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Enablers and Barriers to Youth Employment: An Employment Ecosystem Approach

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Definition: An "employment ecosystem" approach acknowledges that factors affecting employment are never the result of one singular factor but are the product of multiple, intersecting, and mutually reinforcing factors at the individual level (personal attributes and immediate circumstances), relationships and wider community, the workplace, and the wider macro-level (societal and structural factors, such as legislation, government policies, and macro-economic trends). Originally conceptualised within the context of employment for people with disabilities, the employment ecosystem approach provides an ecological perspective that can be used to understand the ingredients of inclusive employment more generally. This entry applies an employment ecosystem analytical lens to explore and identify enablers and barriers to youth employment in the Australian context, based on reviews of published research and reports of initiatives and programs targeting youth employment. Findings include the need to recognise the centrality of support from broader community resources, including family and community-based support, employers and co-workers, policy, and legislation. It provides evidence-based insights for practitioners and researchers interested in the development and implementation of inclusive employment practices.

Keywords: employment; work; employment ecosystem; youth employment

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1. Introduction

An employment ecosystem lens offers an ecological perspective on the multi-dimensional factors that either hinder or help access to employment. First articulated in the context of disability employment research [1], an employment ecosystem approach looks at the intersecting systems and dynamics that play an integrative role in employment opportunities and access. This approach has since been extended and applied in a range of contexts. This entry paper begins by providing a detailed overview of the employment ecosystem approach and explains its utility as an ecological approach to inclusive employment and its applicability in a range of fields. We explain the three levels of the employment ecosystem and outline common factors identified from existing studies. We then expand on the employment ecosystem concept by applying it to the findings of a literature review on the barriers and enablers of youth employment in Australia. We conclude with observations, remarking on the need for employment interventions, programs, laws, and policies to take a holistic, employment ecosystem approach. We argue that such an approach recognises the centrality of support from across all levels of the employment ecosystem, inclusive of personal and family-based support, support for employers, workplaces, and policymakers, as well as resources from the broader community and community members.

2. Defining the Employment Ecosystem

The employment ecosystem approach provides an ecological perspective [2–4], which aims to capture factors at various levels and scales that impact employment access and outcomes. In biology, an "ecosystem" refers to a community of elements that interact to create an equilibrium in order to survive [5]. An employment ecosystem lens can be understood as a systems-oriented approach. Systems theory understands complex systems as constituted by the dynamic, reciprocal relations and interactions between smaller systems [6,7]. The theoretical orientation of systems theory has been applied in a range of disciplines, including sociology, social work, and psychology [3,4]. In recent decades, there has been a shift to focusing on ecosystems and ecologies in systems-thinking approaches, applying ideas about the natural world and biology to understand the social world and the interactions between individuals, economy, and society [8].

The employment ecosystem consists of the individual (and their unique personal attributes and circumstances), their family, and interpersonal/social characteristics, including support and social networks, workplace, employment support services, policies, legislation, and other societal-level infrastructure and processes [9]. The key components of the employment ecosystem can be broadly mapped out at three core levels: the individual and inter-personal (*micro*) level, the employer/workplace and inter-organisational (*meso*) level, and the structural/societal (*macro*) level. An employment ecosystem approach to policy and designing inventions and programs acknowledges the inter-operability of factors across all these levels as producing the barriers and/or enablers of employment. It acknowledges that barriers and enablers of employment are the result of a complex system of factors, which can be mutually reinforcing, and that no single factor can explain lower rates of economic participation [10]. An employment ecosystem approach suggests that models, programs, interventions, and government policy to address employment access and outcomes must acknowledge and respond to roadblocking or enabling factors at various levels [11], and it provides a framework for the stakeholder collaboration required (between government, industry, and communities) to address complex, systemic barriers to employment [12].

2.1. Micro Level: Individual and Inter-Personal Factors

Factors that link to employment participation at the micro level are the unique personal factors or attributes of the person and factors related to their immediate context. This includes factors such as household income, gender, social skills, levels of parental education in the household, levels of educational attainment and educational dis/advantage, disability (including the disability or chronic health condition type and severity), and receipt of career counselling and careers information during high school and high school outreach to employment or post-secondary education contacts [10,13]. Factors at this level also include the support networks and structures surrounding individuals, such as a person's families, friendships, informal support networks, community support, and, in the context of young people, peers, schooling environments, the presence of mentors, role models, and access to social capital. These relationships play a crucial role in the vocational experience [9].

