

## Critical Literature Review on How Individual Socio-Economic Empowerment Occurs in Youth Groups

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**Abstract** This paper seeks to review literature on youth empowerment and provide an overview of the youth unemployment in Kenya and the initiatives by the Kenyan government to address the unemployment. Secondly the study will look at empowerment concept both at the level of the individual and community by looking at empowerment as a process and outcome as it occurs in an environment of youth group funding experience. Thirdly, the paper discusses the various theories and model of youth development guiding strategy for youth empowerment globally as postulated by different authors in the current study. Finally reviewed the empowerment theories and models and propose a model to guide the Practitioners and lay persons on youth development.

**Key words** Funding, youth group, critical review, socio-economic empowerment

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### 1. Introduction

Members of youth groups in Kenya are among the economically vulnerable people that require finance to deal with the twin challenge of poverty and unemployment major disempowering factor the poor. It was for this reason, the government of Kenya in 2006 recognized the value of credit and financial services to the poor youth in enabling them invest in activities that generate income to meet their social and economic obligations and established Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF).

The youth represents an important segment of Kenya's population. The number has almost tripled from 4.94 million in 1979 to 15 million in 2016. It is projected that Kenya's population will be 52.56 million by 2020, 59.06 million by 2025 and 65.93 million by 2030. It is expected the youth will constitute 34.79 per cent in 2020, 34.55 per cent in 2025 and 35.18 per cent in 2030 (Omolo, 2012). This means that at least one in every three of the Kenyan population will be a youth.

The youth bulge can offers Kenya an opportunity to grow in bounce if the youth is turned into demographic dividend, by developing appropriate skills/ assets, delivering critical services such as education and family planning, improving youth development policies and institutional environment for high productivity job creation. Evidence for the demographic dividend can be seen in the Asian economies between 1965 and 1990, where fertility and dependence ratios fell dramatically, and the size and proportion of the working-age population grew, triggering rapid economic growth (Schumacher, 2013).

It is worth noting that the problem of unemployment has since then continued to occupy the minds of policy planners in both the Government and the private sector. The third National Development Plan of 1974-78, acknowledges the efforts made to address unemployment among the youth, warned that the problem would in future loom large. The problem being the deficit and risk thinking among the Kenyan policy makers. This deficit lens shapes research, policy, and practice. It fuels the creation of elaborate and expensive service and program delivery infrastructures, which creates a dependence on experts,

encourages a public mistrust of youth, and, by consequence, derogates, ignores, and interferes with the natural and inherent capacity of human collective action among communities.

Efforts to initiate youth development programmes have been made in other subsequent policy documents, such as Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1992 on Small Scale and Jua Kali Enterprises, the 1997-2001 Development Plan and the National Poverty Eradication Plan 1999-2015, among others. But, despite these efforts, as well as an increase in the number of agencies dealing with the youth like Ministry of Youth Affairs under whose docket falls Youth Fund, Uwezo, National Youth Service together with other non-governmental organizations and private sector. However, the problems affecting young people have continued to worsen. This situation has been attributed to the deficit thinking about youth such as being lazy, cannot save, violent, drug addict in addition to lack of well thought out positive youth empowerment initiative and lack impact evaluation done to provide insight of program strength and weaknesses for learning and informing on future policies.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theories and Concepts of Empowerment

There are many theories, models and practices to explain how empowerment occurs. The authors looked at assets building, adolescent life cycle model, developmental asset and positive youth development model and how they influence various aspects of youth employment programmes in achieving youth development. These theories and models provide process knowledge to enable government and organizations dealing with youth programmes to plan and manage knowledge asset, energy and other potentials among the youth to create a constant innovative environment and stay abreast of with the global level of competitiveness. The author has attempted to provide a blend of key concepts and theoretical models currently existing in the field of youth and adolescent empowerment in addition to empirical knowledge about them subject relating to the practical problems of applying the same in the current program of youth empowerment through funding of youth groups in an effort to meet needs of youth and communities for meaningful economic participation.

Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas: community development, psychology, education, economics, studies of social movements and organizations. Recent literature reviews of articles indicating a focus on empowerment, across several scholarly and practical disciplines that have demonstrated that there is no clear definition of the concept. Zimmerman *et al.*, (1984) has stated that asserting a single definition of empowerment may make attempts to achieve it formulaic or prescription-like, contradicting the very concept of empowerment.

Generally, according to Israel *et al.*, (1994) Empowerment, in its most general sense, refers to the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic and political forces in order to take action to improve their life situations. It is the process by which individuals and communities are enabled to take power and act effectively in gaining greater control, efficacy, and social justice in changing their lives and their environment (Rappaport, 1981, 1999; Minkler, 1992; Fawcett *et al.*, 1994; Israel *et al.*, 1994). Central to empowerment process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

Studies by Czuba (1999) have suggested that there are three components of empowerment definition seen as multi-dimensional, social, and a process. It is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. It occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others, and it is a process along the continuum. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these three remain constant. How empowerment is understood also varies among perspectives and context.

Empowerment is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people; for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important (Czuba, 1999). Power is often related to our ability to make others do what we want, regardless of their own wishes or interests (Weber, 1946). Traditional social science emphasizes power as influence and control, often treating it as a commodity or structure divorced from human action (Lips, 1991).

Kreisberg, (1992) defined power, as "the capacity to implement", is broad enough to allow power to mean domination, authority, influence, and shared power or "power with." It is this definition of power, as a process that occurs in relationships, that gives us the possibility of empowerment (Florin and Wandersman, 1990; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). This does not mean that we can point the finger at those with less access to power, telling them that they must change to become more "empowered" in order to be successful (Wilson, 1996). Rather, individual change becomes a bridge to community connectedness and social change.

To create change in organizations and communities, individual empowerment endeavors to enable people to become partners in solving the complex issues facing them. In collaborations based on mutual respect, diverse perspectives, and a developing vision, people work toward creative and realistic solutions. This synthesis of individual and collective change is an empowerment process. The inclusive individual and collective understanding of empowerment is crucial in programs with empowerment as a goal. There are theories that provide plausible reasons why funding in group cause empowerment due to Social support and social learning factors (Wilson, 1996; Florin and Wandersman, 1990; Speer and Hughey, 1995). The following theories will suffice to explain the process of empowerment for individuals and communities.

### **2.2.1. Theory of Asset-building community**

The theory of asset-building community is an evolving conceptual model describing the nature and dynamics of places and settings that provide a constant and equitable flow of asset-building energy to all children and adolescents (Leffert *et al.*, 2001). This vision of developmentally attentive communities describes multiple arenas of asset-building capacity, including individual-level actions by community residents in informal relationships with children and adolescents, socializing system actions (families, neighborhoods, schools, congregations, youth organizations), and community-building actions that can be triggered directly or indirectly by the economic and governmental infrastructures of a community.

Finally, asset-building society represents an emerging line of conceptualization and inquiry regarding the roles of social norms, public policy, rituals, and media in advancing the asset-building capacity of individuals, systems, and communities (Benson *et al.*, 2003). One initial foray into this work is a poll of a nationally representative sample of adult to identify the social norms that advance or hinder adult engagement in the lives of children and adolescents (Scales, 2001). This theory assume that there are three constructs (assets, community, and society) are interrelated dynamically and originally. The third is asset-building society, a construct that informs our work in local, state, and national policy arenas. The work is essentially focused on generating both knowledge and applied strategies for strengthening the developmental infrastructure within communities.

In essence, the access to core developmental experiences, are support, engagement, empowerment, belonging, affirmation, boundary setting, structure, and connectedness, all of which are grounded less in program and policy and more in how citizens and socializing systems identify and use their inherent, relational capacities (Benson and Saito, 2001).

