



Entrepreneurship Development Among Black Youths in South Africa:

A Choice or Necessity?

By Thulani Andrew Chauke | Peer Review

Abstract

Black-youth-owned enterprises are essential to sustainable development and wealth creation for rural-based municipalities like the Vhembe District Municipality, where they can play a pivotal role in economic growth. This paper aims to explore the socio-economic determinates of entrepreneurship trends among Black youths in the Vhembe District Municipality. The investigation focused on youths living in the Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo province, South Africa. The study used judgmental non-probability sampling to sample the participants. The study used qualitative research to collect and analyse data. The unstructured interview was used to gather data from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The study findings revealed

that Black youths in the Vhembe District decided to be entrepreneurs to empower their communities, escape underemployment and scarcity of jobs, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. The paper recommends that the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in the Presidency, in collaboration with the Department of Small Business Enterprise Development and the National Youth Development Agency, should provide a two-year internship for young Black entrepreneurs in foreign companies that specialize in mining, technology, creative industries, and agriculture. When these Black youth return home, the government should set aside a Presidential Youth Fund to assist them to start their own businesses in the same industry

Introduction

The National Youth Policy 2015–2020 and Integrated Youth Development Strategy 2018 emphasise the need for youth inclusion in an economy through youth entrepreneurship in South Africa. Over the years, there has been a gradual increase in government policy about the vital role that entrepreneurship can play to create jobs among young persons. One of the functions of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) Act 54 of 2008 is to mainstream youth in economic participation through a grant programme, which assists young people between the ages of 18–35 years old who aspire to be entrepreneurs. The definition of youth in South Africa emanates from the country's political landscape, given the fact that young persons, especially Black youth during the apartheid era, were denied the opportunity to participate in socio-economic activities. Therefore, the definition seeks to address the injustices of the past. NYDA (2015) attempts to conceptualise and define youths as a group of young people who fall between the ages of 14–35. Sharma (2013) defines a youth entrepreneurship venture as a structured business run and owned by a young person, individual or collective (Statistics South Africa, 2019). The alarming rate of unemployment amongst young people in South Africa is a serious concern to the government and is seen as a cause of unrest in the country.

Study Contribution

The government can channel a large amount of money to help Black youth start their own businesses, but if the youth themselves do not see entrepreneurship as the best strategy to eradicate unemployment and poverty in South Africa, these efforts will be in vain. Therefore, it is important for youth development researchers in South Africa to explore this area to determine if Black youths venture to do business because they have no choice or because they believe that starting their own business would enable them to create jobs to involve other Black youths to contribute to economic growth. In addition, we need to get a better understanding of Black youth's perspectives and their reasons for starting their own businesses. Therefore, this study sought to fill that gap by producing new knowledge that will contribute to youth and entrepreneurship development research in South Africa. This paper explores this area of study with

the aim of providing appropriate policy responses to youth entrepreneurship development in South Africa to foster economic growth and job creation among young people.

Literature Review

The United Nations (2013) states that it is of greater significance for young people to venture to support opportunity entrepreneurship because it has a positive effect on the economic development of any country. Necessity entrepreneurship was proven to be the opposite of opportunity entrepreneurship. This simply means that young people should start businesses where there are opportunities in the market rather than being forced by the country's fiscal crisis. Furthermore, mixed feelings were reported among youth driven to venture to develop their own businesses. Older Black youth aged 30–33 years old were more likely to pursue entrepreneurship with the mindset of making more money, and were found to contribute to the national development agenda through job creation (Schillo, Persaud and Jin, 2016). On the other hand, younger youth in their early 20s start their own businesses because of the fiscal crisis, which makes it difficult for them to secure employment.

Black youth attitudes towards entrepreneurship were found to be different in most reviewed literature. Mixed feelings were commonly reported, since 69.5% of Black youth who had been involved in a business at a younger age were found to be inclined to start a business again. Fear of failure in business was revealed to be the main factor that prevented youth from becoming engaged in business again. On the other hand, 30.5% of Black youth who had experience in running a business showed an interest in starting a business again despite the hardships endured in the process of establishing and running a business (Sharma and Madan, 2014). The same authors further elaborate by demonstrating that level and types of qualification play a significant role in young people's entrepreneurial mindset.