2.2. Meso Level: Employer, Workplace, and Inter-Organisational Factors

Factors surrounding workplaces and employers are integral to the employment experience, job access, level of workplace inclusion, and retention. The meso level of the employment ecosystem can be extended to include workplace relationships, employment support interventions at the organisational level, and employment programs or interventions targeting workplaces or employers.

2.3. Macro Level: Societal and Structural Factors

The macro level encompasses societal and structural processes and macro-economic level trends that are recognised for their impact on employment, such as access to affordable and accessible housing, reliable transport, disability, health and wellbeing supports, income, and food. Many of these factors are widely recognised as social determinants of health [14]. Macro-level factors in the employment ecosystem also include laws, regulations, government policy, income/social support systems, infrastructure, and cultural and societal attitudes.

As Nicholas et al. state, at each level within the employment ecosystem, various components may offer resources that support employment or, if insufficient, detrimental, or absent, may potentially negate employment opportunity [1]. Table 1 below presents a summary of the factors that impact employment at the micro, meso, and macro levels identified in prior studies adopting an employment ecosystem approach.

Table 1. Examples of barriers and enablers to employment identified in studies applying the employment ecosystem approach.

	People with Autism [1]	People with Disability [10]	Refugees [15]
Mico Level			
Personal factors and attributes	Employment readiness (level of pre-employment, core life skills, motivation, social skills), autism spectrum disorder presentation, occupational focus (interests and strengths), wellbeing, gender, household income, parental educational levels, receipt of career counselling in school, and independence with daily living activities.	Disability type and severity, gender, socio-economic status, cultural diversity, educational attainment, work experiences, internalised oppression, and individual capacity building.	Language barriers, familiarity with local job-application customs, working rights and visa conditions, income, legal status, fluency in local language, literacy, support networks in the host country, and perseverance.
Interpersonal and social factors	Family support with transportation, encouragement, insufficient/misguided support, and social determinants of health.	Expectations related to employment held by family, inter-generational unemployment, family attitudes, and internalised oppression.	Cultural and social community networks in place of residence and professional references.
Meso level			
Employment/support service factors	Employment support, i.e., mentorship, coordination, insufficient services, waitlists, restrictive eligibility criteria, funding, and support limits.	Transition from school, employment support services, collaboration between agencies, and employment support service attitudes.	Discrimination, support from refugee and settlement service organisations, employment services, collaboration between governments, non-government organisations, and refugee organisations, and attitudes about engaging refugees in employment.
Workplace factors	Insufficient resources, limited knowledge or understanding of autism, values people with autism, supportive HR policy, reasonable adjustments, associated supports within a workplace, job coaching, and mentoring.	Inclusive workplaces, manager, and co-worker attitudes.	Non-recognition of qualifications, stigma, racism, discrimination and stereotypes, working conditions, availability of decent work opportunities, a match between vocational interests and job offers, employer willingness to hire refugees, access to mentoring, workplace inclusivity, needs, and will of employers.

Table 1. *Cont.*

	People with Autism [1]	People with Disability [10]	Refugees [15]
Macro level			
Environmental factors	Transportation, food security.	Community infrastructure.	Settlement services in the host country, language training facilities, suitable training, housing, and access to childcare.
Societal and cultural factors	Leisure opportunities.		Racism, stigmatisation.
Economic factors	Housing security.	Income support system.	Labour shortages, financial resources, and wage subsidies.
Policy and legislative factors	Educational support.	Legislation, policy, and funding.	Policies, programs, and laws in the country of residence.

3. Youth Employment in Australia: Challenges and Trends

The unemployment rate for Australian young people [16] is currently 9 percent, more than double the national rate [17]. At the last Australian census, an estimated 3.2 million young people lived in Australia, 12 percent of the total national population [18]. Studies and statistics on youth employment in Australia show that young people are a disadvantaged group within the broader labour market and are particularly vulnerable during their transition from school to employment [19]. The transition from school to work is recognised as a period of challenging new experiences, including leaving school, moving out of home, forging new relationships, and an elevated risk of experiencing mental health issues [20]. Employers are more reluctant to hire younger workers due to employer perceptions that they hold limited experience, have less training, and possess fewer skills [21,22]. Employers generally prefer workers to hold prior work experience [21,23], and labour market trends have resulted in fewer entry-level jobs that can be accessed without prior experience or qualifications [20], with implications for those beginning their working lives.