The theory and research undergirding asset-building community are designed, in part, to reframe the targets and pathways of human development around images of strength and potential. The author posits that this shift is crucial for mobilizing both personal and collective efficacy on behalf of child and adolescent development. By so doing, it ultimately seeks to balance paradigms so that communities pursue deficit reduction and asset building with equal vigor. As argued in a series of publications, the United States is a nation dominated by Deficit and risk thinking, by pathology and its symptoms (Benson, 1997, 2003a; Benson *et al.*, 1998). In one particularly important analysis, Larson (2000) suggests that developmental psychology has spawned a much stronger tradition for understanding and treating psychopathology than for understanding and promoting pathways to developmental success.

### **2.2.2. Developmental asset theory**

The concept of developmental assets, first posited in 1990 by Benson, and is grounded in the large meta-theory known as developmental systems theory (Ford and Lerner, 1992; Gottlieb, 1997). This meta-theory includes several crucial assumptions and components that, in combination, position human development in relational and contextual space, and in contrast to earlier developmental theories that split

development into such polarities as nature–nurture, biology–culture and individual–society (Lerner, 1998; Overton, 1998). Central to the theory of developmental assets are conceptions of the developing person in the contexts in which the person is embedded, and the dynamic interaction.

Developmental asset theory includes another dynamic feature of the organism that is consonant with the process of self-organization but not readily inferred from it the concept of how persons act on their contexts. Indeed, one of the core tenets in developmental systems theory is the bidirectional nature of influence. That is, the “individual is both the active producer and the product of his or her ontogeny (Brandtstädter, 1998). Action theories of human development seek to explain these dual developmental regulation processes of the action of contexts on individuals and the action of individuals on their contexts. This process by which organisms engage, interact with, and alter their developmental contexts (peer group, family, school, and neighborhood) is not only a pivotal theoretical notion for positive youth development, but is also “the essential intellectual challenge for developmental science” (Lerner, 2003).

Brandtstädter’s (1998, 1999) stated that action theory of development emphasizes the role of intentionality in guiding and regulating one’s engagement with social and symbolic environments. The authors’ assumption is that persons reflect on, learn from, and use feedback from their social engagements, creating behavioral intentions that guide subsequent behavior. While this proposed dynamic has currency across the life span, it is a hallmark of adolescence. In addition to intentionality, there are selection and optimization processes that also inform how persons interact with their environments. Aligned with Baltes and colleagues posits that this theory, help youth select (from a range of developmental supports and opportunities) a subset that has psychological and social advantage for prioritized personal goals (Baltes, 1997; Baltes and Baltes, 1990; Baltes *et al.*, 1984).

Additionally, selection has to do with both one’s preferences (to learn to play the flute, to find friends, to experiment with drama) and the ecologies one choice to be the primary crucibles for development. Optimization is “the process of acquiring, refining, coordinating, and applying goal-relevant means or resources” toward the selected targets (Lerner, 2002). These dynamics help frame several strategies and tactical issues germane to community life. These include how well communities provide meaningful opportunities for optimization and how well communities make it possible for youth to create optimization opportunities (to begin a new sports or arts program or to attach oneself to an appropriate mentor).

Positive youth development Positive development, then, occurs in the fusion of an active, engaged, and competent person with receptive, supportive, and nurturing ecologies or environment. In short, this is the fusion of external (ecological) and internal assets. The consequences of these balanced interactions, particularly when they are frequent and sustained, can be seen at both individual and social levels. The “more assets, the better” as reported by the National Research Council Report, *Community Programs to Promote Positive Youth Development*. Eccles and Gootman, (2002) frames it this way: that adolescents with more personal and social assets have a greater chance of both current wellbeing and future success”. Benson *et al.*, (1998, 2003) refer to this as the principle of the “vertical pile up” of assets. Both streams of thinking also suggest that this principle of accumulated assets generalizes to multiple forms of behavior—from prevention of high-risk behavior to the enhancement of positive outcomes such as school success. However, more work is needed to explain the mechanisms that account for the additive impact of assets on developmental outcomes.

