘What’s that smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives’, in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York and London: New York University Press.

---

Headquarters for Youth Development (2008) *National Youth Development Policy of Japan*. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Japan\\_2008\\_National\\_Youth\\_Development\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Japan_2008_National_Youth_Development_Policy.pdf)

---

Hollingworth, S. (2015) “Performances of social class, race and gender through youth subculture: putting structure back in to youth subcultural studies,” *Journal of youth studies*, 18(10), pp. 1237–1256.

---

Hoyt, M.A. and Kennedy, C.L. (2008) ‘Leadership and Adolescent Girls: A Qualitative Study of Leadership Development’, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(3–4), pp. 203–219.

---

Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (2013) *Pathways for Youth: Draft Strategic Plan for Federal Collaboration*. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/United\\_States\\_2013\\_Pathways\\_for\\_Youth.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/United_States_2013_Pathways_for_Youth.pdf).

---

International Centre for Research on Women (2001) *The Critical Role of Youth in Global Development*. Available at: <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Critical-Role-of-Youth-in-Global-Development-Issue-Brief.pdf>.

---



International Labour Organization (2020) Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_737648/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_737648/lang--en/index.htm).

Jain, D. (1995) 'Why Women? Is There a Special Quality in Women's Leadership?'. Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University.

Jeffrey, C. (2010) "Timepass: Youth, class, and time among unemployed young men in India: Timepass," *American ethnologist*, 37(3), pp. 465–481.

Kafer, A. (2013) 'Time for Disability Studies and a Future for Crips', in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Kathmandu: Nepal Government Ministry of Youth and Sports (2015) Youth vision-2025 and ten-year strategic plan. Available at: [https://moys.gov.np/sites/default/files/nitiheru/Youth%20Vision-2025\\_2.pdf](https://moys.gov.np/sites/default/files/nitiheru/Youth%20Vision-2025_2.pdf).

Kennedy, M. (2020) "If the rise of the TikTok dance and e-girl aesthetic has taught us anything, it's teenage girls that rule the internet right now': TikTok celebrity, girls and the Coronavirus crisis," *European journal of cultural studies*, 23(6), pp. 1069–1076.

Koffman, O. and Gill, R. (2014) "'I Matter and so Does She': Girl Power, (Post) feminism and the Girl Effect," in David Buckingham, Sara Bragg, Mary Jane Kehily (ed.) *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 242–257.

Kohlberg, L. (1969) *Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization*. United States.

Kumar, A. (2013) "Serv(ic)Ing the country?: Critical reflections on youth development and citizenship education from India," in *Youth: Responding to Lives*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers, pp. 27–43.

Kumar, S. (2019) *Youth in India: Aspirations, attitudes, anxieties*. London, England: Routledge.

Ljuslinder, K., Ellis, K. and Vikström, L. (2020) 'Crippling Time – Understanding the Life Course through the Lens of Ableism', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 22(1), pp. 35–38. doi:10.16993/sjdr.710.

---

Love, B. and Duncan, K.E. (2017) 'Put Some Respect On Our Name: Why Every Black & Brown Girl Needs to Learn About Radical Feminist Leadership', *Occasional Paper Series*, 2017(38), pp. 1–7.

---

Lukose, R.A. (2014) "Youth and globalization: Changing trajectories of culture and politics," in David Buckingham, Sara Bragg, Mary Jane Kehily (ed.) *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 37–52.

---

Majid, N. (2021) Young persons not in employment and education in India: 2000-2019. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_789243/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_789243/lang--en/index.htm).

---

Mallett, R. and Runswick-Cole, K. (2012) 'Commodifying Autism: The Cultural Contexts of "Disability" in the Academy', in, pp. 33–51.

---

McRobbie, A. (1991) 'Settling Accounts with Subculture: A Feminist Critique', in *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*. London: Macmillan Education, pp. 16–34. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-21168-5\_2.