In addition, Black youth who have an educational background in a business-related field such as Master of Business Administration were more likely to start their own businesses. King'ori (2012), Chiloane-Tsoko and

Botha (2015) support this statement by underscoring that youth with formal education are more likely to successfully establish their businesses. Furthermore, young people who had working experience were more likely to venture to become engaged in business, as opposed to those who had no working experience. Entrepreneurship education surfaced as an important decisive factor for youth to develop the habit of starting their own businesses, especially in terms of career guidance (Dzomondo and Fatoki, 2019). The effort that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) put in place to provide youth with career guidance towards entrepreneurship careers cannot be taken for granted. However, these institutions are not doing very well in terms of providing young people with the practical experience of running a successful business (Osoro and Areba, 2013). This simply means theoretical aspects alone will not play a bigger role in encouraging youth to start their own businesses.

Youth participation in an economy is of paramount importance to the sustainable development and wealth creation of any developing country (Osoro and Areba, 2013). The youth symbolises energy, innovation, creativity, and the know-how stage. Therefore, youth in this stage should channel their energy in initiating projects that will contribute to the growth of their country. These claims are supported by Ngorora and Mago (2018) who indicate that the entrenchment of new ideas in a young person's mind drives them to start their own businesses, particularly amongst Black youth who reside in rural areas. Over the years, the world has witnessed the rapid increase of youth engagement in businesses of their own, increasingly adding pressure on governments who find it difficult to create jobs for young people (Lau, Dimitrova, Shaffer, Davidkov, Yordanova, 2012). In addition, unemployment among youth often leads to deviant behaviour for survival, such as crime and becoming sex workers. There is a correlation between unemployment pathology and entrepreneurship as a driving force among the youth. Nassium et al. (2017) attest to this argument by emphasising that young people venture to join youth enterprises because they are unable to find employment.

A young person's desire to venture into entrepreneurship can be disrupted by several factors, especially for youth residing in rural areas and townships. These claims are supported by the

work of Herrington et al. (2010) who attest that young people in South Africa who have an interest in being entrepreneurs find it very difficult to realise this dream due to a lack of mentors. Mentorship linkage is essential to young inspiring entrepreneurs. Therefore, agencies tasked with addressing youth unemployment should have good policies in place that seek to address mentorship and linkage matters. Youth entrepreneurship scholars argue that entrepreneurship education can play a pivotal role to cultivate young people's desire to start their own businesses (2011). These remarks call upon transformation of the South African education system where entrepreneurship should be compulsory from primary schools to honours level. This will change the old tradition of being job seekers to becoming job creators. Starting a business requires some financial muscles in order for young people to be equipped for the challenges they may encounter. Murimi (2014) alludes to the fact that Black youth who had access to funding were much more likely to venture to youth enterprises compared to those who had no access to resources. This finding reveals that Black youths who received funding from government agencies or family financial support are much more likely to start and run a successful business. Entrepreneurial studies demonstrated that young people who had any form of training in business gained the necessary skills to drive them to start their own business (Olugbala, 2017). In addition, these youths are more likely to run a successful business and hire unemployed youth. Furthermore, some of the youths who grow up in an entrepreneurship environment were more likely to start their own businesses.

Youth unemployment has been noted as the number one factor to influence youth enterprises globally. A study that focuses solely on the correlation between underemployment and youth enterprise is not well documented. A study conducted by Fritsch (2012) was relatively close to filling that gap by demonstrating that young people in a modern society where everything is changing dramatically find no pleasure in doing traditional jobs. Therefore, entrepreneurship is the only solution that young people have. Women venture to become entrepreneurs because they want security and to be financially independent and achieve work-life balance (Justo et al., 2015). According to Chauke and Obadire (2020), talents and creativity in the 21st century are among other

reasons that give rise to Black-youth-run businesses.