A second postulation is that both external and internal assets are applicable universally, although they are expressed or experienced differently across diversities. Among youth development scholars it is commonly assumed that elements in the conceptual models of nutrients/resources/assets have currency for youth in all social locations., the postulation testify to the diversity of methods and procedures for promoting assets and to the importance of creating strategies of asset building that are crafted with deep sensitivity to the experience, wisdom, and capacity of people within particular racial, ethnic, religious, and economic groups (Hamilton *et al.*, 2004). There is a belief that assets are enhanced when contexts and settings are configured and organized in specific ways. Context matters and contexts can be changed. Not surprisingly, there is a considerable research tradition on how, and under what conditions, contexts and ecologies promote positive development. This body of work shifts the unit of analysis from the person to contexts, environments, and communities. Accordingly, it draws us into a number of fields beyond developmental psychology in which such inquiry is more at home. Here, the paper suggest that the theory

of person, context, and their intersection presented the rafter in table 1 asset frame work is necessary but not sufficient set of ideas for delineating the territory, scope, and uniqueness of positive youth development. At the heart of developmental asset thinking and research is the question of how the healthy/balanced/adaptive fusion of person and context can be enhanced.

As described in a series of publications Leffert *et al.*, (2001) the asset framework establishes a set of developmental experiences and supports hypothesized to have import for all young people during the second decade of life. Recent work is taking a broader life span perspective, positing that developmental assets reflect developmental processes that have age related parallels in infancy. The framework synthesizes research in a number of fields with the goal of selecting for inclusion those developmental nutrients that: (a) have been demonstrated to prevent high-risk behavior (substance use, violence, dropping out of school), enhance thriving, or build resilience; (b) Have evidence of generalizability across social location; (c) Contribute balance to the overall framework ( of ecological and individual-level factors); (d) are within the capacity of communities to affect their acquisition; (e) Are within the capacity of youth to proactively procure.

The developmental asset framework was designed not only to inform theory and research, but also to have practical significance for the mobilization of communities, the 40 assets are placed in categories that have conceptual integrity and can be described easily to the residents of a community. As seen in table 2.1 they are grouped into 20 external assets (environmental, contextual, and relational features of socializing systems) and 20 internal assets. The external assets include four categories: (a) support, (b) empowerment, (c) boundaries and expectations, and (d) constructive use of time. The internal assets are also placed into four categories: (a) commitment to learning,(b) positive values, (c) social competencies, and (d) positive identity. Although each element in the asset taxonomy is grounded in research, the framework and its measurement and reporting processes have four applied purposes. First, the framework seeks to provide an understandable vocabulary (for both lay and professional audiences) for core elements of positive human development, with emphasis on developmental processes, experiences, and resources known to promote short-term and long-term well-being. Second, it is intended to create a unified picture of positive development capable of uniting citizens and multiple socializing systems around a shared vision. In this way, it is an attempt to create a common language that has the potential of contributing to a public consensus on what “our” children and adolescents need to succeed. Third, it seeks to empower and mobilize residents (both adults and youth), families, neighborhoods, youth organizations, religious institutions, and other community and injustice.