---

McRuer, R. (2002) 'Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence', in Snyder, S., Brueggemann, B.J., and Garland-Thomson, Rr. (eds) *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

---

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India (2014) National Youth Policy 2014. Available at: <https://yas.nic.in/sites/default/files/National-Youth-Policy-Document.pdf>.

---

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development (2014) National Youth Policy Sri Lanka. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Sri\\_Lanka\\_2014\\_National\\_Youth\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Sri_Lanka_2014_National_Youth_Policy.pdf).

---

Nakassis, C.V. (2013) "Youth masculinity, 'style' and the peer group in Tamil Nadu, India," *Contributions to Indian sociology*, 47(2), pp. 245–269.

---

Nandigiri, R. (2012) 'Standpoint: The politics of being "young": is a "youth" category really necessary for "development"?', *Feminist Africa*, 17, pp. 114–121.

---

National Youth Council Singapore (2021) Youth Statistics Brief 2020. Available at: <https://www.nyc.gov.sg/en/initiatives/resources/youth-statistics-in-brief/>.

---

Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Information and Culture, Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. (2013) Afghanistan National Youth Policy. Available at:

---

Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (2012) National Commission on the Promotion of Child and Youth Development. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Thailand\\_2012\\_Youth\\_Development\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Thailand_2012_Youth_Development_Plan.pdf).

---

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021) The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan: Building Blocks for Future Action. Available at: : <https://www.oecd.org/employment/youth/The-Updated-OECD-Youth-Action-Plan.pdf>.

---

Pathak-Shelat, M. and DeShano, C. (2014) "Digital youth cultures in small town and rural Gujarat, India," *New media & society*, 16(6), pp. 983–1001.

---

Piaget, J. and Inhelder, B. (1958) *The Growth of Logical Thinking From Childhood To Adolescence: An Essay On The Construction Of Formal Operational Structures*.

---

Presidency of the Republic, Civil Cabinet, Subchefia for Legal Affairs (2012) Rights and Public Policy of Youth. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/2013\\_Brazil\\_Youth\\_Statute\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/2013_Brazil_Youth_Statute_Eng.pdf).

---

Pullen, A. and Vachhani, S.J. (2021) 'Feminist Ethics and Women Leaders: From Difference to Intercorporeality', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 173(2), pp. 233–243.

---

Romani, S. (2016) "Being NGO girls: gender, subjectivities and everyday life in Kolkata," *Gender, place and culture: a journal of feminist geography*, 23(3), pp. 365–380.

---

Sinclair, A. (2014) 'A feminist case for leadership', in Damousi, J., Rubenstein, K., and Tomsic, M. (eds) *Diversity in Leadership: Australian women, past and present*.

---

Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 17–38.

---

Singh, R. and Mukherjee, P. (2019) “Intergenerational transmission of poverty: Exploring subjective well-being, risks, shocks, and resilience amongst youth in India,” in Hernan Cuervo, A.M. (ed.) *Youth, Inequality and Social Change in the Global South*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp. 51–66.

---

Sinha Roy, M. (2020) ‘Women and Political Leadership in South Asia’. *Women, Policy and Political Leadership*. Available at: [https://www.kas.de/documents/288143/11335016/KAS\\_women\\_2020\\_MallarikaSinhaRoy.pdf/9208feaf-0537-fb84-2db6-4472a9a1fe32?t=1610705826785](https://www.kas.de/documents/288143/11335016/KAS_women_2020_MallarikaSinhaRoy.pdf/9208feaf-0537-fb84-2db6-4472a9a1fe32?t=1610705826785).

---

Slater, J., Ágústs dóttir, E. and Haraldsdóttir, F. (2018) “Becoming intelligible woman: Gender, disability and resistance at the border zone of youth,” *Feminism & psychology*, 28(3), pp. 409–426.

---

Slater, J. (2012) ‘Youth for Sale: Using Critical Disability Perspectives to Examine the Embodiment of “Youth”’, *Societies*, 2(3), pp. 195–209.