Young people must also navigate an increasingly uncertain and precarious labour market and are disproportionately impacted by growing forms of insecure work [24]. Further disproportionate impacts for young people (relative to older workers) include underemployment, with a significant proportion of young people citing that they are available for and want to work more hours than they currently have [25], are employed in jobs that pay below the minimum wage, and/or are in jobs that do not match their skills or qualifications [26,27]. As a result of the confluence of these broader trends, young people exhibit consistently higher working poverty rates than their adult peers [28]. With Australia's labour market disrupted by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence suggests it will be permanently reshaped, with potential negative impacts on young people's opportunities for future labour force participation [26].

Within this context, this study aims to apply an employment ecosystem lens to synthesise and analyse barriers and enablers of employment for young Australians, based on reviews of published research and reports of initiatives and programs targeting youth employment [29–36]. It is not meant to provide an exhaustive list of all known factors, but to outline the major, recognised contributing factors at each level of the employment ecosystem to demonstrate the strength of applying a multi-dimensional employment ecosystem approach to understanding and addressing employment access. The following sections present the findings of the review, while the methodology of the review is described in the Supplementary Materials.

4. An Ecosystem Approach to Youth Employment in Australia

4.1. Barriers to Employment for Young People

4.1.1. Micro Level: Individual and Inter-Personal Factors

Educational disadvantage and lower levels of educational attainment create significant barriers to employment for young people. Over the past three decades in Australia, job growth has increased predominantly in "higher skilled" professional occupations [20], with estimates showing that more than 50% of new jobs in the next five years will require a university degree [37]. This means that high school non-completion or non-attainment of higher degree qualifications can present barriers to employment. Those experiencing intersecting disadvantages are most likely to have lower levels of attainment or engagement in further education [38]. Degrees of access to knowledge of job options, career, and post-secondary pathways within the immediate schooling and family context can also compound these barriers [36,39,40]. A 2018 Australian report indicated that only half of the young people surveyed reported feeling they received quality career advice at school [41]. At present, parents and caregivers are the primary source of young people's career ad-

vice [42]. Tailored transition planning and career education support within schools has been found to be critical, particularly for young people with disability [36,43,44]. Around 1 in 6 (18%) people in Australia have a disability, and another 22% have a long-term health condition [45].

Logistical barriers and transport disadvantages can be a major barrier for young people in securing employment and maintaining employment. The issue is particularly compounded for young people in regional and outer suburban areas due to the lack of reliable and accessible public transport options [46].

Furthermore, a young person's immediate living environment, including their housing conditions, stability, and suitability, is also a crucial factor at the level of the individual and their circumstances. Young people make up a significant proportion of the Australian homeless population. Homelessness makes activities like attending school, engaging in further education or training, receiving income support, and obtaining or maintaining employment exceptionally difficult [47].

Employment outcomes are particularly poor for young people with disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health, and substance use issues [33,48]. Mental health issues can also compound experiences of low self-esteem and social isolation that young job seekers may experience [49], with periods of unemployment known to have negative impacts on mental health, physical well-being [50], and lowered economic and community participation [51,52].

Youth with disability face similar challenges in finding employment as youth without disability, but to a greater degree and in more areas [2], with disability type and severity important factors in determining societal and familial expectations that a person will participate in employment [10]. A lack of early planning and collaboration between community, employment services, schools, and families, combined with low expectations that young people with disability will work upon leaving school, contributes to poor employment outcomes [53]. Discrimination, a lack of accessible work environments, and the provision of reasonable adjustments are also causal factors [10]. Disclosure of disability (and requests for reasonable adjustments) depends on a range of factors, including the individual's knowledge of their rights, adjustment needs, previous experiences, the workplace context, and confidence in self-advocating [54].

The relationships, support networks, and levels of social capital young people have access to can create more subtle barriers to employment. Young people can be poorly equipped with job search knowledge or tools (for example, a lack of knowledge of how to apply for jobs, or a lack of workplace rights knowledge), meaning they are less likely to feel confident in identifying unsafe workplace practices and raising issues. As such, young people are at greater risk of exploitation by employers [55].

Young people's unpaid, informal caring responsibilities (and lack of employer accommodation) are barriers to workforce participation. Approximately 1 in 10 Australian young people under the age of 25 provide informal care [56–58]. Young people in single-parent, low-income households, living in disadvantaged outer urban locations or regional areas [59], are more likely to take on a caring role, with young women more likely to be carers than men [60]. Qualitative research with young carers in Australia shows that young carers cite limitations in their ability to find work and report lower levels of access to support services [61].