Table 1. The Framework of Developmental Assets: External Assets

Category	Asset	Definition
Support 1.	1.Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support
	2. Positive family communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young
	3. Other adult relationships	person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents
	4. Caring neighborhood	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults
	5. Caring school climate	Young person experiences caring neighbors
	6. Parent involvement in schooling	School provides a caring, encouraging Environment Parent(s) is actively involved in helping young person succeed in school in the community value youth

Empowerment	7. Community values youth Young person perceives that adults	Young people are given useful roles in
	8. Youth as resources the community	Young person serves in the community 1 hour or more per week
	9. Service to others	Person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood
	10. Safety Young	Boundaries and expectations
Boundaries and Expectations	11. Family boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts
	12. School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences
	13. Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior positive, responsible behavior
	14. Adult role models Parent(s) and other adults model	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior
	15. Positive peer influence	Encourage the young person to do well
	16. High expectations Both parent(s) and teachers	Constructive use of time
	17. Creative activities	Young person spends 3 or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts
Constructive use of time	18. Youth programs young person	Spends 3 or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community
	19. Religious community young person	Spends 1 or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution with friends
	20. Time at home Young person is out	"with nothing special to do" 2 or fewer nights per week
Commitment to learning	21. Achievement Motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school
	22. School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning
	23. Homework	Young person reports doing at least 1 hour of homework every school day
	24. Bonding to school	Young person cares about her or his school
	25. Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure 3 or more hours per week Young person places high value on helping other people
	26. Caring	Young person places high value on
	27. Equality and social justice	Promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty

Category	Asset	Definition
Positive values	28. Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs
	29. Honesty	Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy”
	30. Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility
Social competencies	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs
	32. Planning and decision making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices
	33. Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills
	34. Cultural competence cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different
	35. Resistance skills pressure and dangerous situations	Young person can resist negative peer
	36. Peaceful conflict Resolution Positive identity	Young person seeks to resolve conflict Nonviolently
	37. Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me”
	38. Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem
	39. Sense of purpose	Young person reports that “my life has a purpose”
	40. Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

Accordingly, there are three features embedded in the developmental assets framework that are intended to invite “experiments” by communities to mobilize adults, youth, and socializing systems in a coordinated effort to move the developmental needle. First, the model purposefully identifies building blocks of development that have a kind of universal currency, as described earlier. Again we use the term *universal* here to mean developmental resources that have significance within multiple demographic subgroups and that have face validity for the many and diverse communities of identify and interest within a city. Second, the developmental assets framework, when used as a lens to examine the developmental journey of a community’s youth, invites deep, community-wide conversation, reflection, and critique of community life. In essence, this is the process of framing how a community knows and understands its role in the development of children and adolescents. The study of developmental assets at a local level is intended to trigger several forms of reframing. One, of course, is the reframing of how a community of people and systems understands the nature of successful development. Here we would argue that our work helps communities expand their shared understanding of healthy development to encompass not only “problem free” but also “asset rich.” Another reframing has to do with a community’s collective understanding of the population of children and adolescents to be targeted by community interventions. Deficit reduction approaches tend to bifurcate youth into two camps, with the developmental “have nots” labeled as at risk, vulnerable, high risk, or marginalized. Our approach, supported by hundreds of community asset profiles, is to place development on a continuum that runs from “asset depleted” on the one end to “asset rich” on the other. By showing communities that a majority of their 6th- to 12th-grade students are below midpoint, we strategically and purposefully create a dissonance in the public’s understanding of what the issue is. In more classic community development verbiage, this is the process of expanding citizen ownership.

### **2.3. Empirical review**

To empower people and strengthen their political voice, we need to help them gain access to the sources of power in any society. Typically those include assets such as skills that are marketable, economic resources, and social supports. This is essential if we are to make a difference. Most people are familiar with the concept of an asset and typically think first of financial assets such as savings, stocks, or property. This “balance sheet” application of the asset concept is important and relevant for poverty reduction. However, the Ford Foundation takes a more comprehensive view of assets, what they are, and how they can be mobilized to reduce poverty. Asset is not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they give them the capability to be and act. Control over assets gives low-income people the independence necessary to resist oppression, pursue productive livelihoods, and confront injustice. Even when they own few tangible goods or financial resources, individuals possess intrinsic resources such as intelligence, creativity, diligence, and inner strength. Groups of people also share common resources, such as community-based organizations, and cultural values and practices. These strengths and attributes have been called “assets” by proponents of people-centered and community-based development. At the Ford Foundation, we extend the concept of building upon people’s existing assets and see these capacities as a starting point in the development process. It is important to help low-income people develop additional assets that will enable them to be productive participants in economic and social life. As Michael Sherraden writes in *Assets and the Poor*, “People think and behave differently when they are accumulating assets, and the world responds to them differently as well. The power of assets is found in the familiar adage about the distinction between giving someone a fish and teaching him or her to fish.