---

Slater, J. (2013) ‘Playing grown-up: using critical disability perspectives to rethink youth.’, in Azzopardi, A. (ed.) *In Youth: Responding to Lives—An International Handbook*. Boston: Sense Publishers, pp. 75–91.

---

Subramanian, S. (2021) “Bahujan girls’ anti-caste activism on TikTok,” *Feminist media studies*, 21(1), pp. 154–156.

---

Suyemoto, K.L. and Ballou, M.B. (2007) ‘Conducted monotonies to coated harmonies: A feminist (re)conceptualization of leadership addressing race, class, and gender.’, in *Women and leadership: Transforming visions and diverse voices*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 35–54.

---

Tambe, A. (2020) “The moral hierarchies of age standards: The UN debates a common minimum marriage age, 1951–1962,” *The American historical review*, 125(2), pp. 451–459.

---

The State Council; The People’s Republic of China (2017) China unveils 10-year plan for youth development. Available at: [http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latest\\_releases/2017/04/14/content\\_281475626290850.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2017/04/14/content_281475626290850.htm).

UNDP (2018) UNDP Nepal Youth Strategy 2018-2022. Available at: [https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/2018\\_undpnepal/UNDP\\_NP-Youth-Strategy.pdf](https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/2018_undpnepal/UNDP_NP-Youth-Strategy.pdf).

---

UNESCO (2021) By youth, with youth, for youth. Available at: : <https://en.unesco.org/youth>.

---

United Nations (2018) Youth. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>.

---

United Nations (2019) Population Data, World Population Prospects. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

---

Wakefield, S. (2017) Transformative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights. OXFAM America.

---

Women, Youth & Persons with Disabilities Department, Republic of South Africa (2020) National Youth Policy 2020-2030. Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/202103/nationalyouthpolicy.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202103/nationalyouthpolicy.pdf).

---

Xi, J. and Xia, Y. (2006) Introduction to Chinese Youth (with a Commentary). Faculty Publications from Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1001&context=cyfsfacpub>.

---

Youth Affairs, Sports, Tourism and Archaeology Department, Government of Punjab. (2012) Punjab Youth Policy. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/Pakistan\\_Punjab\\_2012\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_eng.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/Pakistan_Punjab_2012_Youth_Policy_eng.pdf).

---

Youth Partnership, Council of Europe, European Commission (2019) Country Sheet on Youth Policy Russia. Available at: [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Russia\\_2009\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Briefing.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Russia_2009_Youth_Policy_Briefing.pdf).

---

## Appendix A

S.No	Source name	Year	Author(s)	Country	Youth age criteria	Name of organisation	Link to source
1	Youth In India	2017	Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India (Social Statistics Division).	India	15-34	Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India (Social Statistics Division).	<a href="#">Youth in India</a>
2	National Youth Policy	2014	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.	India	15-29	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.	<a href="#">NYP</a>
3	Youth Of Bangladesh (Youth Survey)	2018	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD).	Bangladesh	15-35	BRAC University.	<a href="#">YOB</a>
4	National Youth Policy	2017	Ministry of Youth and Sports.	Bangladesh	18-35	Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Secretariat.	<a href="#">NYP_Bangladesh</a>
5	National Statistics	2020	National Youth Council.	Singapore	15-34	National Youth Council.	<a href="#">NYC_Singapore</a>
6	UNDP Nepal Youth Strategy, 2018-2020	2018	UNDP	Nepal	16-40	UNDP	<a href="#">UNDP_Nepal</a>