4.1.2. Meso Level: Employer and Workplace Factors

While workplace non-discrimination is a recognised human right, many socially marginalised young people experience stigma and discriminatory social attitudes at the workplace level of the employment ecosystem. Discrimination can occur at all stages of

the employment cycle, from the recruitment stage (including bias and inaccessibility of the recruitment process) to limited opportunities for career progression (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016). Young people experience employment discrimination for a range of protected characteristics (such as gender, race, disability, LGBTQI+ identity, and age) and intersectional experiences of discrimination [62].

Despite the introduction of age discrimination laws, age discrimination against younger workers can often be seen as less socially problematic than other forms of discrimination and is embedded within Australian labour law and organisational practices [63,64]. For example, young people report age discrimination in the form of harassment, bullying, ageist comments in the workplace (based in stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs about age), but also in the form of losing their job or shifts after they turn 18 when they are no longer legally eligible to be paid junior rates of pay (a rate of pay generally set below the national minimum wage) [65,66]. For young people who are NEET, or have experienced extended periods of unemployment, stereotypes and stigma are often attached to periods of unemployment, impacting employer decisions [67,68]. Globally, young people not engaged in employment, education, or training (NEET) are a specific cohort associated with particularly poor long-term outcomes [69].

4.1.3. Macro Level: Societal and Structural Factors

A range of complex, societal, structural, legislative, policy, and macroeconomic factors create barriers to employment for young people. Across many OECD countries, the school-to-work transition period has become longer and more uncertain [70], with a range of life events becoming increasingly non-linear, or "delayed", when compared to previous generations [71]. This means young people are experiencing prolonged education and extended periods of financial dependence on their parents [72]. Today, younger workers face increased competition against other workers with previous work experience and qualifications in a highly competitive job market, as social and economic changes have led to a growth in labour supply, with increased competition for jobs [23]. In the face of these trends, youth have been described as being "crowded out" in the employment market [23].

Industry shifts driven by changing technologies, the decline in "blue collar" jobs, deindustrialisation, and shifts towards knowledge work and a service economy [20,73] have resulted in fewer entry-level jobs that can be accessed by young people without prior industry, on-the-job experience, or qualifications [20]. Entry-level positions have become rarer over time, particularly in full-time roles, and employment growth has also been strongest in more highly skilled occupations, with a growing proportion of jobs advertised requiring a tertiary level qualification [21]. The rise of non-standard jobs and insecure work, i.e., part-time, casual, short-term employment, gig work, zero-hour contracts, and economic instabilities, has grown since the global financial crisis [20]. These trends have had disproportionate impacts on young job seekers, with higher rates of young people working within the informal economy and in insecure work [74].

At the level of legislation and public policy, Australia lacks a cohesive, dedicated policy approach to meaningfully addressing young unemployment. Additionally, current government income support and welfare policy approaches present barriers to employment. Despite a lack of robust evidence for improved employment outcomes, mutual obligations and "work first" policies are a major feature of Australian employment services [75–80]. A 2012 OECD report found that Australia's approach to unemployment and welfare support, which focuses on mutual obligation requirements, contributed to Australia having one of the highest unemployment rates in the OECD [81]. Compulsory participation and mutual obligation requirements have been demonstrated to have distressing and disempowering impacts on young people, including worsening mental health and overall

well-being for deemed compliance failures [78]. These approaches have been shown to force disadvantaged people into employment, with little consideration for the welfare and long-term career goals of the job seeker [82]. Many young Australian job seekers also rely on income support payments, placing them below the poverty line. The insufficient rates of income support not only force many young people to forego necessities, but they can also undermine efforts to find work, including leading to worsening mental health and physical well-being.

4.2. Enablers of Employment for Young People

4.2.1. Micro Level: Individual and Inter-Personal Factors

At the level of the individual and their circumstances, higher levels of educational attainment have been shown to have positive outcomes in terms of future improved income and health status [83,84]. Level of education and vocational qualifications completed are well-recognised predictors of improved employment opportunities [85].

Access to transport can be an enabler of employment and young people's job search activities [86–88]. In research conducted with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, having a driver's license is significantly associated with higher rates of full-time employment (four times more likely to be in full-time employment) [89].