#### **2.3.1. The Positive Youth Development Model Perspective**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s psychological science has paid increasing attention to the concept of “positive psychology” (Seligman, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). However, the emergence of a positive youth development (PYD) perspective during the third phase of the study of adolescence was not linked to this work.

#### **2.3.2. Origins of the PYD perspective**

The roots of the PYD perspective are found in the work of comparative psychologists (e.g., Gottlieb, 1997; Schneirla, 1957) and biologists (Novikoff, 1945a, 1945b; von Bertalanffy, 1933, 1965) who had been studying the plasticity of developmental processes that arose from the “fusion” (Tobach and Greenberg, 1984) of biological and contextual levels of organization. The use of these ideas about the import of levels of integration in shaping ontogenetic change began to impact the human developmental sciences in the 1970s (Cairns, 2006; Gottlieb, 1997; Lerner, 2002, 2006; Overton, 1998; 2006). Examples are the theoretical papers by Overton (1973) and by Lerner (1978) on how the nature-nurture controversy may be resolved by taking an integrative, relational perspective about genetic and contextual influences on human development. However, as the research about the features of adolescent development began to burgeon during the second phase of the development of the field, and as this research continued to point to the potential plasticity of adolescent development that arose because of the mutually influential relations among biological, individual, and contextual levels of organization within the ecology of youth development, developmental scientists who were using adolescence as their ontogenetic laboratory began to explore the use and implications of the ongoing work in comparative psychology and biology for devising a new theoretical frame for the study of adolescence. In turn, developmental scientists interested in other portions of the life span (e.g., adulthood and aging) were drawn to the study of adolescence because of its use as an ontogenetic laboratory (e.g., Lerner, Freund, De Stefanis, and Habermas, 2001). The exploration of adolescence by developmental scientists interested in developmental systems theory resulted in the elaboration of the PYD perspective.

More than a decade ago most scholars studying human development labeled the field as either developmental psychology or, if they were not themselves psychologists (Elder, 1998), as a field wherein one had to recognize that psychological science was the predominant lens through which the span of human life was studied. Today, however, the field has become much more deeply and broadly multidisciplinary (and, in some sub-areas, actually interdisciplinary or, in other words, disciplinarily



integrative, (Elder and Shanahan, 2006; Gottlieb *et al.*, 2006; Shweder *et al.*, 2006). As a consequence, more and more scholars of human development refer to their field as developmental science (Cairns, 2006; Magnusson and Stattin, 2006) and at least one leading graduate textbook in the field has changed its title from *Developmental Psychology* (Bornstein and Lamb, 1999) to *Developmental Science* (Bornstein and Lamb, 2005).

The change of name for the field studying the human life span reflects in large part a key intellectual change across the last decade. There has been a “demise” of Cartesian, split conceptions of the nature-nurture issue, and of reductionist approaches to either nature formulations (sociobiology or behavior genetics) or to nurture formulations (e.g., S-R models or functional; analysis approaches) (Overton, 2006; Valsiner, 2006). In turn, there has been an ascendant focus on theoretical models that eschew nature or nurture splits and reductionism, and on conceptions that seek to fuse systemically the levels of organization involved in the ecology of human development (from biology and physiology through culture and history (Baltes *et al.*, 2006; Elder and Shanahan, 2006; Gottlieb *et al.*, 2006; Thelen and Smith, 2006). As well, there has been a growing emphasis on relations among levels, and not on the “main effects” of any level itself, as constituting the fundamental units of analysis of developmental analysis (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; Brandtstadter, 2006; Fischer and Bidell, 2006; Magnusson and Stattin, 2006; Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). It was within this conceptual context that interest in developmental systems models not only grew but, in fact, rapidly flourished. Across these diverse instantiations of developmental systems theories, there remain several commonalities of such models. Taken together, these commonalities operationalize the fundamental features of developmental systems theories.