Youth fanaticism is a new subject in entrepreneurship development research and plays a significant role in influencing a young person to embark on entrepreneurship. The rise of technology encourages young people to explore a new area. In addition, the old traditional boss may be an impediment for a young person to innovate. Kaur (2012) supports this statement in his work by emphasising that young people start their own business because they do not want to report to anyone and follow the old protocol. Therefore, doing their own thing is the only option that brings excitement to their lives.

Despite the inner drive for youth to start a business, proper training is needed for youth to understand the importance of running a successful business (Ellis and Williams, 2011; Ekpe, Razak, Ismaili and Abdullah, 2015). Moreover, a young emerging entrepreneur needs some skills such as soft skills, communication skills, time management skills, and leadership skills (Kline, 2015). In the context of South African youth enterprise development, the National Youth Development Agency has been doing a wonderful job by providing young emerging entrepreneurs with a life skills programme for the past ten years that helped the youth to know who they are before they venture into business.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed a social learning theory that is founded by Bandura. According to Bandura (1976), social learning theory is based on the assumption that a person's behaviour, attitude, and drive to do something is shaped by the surrounding environment. Moreover, this theory attribution is based on rewards and punishment. The individual will observe someone else's behaviour to see if the behaviour is rewarding or punishable. Thereafter, if the behaviour is perceived to be rewarding the individual is more likely to produce the same behaviour. In the context of this paper, the researcher argues that Black youth's drive to start their businesses emanates from seeing other successful Black persons who were once unemployed and decided to venture to initiate an enterprise and began to make an honest living by becoming successful. In addition, social learning theory is the best theory to be used in entrepreneurship education in South Africa from primary to tertiary

level where the youth will be exposed to a practical entrepreneurship system and will be coached by successful young businessmen and women.

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose is to shine a new light on youth entrepreneurship by investigating socio-economic determinates of entrepreneurship trends among Black youth in the Vhembe District Municipality.

Methodology

The research methodology used in this study was a qualitative approach. The research approach aims to understand the world through people's perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and motives (Hossain, 2011; Mertler and Charles, 2011; Neuman, 2011). Chauke and Malatji (2018) note that the qualitative approach helps the researcher to save time since it involves a small group of people to participate in the study. Chauke and Mudua (2019) allude to the fact that a qualitative approach is human-oriented because it drives the researcher to interact with the participants in a face-to-face discussion to understand the study investigated. A qualitative approach was useful in this study, because a small group of Black youth were interviewed and their attempts to start businesses were explored through face-to-face discussions. This study was conducted in a natural setting, and the Black youth were given the opportunity to answer questions regarding what drives them to venture into enterprises. This study comprises a case study approach, because of its usefulness in qualitative research. As is common in case studies (Kumar, 2011), observations and interviews formed a crucial part of the research.

This paper made use of purposive sampling by selecting Black youths who share the common experience of being entrepreneurs. Purposive sampling is defined as a sub-type of non-probability sampling that seeks to sample participants who share the same characteristics (De Vos et al., 2011). Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2007) assert that population is a group of people who are sampled by the researcher to act as participants in the study with the aim of understanding the world through their experience. This study's target population consisted of 10 young people aged 18–35 years old who own businesses.

“ The aim of the study was to investigate socio-economic determinates of entrepreneurship trends among Black youth in the Vhembe District Municipality. The findings revealed that Black youth venture into entrepreneurship for the following five major reasons: because of underemployment; for the empowerment of their community; in order to stimulate economic growth; because of a scarcity of jobs; and in order to pursue self-fulfilment. ”

The participants in the study were sampled in the Vhembe District Municipality, South Africa.

