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IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA*

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Abstract. Unemployment rates are particularly elevated among adolescents in South Africa. The academic community has consistently underscored the potential for unemployment to have a detrimental impact on young people, as it represents a risk of social exclusion and the loss of valuable future human capital. Unemployment, poverty, and destitution are the three most significant socioeconomic challenges in South Africa. Since these socioeconomic issues are widespread, adolescents, particularly those of African descent, are at risk. The South African government has recently disclosed many corporate interventions, including policies, programs, and initiatives, as part of its strategy to resolve these socioeconomic concerns. This paper intends to examine the potential of entrepreneurship education To resolve the issue of adolescent unemployment. Paulo Freire's educational theory will be employed to elucidate the current existence of the research problem studied in the paper. The paper will be constructed using a mixed-method dominant design and employ secondary source analysis. The article critically evaluates and discusses several obstacles to preventing adolescent unemployment, including a lack of understanding and skills in entrepreneurship education. Youth unemployment is exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and substandard education. This issue can be resolved by increasing the accessibility of education to young individuals. Programs that offer the requisite entrepreneurial skills and training can facilitate solving this issue.

Keywords: youth unemployment; education; South Africa; Mthatha township; Mthatha; Eastern Cape Province

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1. Introduction

Youth unemployment is a significant national issue. In Africa, three countries reported exceptionally high youth unemployment rates in 2020. South Africa had the highest rate at 55.75%, followed by Swaziland at 47.37% and Namibia at 41.17% (International Labour Organization statistics, (2021). In 2023, the youth unemployment rate in South Africa remained relatively stable at approximately 49.14%, marking the second consecutive year of decline (O'Neill, 2024). This rate represents the percentage of individuals aged 15 to 24 who are unemployed but actively seeking work (O'Neill, 2024). Alarming, South Africa has sustained a youth unemployment rate of over 50% for more than twenty years (Falakahla, 2018). Unemployment, which signifies a lack of employment and financial income, is often associated with negative impacts on overall health (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018; Mokona et al., 2020). The effects of unemployment, whether due to economic recessions, natural disasters, pandemics such as COVID-19, or structural labour market issues, are severe and can lead to significant psychological stress (Putter, 2021). The persistently high unemployment rate in South Africa has a detrimental effect on the psychological

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well-being of the unemployed (Mncayi & Shuping, 2021). Specifically, Black South African youths aged 24-35 are disproportionately affected, facing overcrowded living conditions and poverty despite having completed higher education, unlike their Indian, Coloured, and White counterparts (Maka et al., 2021). South African youth generally experience joblessness, poverty, and inequality, often falling into one of three categories: uneducated, unemployed, or unemployable (Zikhali & Matsiliza, 2022). This problem is particularly acute in the Eastern Cape, notably in Mthatha, which has the highest youth unemployment rate in the province (MacGinty, 2024). The youth unemployment rate is further exacerbated by limited access to adequate educational resources and entrepreneurial opportunities (Singh, 2024). In this context, entrepreneurship education has emerged as a potential solution to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical employment skills (National Planning Commission, 2020). Research suggests that entrepreneurship education can develop skills that enhance employability and foster economic growth by equipping youth with the necessary tools to establish and sustain businesses (Ncube & Matlala, 2024).

This paper aims to examine the use of entrepreneurial education to address youth unemployment in Mthatha and Ngangelizwe and clarify the relationship between entrepreneurial education and youth unemployment. The research will provide a conceptual framework for understanding how entrepreneurial education can mitigate youth unemployment issues in these areas. Specifically, it will investigate the impact of entrepreneurship education on factors such as wages, benefits, and job security. Notably, there needs to be more research concerning the correlation between entrepreneurship education and youth unemployment in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Addressing the effects of entrepreneurship education on the youth of South Africa

The 2015 League Table of Education Systems ranks South Africa 75th out of 76 countries (The Economist, 2017). According to contemporary statistics data, 27% of students who have completed six years of formal schooling are illiterate. Only 4% of students who begin their postsecondary education earn a degree, whereas 37% of students who start their academic path pass the matriculation exams (The Economist, 2017). These are notable data that highlight the current national predicament. Several specific competencies and understandings are lacking when comparing South African students to their colleagues in other countries. This tendency hurts the quality of education in South Africa. The Centre for Education Policy Development (2017) states that South Africa's education system is distinguished by high costs and poor results, setting it apart from education systems in other developing countries. Many students live in destitute rural areas, putting a tremendous financial strain on the government and the students (ExpatCapetown, 2016). South Africa spends more of its GDP on education than any other African nation (Kyro, 2018). The nation's education woes have yet to show signs of progress. According to Govender (2017), eighteen South African institutions had a 0% pass rate on the 2016 national senior certificate examinations. South African adolescents face several obstacles, including delays in academic progress due to teacher absence, adolescent pregnancy, and occurrences of violence in educational institutions (Do, 2017).