#### **2.4. Theoretical Foundations of the PYD Perspectives**

The focus within the contemporary study of human development is on concepts and models associated with developmental systems theories (Cairns, 2006; Gottlieb *et al.*, 2006; Lerner, 2002, 2006; Overton, 2006). The roots of these theories may be linked to ideas in developmental science that were presented at least as early as the 1930s and 1940s (e.g., Maier and Schneirla, 1935; Novikoff, 1945a, 1945b; von Bertalanffy, 1933), if not even significantly earlier, for example, in the concepts used by late 19th century and early 20th century founders of the study of child development (see Cairns, 2006). There are several defining features of developmental systems theories. These include- A relational meta-theory. Predicated on a post-modern philosophical perspective that transcends Cartesian dualism, developmental systems theories are framed by a relational meta theory for human development. There is, then, a rejection of all splits between components of the ecology of human development (e.g., between nature- and nurture-based variables), and between continuity and discontinuity and between stability and instability. Systemic syntheses or integrations replace dichotomizations or other reductionist partitions of the developmental system. The integration of levels of organization. Relational thinking and the rejection of Cartesian splits is associated with the idea that all levels of organization within the ecology of human development are integrated, or fused. These levels range from the biological and physiological through the cultural and historical. Developmental regulation across ontogeny involves mutually influential individual context relations. As a consequence of the integration of levels, the regulation of development occurs through mutually influential connections among all levels of the developmental system, ranging from genes and cell physiology through individual mental and behavioral functioning to society, culture, the designed and natural ecology and, ultimately, history. These mutually influential relations may be represented generically as Level 1 Level 2 (Family Community) and, in the case of ontogeny may be represented as individual context. Integrated actions, individual context relations, are the basic unit of analysis within human development. The character of developmental regulation means that the integration of actions – of the individual on the context and of the multiple levels of the context on the individual (individual context) – constitutes the fundamental unit of analysis in the study of the basic process of human development. Temporality and plasticity in human development. As a consequence of the fusion of the historical level of analysis – and therefore temporality – within the levels of organization comprising the ecology of human development, the developmental system is characterized by the potential for systematic change, by plasticity. Observed trajectories of intra individual change may vary across time and place as a consequence of such plasticity. Relative plasticity. Developmental regulation may both facilitate and constrain

opportunities for change. Thus, change in individual context relations is not limitless, and the magnitude of plasticity (the probability of change in a developmental trajectory occurring in relation to variation in contextual conditions) may vary across the life span and history. Nevertheless, the potential for plasticity at both individual and contextual levels constitutes a fundamental strength of all human's development. Intra-individual change, inter-individual differences in intra-individual change, and the fundamental substantive significance of diversity. The combinations of variables across the integrated levels of organization within the developmental system that provide the basis of the developmental process will vary at least in part across individuals and groups. This diversity is systematic and lawfully produced by idiographic, group differential and generic (nomothetic) phenomena. The range of inter individual differences in intra-individual change observed at any point in time is evidence of the plasticity of the developmental system, and makes the study of diversity of fundamental substantive significance for the description, explanation, and optimization of human development. Optimism, the application of developmental science, and the promotion of positive human development. The potential for and instantiations of plasticity legitimate an optimistic and proactive search for characteristics of individuals and of their ecologies that, together, can be arrayed to promote positive human development across life. Through the application of developmental science in planned attempts (i.e., interventions) to enhance (through social policies or community-based programs) the character of humans' developmental trajectories, the promotion of positive human development may be achieved by aligning the strengths (operationized as the potentials for positive change) of individuals and contexts.