Gender was taken into consideration in this study, with five young men and five young women selected to participate. All the participants had tertiary qualifications. Seven were living with their parents and siblings, while two had families of their own. The dominant languages spoken by the participants are Xitsonga and Tshivenda. The participants reported that their families were able to afford their basic needs. This study was carried out in the historically rural area of Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The district is estimated to have 1.1 million inhabitants (Statistics South Africa, 2011). It shares borders with Botswana, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. The district is composed of four local municipalities, namely: Collins Chabane, Thulamela, Makhado, and Musina. The area is predominantly rural and has a number of foreigners, mainly from African countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, some of whom own small businesses. It is composed of diverse groups such as Black Africans and Indians. According to Vhembe District Municipality (2018), 4.4% of South Africa's total agricultural output, 8.4% of its sub-tropical fruit, and 6.3% of its citrus are produced in the Vhembe District. The district is one of the most impoverished areas in Limpopo Province, with a high rate of youth unemployment. Cadre deployment and tribalism were indicated as some of the factors that fuel youth unemployment. This district was selected because of its high number of unemployed graduates as an appropriate location to find out why Black youth venture into entrepreneurship, from the perspective of Black youth.

The researcher used unstructured individual interviews to gather data; this was done in a conversational manner between the researcher and the young people. The unstructured individual interview was very useful in this study, because it helped the researcher to gather in-depth information. Collins (2010) and De Vos (2013) assert that unstructured individual interviews are also known as conversations which allow for individuals' points of view and perceptions to be explored in detail. The researcher arranged a convenient time and place where he met the participants with prepared questions.

The research used thematic data analysis; thematic coding enabled the researcher to gather in-depth information from the responses given by the participants. Davidson's (1997) data analysis in qualitative research involves making sense of the data collected to understand the social phenomena investigated. In the case of this study, the researcher carefully interpreted the data through the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the study. Informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation were practiced in this study. The participants were informed about the study and its intentions, and were assured that their names would not be shared with the public. Babbie (2006) highlights the importance of ethical considerations and of providing participants with accurate information about the study to allow them to make informed decisions about their participation. Trustworthiness was taken into consideration in this study and credibility was achieved by making sure that the report was prepared for the participants to check.

Results and Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate socio-economic determinates of entrepreneurship trends among Black youth in the Vhembe District Municipality. The findings revealed that Black youth venture into entrepreneurship for the following five major reasons: because of underemployment; for the empowerment of their community; in order to stimulate economic growth; because of a scarcity of jobs; and in order to pursue self-fulfilment. The issues raised by the participants in relation to each of these reasons are discussed in detail below.

Themes	Description
Underemployment	Black youths venture to become engaged in entrepreneurship in order to improve their monthly income, as most of these Black youths were once underemployed.
Community Empowerment	Black youths venture into entrepreneurship in order to empower their community.
Stimulate Economic Growth	Black youths venture into business so that they can create jobs for others and contribute to economic growth in South Africa.
Scarcity of Jobs	Black youths venture to join youth enterprises because they are unable to find employment. Therefore, self-employment is the only available option they have.
Self-fulfilment	Black youths start their own businesses for self-fulfilment where they find joy in running their own businesses

Underemployment

The study findings revealed that there was a common understanding among nine participants that the main aim of venturing to join youth enterprises is to improve one's monthly income, as most of these Black youths were once underemployed. Underemployment in this study refers to Black youths who are highly qualified, were employed in a lower position, and were paid a salary that did not meet their level of qualification. Thus, the Black youths deemed it essential to start their own businesses to meet their basic needs, rather than being underemployed and generating a lower income. Justo et al. (2015) attest that women start their own business in order to achieve economic

freedom, to be financially independent, and to achieve a work-life balance. One participant stated:

P1: 'I hold an honours degree; I have been working as an administrator for years. My contributions were taken for granted at all the companies I worked for. I was best known for making copies, printing, and nothing else. So, exploring entrepreneurship was the only

option left for me to escape this unbearable situation.'

Contrary to P1's view, P2 asserted that being underemployed was not a problem at all. In fact, this experience enabled her to discover her own passion to help people who are in need and to begin to be creative. Ngorora and Mago (2018) argue that young people start their own business because they have ideas to implement. Another participant said:

P3: 'I desire to make a meaningful impact in this world before I leave for good, and starting my own business will help me to leave a legacy to my children. Unlike if am hired by a government when I die, someone will replace me, but in business, my children will take over.'