The absence of responses to this issue portends a grim future for South Africa's education system. Do (2017) reports that 27% of public schools lack access to water, while 78% lack libraries or computers. This leads to inadequate school infrastructure, influencing kids' academic performance and well-being. Entrepreneurship education seeks to develop in pupils the knowledge, skills, and mindsets required to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Kyro, 2018). As per Boldureanu et al. (2020), students' confidence in their capacity to establish a business and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship may be significantly influenced by their exposure to successful entrepreneurial models in entrepreneurship education programs. Motsoeneng and Sithole (2022) highlight the necessity of addressing the nation's socioeconomic challenges, the growing recognition of the significance of entrepreneurship in economic development, and the increasing demand for entrepreneurial skills among employers. The South African government has established a framework for entrepreneurial education in higher education. This framework motivates colleges to facilitate the establishment of business ecosystems and

offer entrepreneurship curricula. South Africa's entrepreneurial education merits no exaggeration. Education is essential for addressing urgent socioeconomic issues and contributing substantially to the nation's advancement (Uleanya et al., 2021). Increased entrepreneurship education can lead to economic growth and development in South Africa and the acquisition of skills, capacity building, and entrepreneurial development (Omoniyi & Gamede, 2021). Entrepreneurship education has the potential to help communities become more sustainable and resilient. Entrepreneurial skills have the potential to boost local economies and address community issues by encouraging resourcefulness and problem-solving (Hagebakken et al., 2021).

The denial of employment opportunities to working-age youths is a significant waste of human resources, as it contributes to the perpetuation of the poverty cycle in society. Those who have been denied employment opportunities feel marginalised by the government and resort to criminal activities, including theft, prostitution, robbery, and murder (Buheji, 2019; Mukosa et al., 2020). Persistent unemployment harms social development, compromising individuals' capacity for social development, poverty alleviation, and social integration (Buheji, 2019). According to Buheji (2019), juvenile unemployment that persists for an extended period results in low self-esteem, frustration, and an elevated susceptibility to criminal activity, drugs, and violence. Exclusion from economic advancement and marginalisation are the consequences of youth unemployment (Mukosa et al., 2020). Amarasuriya et al. (2009) and Akinyetun et al. (2021) have posited that employment opportunities are essential for young people to successfully transition into maturity, achieve self-sufficiency, and improve their quality of life, as well as to break the poverty cycle in society. Akashraj and Atem (2020) identify several challenges, including inadequate training opportunities, a low quality of education, a high proportion of young people, an absence of privatisation, a skill mismatch, and a lack of experience. Youth unemployment is prevalent in numerous countries, including South Africa, due to corruption, malfunctioning governmental and private institutions, and a feeble labour market (Akashraj & Atem, 2020).

2.2 The challenges that are confronting entrepreneurship education in the youth of South Africa

Young entrepreneurs, especially women, faced more significant challenges securing funding than their male peers (Baral et al., 2023). The absence of networking possibilities and insufficient infrastructure support contribute to this problem (Baral et al., 2023). Young entrepreneurs in South Africa face cultural and social limitations that prevent them from connecting with individuals outside their families or establishing business networks, or they need more awareness of technology and other infrastructure resources (Baral et al., 2023). According to the research conducted by Bastian et al. (2019) and Costa and Pita (2020), it is evident that gender discrimination in South Africa results in limited access to formal education and employment opportunities for young people. The study reveals that more entrepreneurship education and training is needed for a shortfall in managerial abilities. South African social norms and gender biases prevent young people from pursuing business jobs and restrict their opportunities for entrepreneurship courses (Tasnim et al., 2020; Kaur, 2021). Agrawal et al. (2023) assert that their limited commercial insight and expertise required more managerial aptitude.

