

# 1 Youth Culture and Development in Mauritius

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 Development of any society depends largely on young people and investment in today's youth  
8 is actually an investment in the future of the nation. Properly cultured youth become  
9 responsible citizens, good parents, effective decision-makers, efficient workforce and leaders of  
10 tomorrow. This study explores the relationship between youth culture and development. The  
11 main objectives of this work are to: take stock of the youth culture in society and examine the  
12 relationship between youth culture and development. Analysis, reflection and discussions are  
13 based on both secondary data and observation of youth culture in society. The principal  
14 finding shows that youth culture has much positive impact on societies that inculcate good  
15 cultural values in youth and create opportunities for them to build character, acquire  
16 knowledge and skills, and develop talent and abilities. One main recommendation based on  
17 the study would be state investment in young people should be encouraged and given high  
18 priority on governmental agenda by societies willing to ensure sustainable socio-economic  
19 development and political stability.

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21 **Index terms**— Development, Youth, Youth Culture, Values and Society

## 22 **1 INTRODUCTION**

23 Culture is a way of life. Different societies have different ways of life and even in the same society there are  
24 variations in the behaviour, thinking, attitude and action of groups based on class, caste, ethnicity and age,  
25 amongst other factors. Young people, normally including adolescents and teenagers, have their own culture  
26 which most of the time differs from the mainstream societal culture. Their way of life has much influence on  
27 society and its development. Therefore, no responsible state in this global world can ignore investment in young  
28 people if it really wants to progress and modernize. Given that the future of a nation depends on the younger  
29 generation, the state should have proper policies, action plans and guidance for the youth enabling them to get  
30 the necessary space, opportunity, education, training and motivation to develop their potential and creativity  
31 thereby making positive contribution in society.

32 This study aims at taking stock of the youth culture in society and examining the relationship between youth  
33 culture and development. For the purpose of this study, use of secondary data has been made. There has  
34 been a review of literature on youth culture and development. Available data has been Author ?? : University  
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36 critically analyzed, discussed and reflected upon.

37 The first part of the paper deals with the literature review where youth culture and development have been  
38 conceptualized and also an overview of the link between them in few societies has been provided. In the second  
39 part there is an analysis, discussion and reflection on available secondary data. A conclusion based on the study  
40 followed by some recommendations has been stated in the last section.

### 41 2 II.

### 42 3 NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY IN MAURITIUS

43 Since its independence in 1968, successive Governments in Mauritius have always laid emphasis on the youngsters  
44 of the country. However, due to the absence of a proper policy for the youth, the latter could not develop their  
45 potential to the maximum. At the beginning of the new millennium, this big weakness was partially brought  
46 on the agenda by the preparation of a "National Youth Policy" (NYP) launched by the Prime Minister, Dr  
47 Navinchandra Ramgoolam in 2000. In his message, for the revised 2009 NYP, Dr N. Ramgoolam wrote: "The  
48 National Youth Policy is an important framework for tapping the energy and the creative drive of the youth for  
49 the development of our country???.Our youth are our future and they are active contributors of the making of  
50 a dynamic and compassionate society."

51 The message of the head of the government reflects the consideration that the state should give to help young  
52 people develop their potentials for the sake of socio-economic development of the country. The number of youth  
53 was estimated at about 311789 in 2008 representing roughly 25% of the whole population. Therefore, government  
54 stands to gain by catering properly for the need of the youth who will be future decision makers and voters as  
55 well. The NPY ensures that equal treatment and facilities are offered to all young people and no discrimination  
56 be made on the basis of gender, ethnicity, caste or class. Such a measure is highly beneficial for the population  
57 where the youth learn values like meritocracy, democracy, unity, cooperation and tolerance which are essential  
58 preconditions for living in multicultural Mauritius.

59 A deeper analysis of the 2009 NPY reveals its main aim is to empower youth through proper holistic and  
60 inclusive education, training, counselling, participation in decision making, sports activities and access to the  
61 right Information and Communication Technology. It is believed that in this way youngsters will at the end  
62 become more capable, skilled, knowledgeable and above all responsible contributors to modernize and sustain  
63 development of the economy. Consequently, the benefits reaped by the society can help to strengthen the standard  
64 of living of the whole population.