The alignment of an individual's particular interests, motivations, and alignment of their attitudes and values of the work environment appears to be an indicator of employment. Deloitte's "Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey" highlighted the importance of work that aligns with young people's goals and values [90], with Gen Zs and Millennials more driven to find work that is purpose-driven and aligned with their values [91], affirming the findings of other studies that have shown that younger workers want their work to reflect their values and provide a sense of purpose [92].

Factors such as strong social, peer, and family networks and community connections, such as positive role models and online social networks [93], are recognised as providing connections to employment opportunities [94,95]. Young people have emphasised the importance of supportive and trusting relationships when searching for work and the value of having someone encouraging them to pursue their employment goals [96,97]. Youth-friendly coaching, mentoring, and the deliberate cultivation of relationship-based practice in employment support for young people can be one way of fostering improved supportive relationships, personal networks, and community connections [31].

Early exposure to structured and well-supported work experience while at school is a key factor in predicting post-school employment [53]. It is recommended that access to school-to-work transition planning support begins early, before the later stages of schooling, taking place across multiple years [36]. Early-career support and transition planning are widely acknowledged in the literature as especially important for improved employment outcomes for young people with disability [43,44,98]. It is important for young people with disability to receive the support required to participate in the workforce as early as possible [99], especially for young people with intellectual disabilities [53,100].

4.2.2. Meso Level: Employer and Workplace Factors

At the workplace and employment-support level, there is evidence that young people experience positive, longer-term employment outcomes as a result of taking a holistic, strength-based, and personalised approach to addressing their employment-support needs. In one study, young people described greater levels of support and responsiveness from an employment service and attributed it to efforts from staff to get to know young people in an individualised way, using accessible and youth-appropriate language, greater amounts

of time spent assisting young people, and significant attention paid to young people's non-vocational support needs [101,102].

Additionally, when employment supports and service providers engage positively and collaboratively with local employers to identify realistic work placements that meet employer skill requirements and work to engender high levels of support from employers, there is evidence of improved outcomes for young people [53]. By developing local, place-based networks amongst young people in their community, employment interventions can also lead to employment opportunities for young people [103]. Strong commitments from employers prior to the placement of the young person in a program or role, as well as strong commitments from workplace supervisors and co-workers, are recognised as important ingredients of successful outcomes [104].

A large body of evidence suggests that the quality of work matters, and levels of psychosocial stress associated with work impact individual employment outcomes [73,105]. Supportive and inclusive workplace cultures are an important enabler of positive outcomes and perceptions of work for young people navigating the transition from school. Supportive employers are identified as those who can provide accessible resources that help young people understand the role, flexibility, and a "go-to" person who can provide support and be asked questions [106]. In research on Australian work integration social enterprise, young people described organisational cultures that were "youth-centred, accepting, supportive, and forgiving of workplace mistakes", that provided them opportunities to "safely 'rehearse' new skills in real-life settings" [30] as assisting them with achieving their employment goals. The cultivation of supportive workplace relationships, opportunities to experience "balanced teamwork", and on-the-job assistance in accessible work settings have been identified as key enablers of success for young people with disability in supported internships [104,107].

4.2.3. Macro Level: Societal and Structural Factors

At the societal and structural level, the links between stable housing, housing assistance and policy, and employment outcomes are well-evidenced [108]. With youth having a higher risk of homelessness and constituting a significant cohort within the wider homeless population in Australia, housing policies and programs are critical enablers of young people's employment and well-being outcomes. Housing is a structural and systemic issue that has profound implications for employment: youth experiencing homelessness have higher rates of unemployment [109], with employment providing the income necessary for young people to gain and remain in housing [110]. There is evidence that strong programs and approaches that leverage partnerships to bridge employment, housing, and support for young people can lead to better outcomes [111]. Government housing policy, programs, and related spending are critical components at the systemic and structural level that act as enablers of employment access for young people.

5. Key Findings and Implications

Table 2 summarises the key factors in the employment ecosystem for young people. The review identified barriers across the micro, meso, and macro levels, including educational disadvantage, NEET status, transport disadvantage, rural and regional location, study and career pathways information access, a lack of inclusive workplaces, discrimination, and a preference for applicants with prior work experience and qualifications. Key enablers identified in the literature included trusted relationships with adult mentors, social capital, networks and community connections, job satisfaction, access to reasonable adjustments and accommodations, support and "buy-in" from employers for interventions, inclusive workplace cultures, and strong links between employers and local communities.