Furthermore, teenagers often face the burden of family obligations due to societal stigmatisation and cultural norms (Costa & Pita, 2020; Hammami et al., 2022). Additionally, it is common for young people to need more basic literacy skills (Agrawal et al., 2023). Finally, this leads to isolation and a lack of support for their entrepreneurial tendencies, resulting in apprehension and a fear of failure (Agrawal et al., 2023). As a result, there is a need for more proficient workers. Due to the significant issue of youth unemployment, developing countries like South Africa face the potential of experiencing social, economic, and political instability (Mpofu, 2020). Unemployment among young people has led to unstable job markets, increased spending on welfare, decreased tax revenue, and squandered resources on training and education (Mpofu, 2020). Mpofu (2020) asserts that youth unemployment profoundly impacts families, the community, and young individuals, encompassing socioeconomic consequences. Policymakers are more aware of the global issue of youth unemployment, as shown in the study by Annoy et al. (2020). Lannany et al. (2020) assert an increasing interest in understanding the root causes of this issue and identifying practical remedies. According to Statistics South Africa (2021), the country's

youth unemployment rate of 64.4% is not uncommon. Despite the government's enormous endeavours to decrease unemployment, it persists in increasing (Sinclair et al., 2021). So far, these initiatives have yet to reduce the problem successfully. According to Lannoy et al. (2020), South Africa needs help understanding the underlying source of the problem and implementing direct treatment measures to find a solution. However, disciplinary silos hold a significant amount of research that has been performed to analyse and combine the causes and remedies of unemployment thoroughly.

Policymakers frequently overlook the intricacy of this situation, which should be considered in any interventions to resolve the issue (Lannoy et al., 2020). According to Diraditsile and Maphula (2018), entrepreneurship is crucial for tackling the problems related to teenage unemployment. To address the issue of high youth unemployment and alleviate poverty among young individuals, involving them in entrepreneurial activities (Ogamba 2019; Abdullah and Othnam 2021). Radebe and Vezi-Magigaba (2021) conducted a study that found that various factors influence the involvement of young individuals in entrepreneurship. These aspects include the public perception of entrepreneurship and the need for thoroughness in the curriculum system for entrepreneurship education. The concentration of young individuals in entrepreneurship is influenced by various variables, including limited access to finance, onerous rules and bureaucracy, the exorbitant cost of hiring staff, and prevailing corporate cultures (Radebe, 2019). The South African government aims to mitigate poverty, inequality, and unemployment by implementing the New Growth Path, the nation's latest macroeconomic policy (Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021). An essential aspect of this goal is the encouragement of entrepreneurship.

2.3 The possible solutions to combat unemployed youth of South Africa

The multifaceted problems that young entrepreneurs in South African nations face demand solutions that take multiple approaches. To overcome these challenges, youth entrepreneurs must participate in mentoring programmes, networking events, and training (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022). Government assistance, access to cash, and market exposure are further prerequisites for youth entrepreneurship (Panda, 2018). The success of young entrepreneurs depends heavily on market exposure, government backing, and cash availability (Panda, 2018). According to Prastyaningtias and Arifin (2019), using digital technology in entrepreneurship education can help young people develop their character by boosting the elements required to create a generation of digital entrepreneurs. Jannah (2023) recommends bolstering the apprenticeship programme, creating a particular school for entrepreneurship, developing a curriculum around the needs of business owners, and conducting transactions with morally grounded business ethics. Skilled teachers can help young people overcome their fear of starting businesses and build confidence (Jannah, 2023)

3. Conceptual framework

This paper is grounded in Paulo Freire's educational theory, which emphasises the importance of education for the holistic development of individuals (Freire, 2018). Freire's concept of liberating education views students as active participants in their learning, advocating for equitable opportunities for engagement and critique (Prasetia et al., 2021). Educators must address students' intellectual and ethical needs, fostering self-respect and academic aspirations (Freire, 2018). Freire critiques traditional, one-way instruction methods, proposing instead a dialogic approach that reflects an understanding of students' contexts (Freire, 2018). The research topic is strongly associated with Freire's theory of education, which emphasises transforming educational practices by integrating problem identification and constructive development. The researcher views education as a means of refining rigorous educational approaches while staying true to the essence of humanity. This perspective supports the idea that individual education is a driving force for global change.