7	Youth Vision 2025		Ministry of Youth and Sports.	Nepal	16-40	Nepal Government.	<a href="#">YV_Nepal</a>
8	Introduction To Chinese Youth	2006	Jieying Xi and Yan Xia.	China	15-29	Children, Youth, Families & Schools, Nebraska Center for Research, University of Nebraska.	<a href="#">ICY_China</a>
9	The Middle-and Long-term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)	2017	CPC Central Committee and the State Council.	China	14-35	The People's Republic of China.	<a href="#">YDP_China</a>
10	The National Child and Youth Development Plan (2012 - 2016)	2012	Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups.	Thailand	18-25	National Commission on the Promotion of Child and Youth Development.	<a href="#">NCYD_Thailand</a>
11	Rights And Public Policy of Youth	2013	Presidency of the Republic.	Brazil	15-29	Civil Cabinet, Subchefia for Legal Affairs.	<a href="#">RPPY_Brazil</a>
12	National Youth Development Policy	2008	Headquarters for Youth Development.	Japan	0 to about under 30 years		<a href="#">NYD_Japan</a>
13	Country Sheet on Youth Policy	2009	Youth Partnership.	Russia	10-29	Council of Europe, European Commission.	<a href="#">CSYP_Russia</a>
14	National Youth Policy	2014	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Skills Development	Sri Lanka	15-29	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development	<a href="#">NYP_SriLanka</a>

15	Youth Act (72/2006)	2006	Finland Youth Decree	Finland	Under 29		<a href="#">YA_Finland</a>
16	Youth Impact in Shaping Policy & Social Cohesion in Myanmar	2018	Search For Common Ground (Organisation).	Myanmar	16-35	Myanmar National Youth Policy.	<a href="#">YISP_Myanmar</a>
17	Punjab Youth Policy	2012	Youth Affairs, Sports, Tourism and Archaeology Department.	Pakistan	15-29	Government of Pakistan.	<a href="#">PYP_Pakistan</a>
18	National Youth Policy	2011	Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education.	Bhutan	13-24	Royal Government of Bhutan.	<a href="#">NYP_Bhutan</a>
19	Australia's Youth	2021	Australian Institute of Health & Welfare.	Australia	12-24	Australian Government.	<a href="#">AY_Australia</a>
20	Australia's Youth Policy Framework	2021	Department of Education, Skills and Employment.	Australia	15-24	Australian Government.	
21	National Youth Policy 2020-2030	2020	Women, Youth & Persons with Disabilities.	South Africa	14-35	Republic of South Africa.	<a href="#">NYP_South-Africa</a>



22	Positive For Youth: A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19	2011	Department of Education.	United Kingdom	13-19	Government of The United Kingdom.	<a href="#">PFY_UK</a>
23	Pathways For Youth: Draft Strategic Plan for Federal Collaboration	2013	Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs.	United States of America	10-24		<a href="#">PFY_USA</a>
24	UAE National Youth Agenda		Emirates Youth Council	United Arab Emirates	15-30	UAE Government.	<a href="#">NYA_UAE</a>
25	Afghanistan National Youth Policy	2013	Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs.	Afghanistan	18-30	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Information and Culture.	<a href="#">NYP_Afghanistan</a>
26	Maldives National Youth Policy	2003 (edited in 2012)	Republic of Maldives	Maldives	15-24		<a href="#">NYP_Maldives</a>
27	The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan	2021	Meeting of OECD Council of Ministers (31 May & 1 June 2021).		15-29	OECD	<a href="#">YAP</a>
28	World Health Organisation: Adolescent Health		World Health Organisation.		15-24	WHO	<a href="#">WHO</a>

29	First ASEAN Youth Development Index	2017	Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).		15-35	ASEAN	
30	Covid-19 And Labor Markets In South-east Asia: Impacts On Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, And Viet Nam.	2021	Asian Development Bank.		15-24	ADB	<a href="#">ADB</a>
31	Global Employment Trends for Youth	2020	Employment Policy Department, International Labour Organisation		15-24	ILO, Geneva	<a href="#">GETY</a>
32	The Critical Role of Youth in Global Development	2001	ICRW's activities on youth and development		15-25	ICRW	<a href="#">YGD</a>
33	By Youth, with Youth, for Youth	2015	UNESCO Youth Program		15-24	UNESCO	<a href="#">UNESCO</a>



[www.genderatworkindia.org](http://www.genderatworkindia.org)

---

Instagram : @genderatworkindia

Twitter : @GenderatWorkInd

LinkedIn : Gender at Work India