Multi-disciplinarily and the need for change-sensitive methodologies. The integrated levels of organization comprising the developmental system require collaborative analyses by scholars from multiple disciplines. Multidisciplinary knowledge and, ideally, interdisciplinary knowledge is sought. The temporal embeddedness and resulting plasticity of the developmental system requires that research designs, methods of observation and measurement, and procedures for data analysis be change-sensitive and able to integrate trajectories of change at multiple levels of analysis.

#### ***4.3. Community-Based Programs are a Vital Source of Developmental Assets***

Despite this controversy about the nature, measurement, and impact of developmental assets, there is broad agreement among researchers and practitioners in the youth development field that the concept of developmental assets is important for understanding what needs to be marshaled in homes, classrooms, and community-based programs to foster PYD. The focus on youth programs is important not only for practitioners in the field of youth development, however. In addition, the interest on exploring youth development programs as a source of developmental assets for youth derives from theoretical interest in the role of the macrolevel systems effects of the ecology of human development on the course of healthy change in interest derives as well from policy makers and advocates,

### **3. Methodology of research**

The review adopted descriptive research design .This is because that study was only describing theories model on how individual socioeconomic empowerment occurs in youth groups . To address that the study used desk review method. The paper focused various scholarly works. Thereafter conclusion was drawn.

### **4. Conclusions**

The question today that interests researcher and policy maker is whether youth are resources to be developed, and not as problems to be managed (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, and 2003b). Based on the idea that the potential for systematic intra individual change across life (i.e., for plasticity) represents a fundamental strength of human development and whether the strengths of youth enhancements help in positive functioning at any one point in time. Finally, there remains a question about whether the mere accumulation of assets, whatever their source (family, school, or community) is the best predictor of PYD or, in turn, whether there exist particular assets that are of specific salience for youth living in specific communities. While there is a good deal of evidence for the idea that "more is better" (Benson, et al., 2006), this notion has been tested primarily through assessing only youth perceptions of developmental

assets. Steward (1990) concluded, after synthesizing some theoretical and empirical studies, that the provision of social support and social learning in self-help groups is the major factor in self-help group effectiveness. In a study of three organizations (one of which was a mutual help organization for persons with severe mental illness), Maton and Salem (1995) found that the reason why they are so empowering is because they have a belief system that inspires growth; an opportunity role structure that is pervasive, highly accessible and multi-functional; a support system that is encompassing, peer-based, and cohesive; and leadership that is inspiring, talented and shared. Members youth groups are able to derive the following benefits (economic indicators) from group association as alluded to by the research model of positive youth development and the asset building community theory in as far as asset development are concerned and influence to youth development. Increase in assets, control over life situations like developing healthy lifestyles by avoiding risky behavior and drug abuse among other are aspects of socio-economic empowerment.

## 5. Recommendations

Today, many governments are channeling billions of taxpayers' through microfinance models financed through group framework. They aimed at assisting group to accumulation of assets, which is the best predictor of PYD for youth living in specific communities. In addition assets can increase commitment to a shared vision and community action. The sharing of individual assets and building of community assets can contribute to broader social well-being. Assets create stronger families and communities for the next generation. Programmes that invest in building the assets of low-income people and communities through their economic, psychological, and social benefits reduce poverty and injustice will increase meaningful, effective participation in social, economic, and political life of the participants. The recommendation is that the government should develop a strategy to use local NGO and other partners to provide access to credit and simple support services to existing youth groups to improve on their empowerment. The government should build a comprehensive framework for measuring the multidimensional facets of empowerment that can be applied to get credible comparisons across different milieus, while at the same time being flexible enough to allow modifications in accordance with variations in economic, social- culture and context of groups.

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