4. Methodology

This paper employed a qualitative research approach to explore the potential impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth unemployment. According to McMillan et al. (2018), qualitative research enables researchers to investigate phenomena from participants' perspectives within their natural contexts, providing a comprehensive view. This method facilitates an in-depth secondary data analysis, including case studies, events, policies, and narratives pertinent to the research objectives. The in-depth case study design, as advocated by Yin (2018), is well-suited for addressing fundamental questions such as "how," "why," and "what." The data collection will involve meticulous documentary research to identify relevant case studies that enhance understanding of the research topic. The researcher will systematically gather data using Edu, Springer Link, and Google Scholar, guided by specific search terms related to the study. Data selection will be governed by rigorous criteria, including the use of peer-reviewed articles from South Africa published between 2018 and 2023 to ensure the integrity and relevance of the dataset. This paper will apply descriptive case study methods and prisma analysis techniques to investigate how entrepreneurship education impacts underprivileged youth in Mthatha, Eastern Cape.

5. Discussion

5.1. Conceptualising youth unemployment in South Africa

Rapid intervention is required due to Africa's rising adolescent unemployment rate (Maulani & Agwanda, 2020). In South Africa, youth unemployment comprises 59.5% of the total unemployed population (Statistics South Africa, 2020). According to Statistics South Africa (2019), the unemployment rate in South Africa is 63% among individuals aged 15 to 34. Unemployment continues to be a global issue and a significant obstacle to developing emerging nations, particularly South Africa, beset by government failure, corruption, and protracted conflicts (Buheji, 2019). Despite recent improvements in African economic growth, youth unemployment continues to be a significant concern for policymakers, youth empowerment agents, and investors (Alfonsi et al., 2020). Unemployment among working-age youth continues to threaten global peace and security substantially. Consequently, the international community, the nation, and society can all benefit from policies and strategies that reduce youth unemployment rates (Buheji, 2019). The youth unemployment rate in South Africa has rendered young individuals the most vulnerable demographic in the labour market (Writer, 2021). Youth unemployment is the most severe concern confronting young South Africans (Writer, 2021). Unemployment may be caused by the growing demand for competent labour vs dangerous low-skilled youth (Oosthuizen, 2021). The global adolescent unemployment rate is 13 per cent (Decade De Accion, 2018). Youth unemployment is distributed unevenly across the country (Mandela, 2016).

In South Africa, youth unemployment results from various factors, such as population growth, ineffectual job search strategies, and a lack of career guidance (Cloete, 2016). Youth unemployment is the result of a variety of factors, such as the size of the jobless young population, the overall labour demand, youth earnings, work search fees, a lack of experience and skills, and inaccurate labour market information (Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021). Mandela (2016) contends that youth unemployment is due to a shortage of skills and experience necessary to compete in the labour market. This situation has been exacerbated over the past decade as South African adolescents encounter substantial employment barriers. South Africa's labour demand is low because employers transition to capital-intensive resources and trained labour, which enhances entry-level competitiveness (Mandela, 2016). The juvenile unemployment rate in South Africa is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate, which is a significant concern. The considerable proportion of adolescent unemployment is a cause for concern, and efforts will be made to address it. Youth unemployment has been a grievous issue in South Africa. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 34 was 46.3% in the second quarter of 2021, significantly higher than the general unemployment rate of 34.4%, according to the most recent data from Statistics South Africa. The high unemployment rate among adolescents in South Africa results from a

combination of factors. A lack of expertise and ability is one of the primary factors. The high cost of tertiary education and the poor quality of education in certain regions contribute to the fact that many South African teenagers need more qualifications and skills to partake in the job market. Professional opportunities contribute to the high adolescent unemployment rate in South Africa. The economy has declined for several years, and the COVID-19 outbreak has only exacerbated the situation. There are fewer employment opportunities for young people because of the closure of numerous businesses and the reduction of their workforce.

5.2. The government support to entrepreneurship education

The South African government has prioritised entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education to address the issue of youth unemployment, placing significant focus on these strategies for job development (Yiannakaris, 2019). Government assistance for entrepreneurship has become a crucial policy priority to tackle the underlying problems of limited job opportunities and high unemployment rates among young people (Lee & Yin, 2019). The government should promote a conducive climate that stimulates entrepreneurship and nurtures the ability to identify and capitalise on possibilities (Stuetzer, 2018). Entrepreneurship is crucial for enhancing the involvement of young individuals in government-sponsored projects that foster entrepreneurial activity (Yousaf et al., 2021). According to Mbuya et al. (2016), these programmes must establish an entrepreneurial ecosystem that motivates young individuals to initiate their firms and enhances the probability of securing employment. Policies and initiatives should prioritise the entrepreneurship sector to cultivate business expertise and provide entrepreneurial possibilities (Smith, 2018). In recent years, the increasing interest among individuals in starting their businesses has made entrepreneurship education increasingly important. Governments globally have taken action to endorse entrepreneurial education upon recognising its significance. Governments can promote entrepreneurship education by funding initiatives and initiatives that provide instruction on initiating and overseeing a business. Federal and state governments, private foundations, and enterprises may provide funding. Governments facilitate entrepreneurial education through policy interventions as well as financial support. Various governments have implemented tax incentives to incentivise business owners and promote entrepreneurship. Various governments have implemented projects that provide entrepreneurs with networking and mentoring opportunities, allowing them to connect with fellow business owners and acquire information from their experiences.