Table 2. Factors identified in the employment ecosystem for young job seekers in Australia.

	Young People	In Workplaces	Across Society
Barriers	Lower educational attainment [38], transport disadvantage [46], homelessness and housing precarity [47], disability and long-term health conditions, mental health challenges and/or substance use issues [33,48], lack of workplace rights knowledge [55], lack of prior work experience and qualifications [21], geographic location [112], and disruptions and delays in course completion [113].	Stigma attached to periods of unemployment [68], lack of reasonable adjustments and workplace accessibility accommodations for young people with disability or chronic health conditions [114], experiences of bullying and harassment in the workplace [115], failure to accommodate caring responsibilities [61], and preference for applicants with prior work experience and qualifications [21].	Fewer entry-level jobs are accessible without prior experience or tertiary-level qualifications [20], reduced job mobility [116], precarious labour markets [24,117,118], economic impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic [26], delayed transitions [70,71], growth in labour supply and increased competition for jobs [23], and inadequate rates of youth income support and poverty [112].
Enablers	Early access to career information and advice [10,36], early access to tailored school transition planning [44], positive relationships and peer networks (i.e., access to role models and mentors) [94], cultivation of aspirations from school, peers, and surrounding community [116], parental expectations [116], financial and emotional support from parents [116], social capital [95], education and vocational qualifications [85], literacy and numeracy [119], alignment of interests, career motivations and personal values [90], and early exposure to supported work experience opportunities [53].	Tailored, strength-based, and holistic approaches to employment support [29,102], collaboration between employment support services and employers [53], leveraging place-based networks [103], cross-sector partnerships [116], commitment and support from employers and co-workers [104], quality of work and levels of psychosocial stress associated with work [105], inclusive workplaces [30], and provision of "meaningful work" opportunities [91].	Coordinated youth employment policies [82], housing assistance and youth homelessness programs and policies [108], financial support for youth job seekers [116], and employment system reform [116].

This study underscores the need for an integrated, ecosystems-focused approach to interventions that aim to address youth (un)employment, emphasising cross-sector collaboration and partnership between young job seekers, schools, employers, employment service providers, industry networks, communities, and governments. The findings suggest the need for the development (and up-scaling) of interventions and programs that provide personalised, wraparound, early intervention support through providing pathway information [73] and access to education, training, and skills development for young people most impacted by educational disadvantage [120]. However, for such interventions at the individual level to lead to sustained outcomes, these must be reinforced through programs and initiatives that support the increased adoption of inclusive employment practices and larger-scale, structural-level policy and legal reforms, with reference to the wider context of labour market conditions and macroeconomic trends [121]. While the review applied the employment ecosystem framework to the Australian context, youth unemployment is also a global issue, and the Australian domestic context is impacted by structural and economic factors at the international level. A total of 64.9 million young people aged 15–24 were unemployed worldwide in 2023, the lowest level in the past 15 years [122]. In 2024, the global youth unemployment rate sat at 12.6 percent and continues to be significantly higher than the global adult employment rate [123]. We note that future research could apply and extend the eco-system approach to this wider context of youth employment as a multi-dimensional, global phenomenon.

6. Conclusions

An ecosystem approach to understanding employment "confront[s] singularity and deductive explanations" in favour of a broader, more holistic framework [1]. As illustrated by the application of an employment ecosystem lens to the context of youth employment, the findings identified by the review that either help or hinder employment are multi-faceted, interact at various levels, and involve a multitude of actors and stakeholders (who often hold varied or divergent concerns and priorities). We have expanded upon the employment ecosystem conceptual framework by considering its applicability and utility in the context of youth (un)employment. The employment ecosystem approach offers a useful framework for understanding and unpacking the ingredients that may assist or hinder job readiness, employment opportunities, and employment outcomes for people and communities experiencing barriers to employment. It is a conceptual orientation that can be applied to other fields of employment studies, either on a specific group or on a topic, such as understanding factors affecting underemployment. It would also be interesting to apply this approach to other countries and conduct cross-country analysis to identify common factors, as well as country-specific elements. For practitioners, taking an employment ecosystem approach may encourage employers, service providers, organisations, and change makers working on employment issues, as well as policymakers to build and strengthen cross-sector collaborations in the development and implementation of models, programs, interventions, and government policies to collectively address issues of economic participation and employment outcomes.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/encyclopedia5020073/s1, File S1: Methodology.

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