This indicates that Black youth in the Vhembe District Municipality understand the importance of leaving something behind for the next generation. Black youth feel that becoming involved in entrepreneurship will enable them to leave a legacy behind, and to counter the commonly held false impression that Black youth are lazy.

Community Empowerment

With the number of socio-economic challenges that South Africa is confronted with, it is very important for new ideas to be generated that can solve challenges that communities face, especially in townships and villages. There is a dire need for creative and innovative solutions in our communities. P5 mentioned that people residing in villages struggle a lot to travel to town to buy necessities such as vegetables. She therefore desired to open a community vegetable garden where she could sell products to the community at a cheap price, which would help customers to not have to travel to town to buy these products. This remark reflects that Black youth sometimes venture into entrepreneurship with the aim of solving existing problems within their communities. Others venture into enterprise in order to make money (Olugbola, 2017). One participant commented:

P4: 'There is a higher rate of crime committed by young people in my village so I want to start my own businesses so I can empower youth in my community by hiring them.'

Based on the above quotation, it is clear that some youth begin their own business in order to help reduce anti-social behaviour such as crime and to bring positive reinforcement into young people's lives by improving their economical background. Young Black entrepreneurs aspire to empower youth within their community by hiring them and contributing to job creation. This is consistent with the work of Ngorora and Mago (2018) who argue that young entrepreneurs use their ideas to solve problems within their communities.

Black youths also venture into entrepreneurship because they have identified a gap in the market and intend to fill that gap. For instance, one participant explained that they had set up a business to assist university students in their community:

P8: 'I have seen a need for a photocopying and printing machine within the University of Venda then I have decided to venture to that business to ensure students do not go off campus to look for this product and service while we are here. The business is not formally registered but I am

planning to expand it one day.'

Stimulation of Economic Growth

The South African economic growth rate is slow in comparison with other countries on the continent, such as Ghana and Rwanda. Ghana's economy was able to grow fast in comparison with South Africa's, because it focused on small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs). South Africa's slow economic growth rate can be linked to poverty and a high rate of unemployment, especially among Black youth. Against this backdrop, all 10 participants indicated that they are venturing into their own businesses in order to contribute to South Africa's economic growth and to assist with job creation. According to Osoro and Areba (2013) entrepreneurship enables young people to be economically active and to contribute to a country's wealth and job creation. As one participant stated:

P5: 'South Africa's future, economically speaking, depends on entrepreneurship, particularly on small businesses. There is evidence backed by numerous research that shows that small businesses create more jobs and stimulate economic growth compared to big players in the market and more funding is needed. So, I want to be part of the people who will contribute to economic growth. In addition, the coronavirus exposed problems. As a country we need to rethink informal trading based on research where the market is much more competitive.'

The above quote clearly demonstrates that youth are keen to contribute to South Africa's economic development by starting their own businesses. Furthermore, Black youths recognise that informal trading suffered severely during Covid-19, and that the government needs to channel more funding into supporting Black youth enterprises.

Scarcity of Jobs

Findings in this theme revealed that scarcity of jobs was a major reason for Black youth to start their own businesses in the Vhembe District Municipality. The study further revealed that the majority of young people go to a higher education institute with the hope

of being able to secure better employment after the completion of their studies, only to find that jobs are still scarce. Therefore, the only way to escape this sad reality of youth unemployment is to start a business. Nassim et al. (2017) support this finding by indicating that young people venture to join youth enterprises because they are unable to find employment. This finding is supported by the below responses:

P6: 'I went to university with the hope that one day I will get a good job but, it turns out to be impossible, so I left and decided to open my own business.'

P7: 'I was unemployed for three years after attaining my qualification; then I started to approach NYDA for funding so I can start my own business. I realised, here in the Vhembe District Municipality, if you are not connected to the ruling party or belong to certain tribes you will not get a job. So, starting my own business was the best solution. Even though NYDA did not fund my business, I will not lose hope.'