### 65 4 III. CONCEPTUALISING 'YOUTH'

66 There is no universal definition of the term 'youth'. Different societies attach different meanings to who they  
67 consider young people, teenagers and adolescents. For the United Nations, youth refers to those persons who are  
68 between 15 and 24 years of age. In Mauritius, the National Youth Policy (2000) defines youth as those who fall  
69 between the age of 14 to 29. Going by the definition of the United Nations, the world has a youth population  
70 of about 18%. United Nations has adopted numerous declarations, conventions and covenants concerning youth.  
71 One of them is the World programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond 1995 which identified  
72 ten important youthrelated issues that should be of highest priority to governments willing to cater for the needs  
73 and aspirations of youngsters. Amongst others, much emphasis was aid on the full and effective participation of  
74 youth in the development of society and in decision making.

75 IV.

### 76 5 YOUTH CULTURE AND YOUTH SUBCULTURE

77 According to ??acionis (2000), culture means beliefs, values, behaviour, and material objects that constitute a  
78 people's way of life. Christopher Jencks (1993) describes culture as all which is symbolic: the learned aspects  
79 of human society. For Haralambos and Holborn (2000), culture has two main elements, first it learned and  
80 second it is shared. Culture is in fact a shared way of life of people. In societies different groups have different  
81 lifestyles, values, beliefs, dress codes and symbols. The mainstream culture is the one that is usually the norm of  
82 any society. However, there are subculture and counter culture groups whose values and beliefs and behaviour  
83 differ from the main stream culture. For the different cultural groups to live peacefully, the state has develop  
84 common goals and vision it has of the society. The latter has to manage the diverse groups properly.In all  
85 societies, whether developed or developing, young people have a different way of living. They have their own  
86 norms, mores, folkways, values, symbols and lifestyles. Youth culture simply refers to the ways young people  
87 differentiate themselves from the culture of adults and older population of the society.

88 Most of the adolescents and teenagers are trendy. They like to keep up to date with new music, dress codes,  
89 mobiles, perfumes, hair styles and activities. They are the main consumers of branded products. Peer pressure  
90 and mass media force them to be trendy. However, in any society youth culture differs among young population  
91 based on mainly class and sometimes on caste. The working class youth culture often has different values from  
92 those of the middle and upper classes. There are also youth subcultures that emerge where young people have  
93 distinct life styles than those of the mainstream youth culture. Sometimes, youth counter culture arises in societies  
94 where the values, beliefs and behaviour of the young people are totally different from those of the mainstream  
95 groups.

96 Adolescents and teenagers often get an identity that is different from the one they get at home or at work.  
97 Juveniles who are in search of identity often find solace the peer where they are valued.

98 V.

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## 99 **6 THEORIES ON YOUTH CULTURE AND SUBCULTURE**

100 For Functionalists when youth move from the family cocoon to the larger society they are faced with an anomie  
101 situation. Their values at home differ from those of peers and workplace colleagues. Sometimes youngsters forget  
102 about their own traditions and customs and adopt new ways of living. The family has a primordial role to play in  
103 the socialization process of adolescents and youngsters enabling them to smoothly adapt to changes and choose  
104 behaviour that are in line with societal mainstream culture.

105 From a Marxist perspective, Clarke et al. (1976) argue that although material circumstances limits the forms  
106 of culture, yet the possibility for human creativity in producing culture exist in societies. For Clarke et al.  
107 youth culture represents the creative attempts of youngsters to try to maintain or win autonomy and space  
108 from the mainstream dominant capitalist culture. Tony Jefferson(1976) argues that the youth culture of Teddy  
109 boys represented an attempt to rebuild the sense of loyalty and working class community which were affected by  
110 urbanization and development. The youth culture with its distinctive style of dress and music act as an attempt  
111 to find solution to problems like unemployment, poverty and alienation. Although the problems are not solved  
112 yet they feel doing something worthwhile for protecting their community, gain status and offer solace to others  
113 who are in vulnerable situation.

## 114 **7 VI.**

## 115 **8 DEVELOPMENT**

116 For the sake of this paper the term development comprises economic and social development. Economic  
117 development is defined as a sustainable increase in the living standards that encompass material consumption,  
118 education, health, and environmental protection (World Development Report, 1991). On the other hand, social  
119 development refers to socioeconomic justice, that is, fairness in income and occupational distribution, preservation  
120 and respect for human rights, equal access to education, mutual understanding among members of different groups  
121 and peace and stability in society. The overall goal of development is to increase the economic, political and civil  
122 rights of all people in the country. For development to take place, a society needs the input of each and everyone.  
123 Youngsters, adults and the elderly have to work hand in hand to make development and progress happen. The  
124 different institutions of the state should cooperate for the benefit of the population. The public and private  
125 sectors together with the civil society have an immense responsibility towards the state. The latter can only  
126 prosper when different stakeholders join hands and work responsibly. Good governance and transparency at all  
127 levels should prevail.