5.3. The advancement of Entrepreneurship education

Promoting entrepreneurship without considering the socioeconomic conditions, lived experiences, and challenges young people face in accessing economic opportunities is counterproductive. Adolescents are vulnerable to exclusion from the workforce (Patel et al., 2018). At the local level, the policies of apartheid and post-apartheid urban planning have played a role in causing young people to have limited economic involvement (Yiannakaris, 2019). Based on research that expands on these understandings, it is crucial to recognise the significant impact of entrepreneurship and a profoundly ingrained entrepreneurial culture (Raza et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs innovate by developing and launching novel products, services, technology, and markets, creating new job opportunities. According to Mbete and Pellegrino (2018), entrepreneurship is widely recognised as a practical approach to addressing poverty worldwide.

Therefore, individuals benefit from entrepreneurship by obtaining financial gain, job prospects, and overcoming destitution (Venter & Urban, 2021). Nevertheless, for entrepreneurship to thrive, it is imperative to have sufficient government assistance. According to Maziriri and Chivandi (2020), the government must assist with programmes promoting inclusive development to address societal inequalities successfully. Menkiti and Ward (2016) outlined how entrepreneurial training and education encourage and ensure the involvement of young people in entrepreneurial growth. Thus, it is crucial to prioritise the educational environment that fosters student learning and encourages innovative behaviours that contribute to the business's success. There are multiple approaches available to facilitate the dissemination of entrepreneurial education. One strategy is to integrate entrepreneurship education into school and university curricula. It achieves this by developing specialised courses, programmes, and seminars on business planning, marketing, finance, and management. Several benefits

arise from advocating for entrepreneurial education. It can help individuals acquire the necessary skills and information to start and grow successful businesses, contributing to job creation and economic growth. Furthermore, it can foster innovation and creativity by motivating individuals to think beyond conventional boundaries and generate novel ideas and solutions to challenges.

6. Limitations of the study

The study primarily examines Ngangelizwe township in Mthatha, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other areas or circumstances within South Africa. The distinct socioeconomic circumstances and cultural elements specific to Ngangelizwe township may not accurately reflect the challenges of youth unemployment in other urban or rural places across the country. The researchers encountered obstacles in obtaining pertinent secondary data, as the research articles were limited and inaccessible.

Conclusions

The paper highlights the pressing issue of youth unemployment in South Africa, where the unemployment rate is alarmingly high, accounting for a significant proportion of the total unemployed population. Various factors contribute to this phenomenon, including inadequate education, limited skills, and a lack of career opportunities exacerbated by economic challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the South African government has prioritised entrepreneurship education to address youth unemployment, recognising the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem and supporting aspiring young entrepreneurs. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the socioeconomic disparities and structural barriers that hinder youth participation in the labour market, emphasising the need for inclusive policies and initiatives. While promoting entrepreneurship education holds promise for empowering youth and driving economic growth, the study's focus on Ngangelizwe township in Mthatha and limitations in accessing comprehensive secondary data underscore the importance of cautious interpretation and generalisability of findings to other regions in South Africa.

Entrepreneurship education is identified as a critical strategy by the South African government to address adolescent unemployment. The process entails the establishment of supportive environments for young entrepreneurs, the promotion of entrepreneurial education, and the integration of such initiatives into educational curricula. The research underlines the potential of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem to bolster the capacity of young individuals to establish businesses, thereby promoting economic development and job creation. Innovation and Uniqueness This study's distinctiveness is its thorough examination of the socioeconomic context at the intersection of adolescent unemployment and entrepreneurship education in South Africa. The pressing necessity for customised policies that address the development of skills and consider the historical and systemic obstacles encountered by marginalised youth is underlined. By promoting the integration of entrepreneurship education into formal curricula and emphasising government support mechanisms, the study provides a unique viewpoint on how to engage young people effectively in economic activities. This distinctive method of addressing the challenges of youth unemployment in South Africa is characterised by a dual emphasis on systemic support and education.

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