The above quotation indicates that scarcity of jobs can in part be explained by ethnicity discrimination and cadre deployment in the Vhembe District Municipality, making it very difficult for young graduates to secure employment. Therefore, venturing to engage in a youth enterprise is the best alternative for Black youths to create jobs for themselves. Moreover, Chauke and Obadire (2020) maintain that lack of job opportunities for youths in South Africa remain a challenge. The youths venture to commence with entrepreneurship to create jobs for themselves. The National Youth Development Agency, despite the disappointment that some of the young emerging entrepreneurs have faced, is still seen as the best option for Black youth to secure funding. One participant said:

P10: 'There is no better gift that a person can give others than helping them to put food on the table. I have a business administration qualification. So, I have skills on how to run a business. Therefore, I have started a business to employ others so I can change their lives.'

Reflecting on the above responses from the 10 participants, the study findings revealed that young

people venture to become entrepreneurs with the aim of improving the lives of other people economically by creating jobs for them. More so, having a qualification in business administration is the most empowering qualification for Black youths to start their own businesses in the Vhembe District Municipality. This finding is in relationship with the work of King'ori (2012), Chiloane-Tsoko and Botha (2015) who attest that youth who have formal education especially in business-related studies are much more likely to start their own business.

Self-Fulfilment

Success in humankind is deeply rooted in self-fulfilment. In this theme, the study findings revealed that Black youths start their own business for self-fulfilment where they find joy in running their own businesses. More so, self-fulfilment emanates from the desire to be in charge. This confirms the observation of Sharu (2013) that young people easily generate new ideas to start their own businesses, as opposed to working in the corporate world where everything is already in place. Kaur (2012) argues that young people venture into enterprises in order to be their own boss. This finding is supported by the below:

P9: 'I have worked for a corporate company for a few years; I used to get bored as there was no creativity. I then decided to start my own business so I can come up with something new that can address today's challenges.'

Reflecting on the above statement, one can conclude that Black youths venture to begin new enterprises with the aim of discovering their true potential that the corporate world fails to acknowledge. Therefore, embarking on entrepreneurship is both financially rewarding and provides a space for creativity.

Conclusion

This study indicated that there are multiple socio-economic factors in the Vhembe District Municipality that are associated with Black-youth-owned enterprises. Black youth venture to become entrepreneurs because of underemployment, job scarcity, and out of a desire to stimulate economic growth. Black youths of the 21st century find no pleasure in being underemployed or working in the

corporate world where there is no room for creativity and innovation. They often start their own businesses in order to pursue this creativity and innovation: skills that are needed in the 21st century for young people to succeed. This study concludes that Black youth pursue entrepreneurship for different reasons: some do it out of necessity, whereas others do it out of choice. The limitation of this paper is that only a few Black youth from the Vhembe District Municipality participated in the study, and the results therefore cannot be generalised to the entire population in South Africa.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

The following are some of the recommendations from the study:

- The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in the Presidency, in collaboration with the Department of Small Business Enterprise Development and the National Youth Development Agency, should provide a two-year internship for young Black entrepreneurs in foreign companies that specialize in mining, technology, creative industries, and agriculture. When these Black youth return home, the government should set aside a Presidential Youth Fund to assist them to start their own businesses in the same industry.
- The National Youth Development Agency, in collaboration with the Small Enterprise Development Agency, should strengthen mentorship and a linkage programme to ensure that all funded youth entrepreneurs have a mentor who specialises in their business to coach them and link their products and services with the international market.
- Professional Youth Workers are trained to fully take responsibility to influence the mind of the young generation to improve their lives through youth development principles and practices. Therefore, South Africa should professionalise youth work and task youths with the coordination, management, and implementation of outreach programmes that will positively change the mind of Black youth to venture to become entrepreneurs.
- The private sector in South Africa should set up a coordinated Youth Enterprise Fund that will assist small businesses and informal trading without any political interference per province.
- An exploratory study on challenges faced by youth-owned businesses in South Africa using gender analysis should be conducted.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the young people who participated in this study.

Competing Interests

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

Funding Information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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