## 128 **9 VII.**

## 129 **10 YOUTH CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

130 Since its inception, UNESCO has stressed upon culture which impacts on development. Even the 1998  
131 Intergovernmental Conference on cultural policy for development, held in Stockholm, rightly concluded that  
132 'any policy for development must be profoundly sensitive to culture itself'. This shows that youth culture should  
133 be given its due and recognition by societies as it has its contribution in development process. Young people are  
134 an important asset that should be exploited judiciously for development and its sustainability given the fragility  
135 and uncertainty of economic turbulence in this global world. No responsible society can ignore the potential of  
136 its younger population. Cultural values, beliefs and behaviour of youth have an impact on development.

137 Societies all over the world have always used adolescents and teenagers to gain statuses locally, regionally and  
138 internationally in many areas, more particularly in the domain of sports. Young people sacrifice their precious  
139 moments of youth to train for hours in order to be able to participate in sports and athletic activities with a  
140 view to bring back honour, medals and statuses for their countries. Once they win international games or break  
141 world records in athletics, leaders of their society start to claim paternity of the success of the participants. The  
142 latter are often welcomed as heroes. Mass media are used to show celebrations and political leaders are found  
143 surrounding them, but more for their own marketing. After the event participants are often forgotten and rarely  
144 are they given any kind of support, financial or logistic, from state authorities. Most societal institutions use  
145 youngsters for their vested interest.

146 Regarding education, adolescents and youngsters are made to compete to achieve the best meritocracy to  
147 youth. Many time young people are frustrated when they do not get jobs that they deserve and most of the time  
148 state authorities do not give them any feedback on why they have not been recruited. The lack of transparency in  
149 job allocation often discourages youngsters to perform well. Underemployment impacts negatively on efficiency  
150 and productivity which indirectly affects development. Youngsters feel alienated and they sometimes turn towards  
151 groups which encourage and validate deviant behaviour to blow out frustrations.

## 152 **11 VIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND A PROPOSED 153 YOUTH CULTURE DEVELOPMENT MODEL**

154 Youth culture is a marker of identity for adolescents and teenagers all over the world. Although values, belief  
155 systems, norms and mores of youngsters differ from those of the mainstream culture, positive contribution made

## 11 VIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND A PROPOSED YOUTH CULTURE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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156 by their way of living cannot be underestimated in society. The state has to review its mode of operation and  
157 make provision to take on board the attitudes, thoughts, behaviour and action of youngsters in the development  
158 process. The youth culture developmental model is an 'all inclusive' alternative model of development for societies  
159 to sustain and consolidate development in this fragile and uncertain global world. With a small population,  
160 Mauritius stands to gain by influencing its National Youth Policy along the lines of a more well-thought-through  
161 model. Development in this global world has to be youth centered. Youth Culture Development Model (YCDM)  
162 requires the state to become 'all inclusive' in its pursuit for development.

163 The term 'all inclusive' means accepting the youth culture as a way of living and seeking the collaboration  
164 of Youth and supporting them by inculcating appropriate behaviour required by the society for development  
165 purpose. Societal institutions have to review their modes of operation vis-a-vis youngsters. All the agents  
166 of socialization have to work in collaboration in order to achieve success. States have to develop policies to  
167 accommodate youth culture. Societal stakeholders, Government, private sector and the civil society, need to join  
168 hands to take on board all youngsters for the benefit of the society.

169 The agents of socialization have a primordial role to play for the success of YCDM. Families, schools, peer  
170 groups, mass media and religion can help much to understand youth culture and position it for the well being  
171 of the society. The Family as an important agent of socialization has to give space for youth to become creative  
172 and develop an identity. Parenting has to be reviewed.

173 With information and technological advancement, parents are more than ever called to become a partner and  
174 develop friendly relationship with their children. The latter have a broad mind and should results. Capitalist  
175 societies often sell the dream of not be underestimated by parents. The state should use the mass media more  
176 precisely television to impart adult education. Religious and community institutions can also help parents to  
177 learn how to cope with youngsters as social control no more lies with parents in this virtual world. Informed  
178 parents understand that culture is dynamic and their offspring youth culture and their way of behaviour are not  
179 permanent. <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

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