



YOUTH-OWNED MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN KENYA: CONTRIBUTIONS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

Youth-owned enterprises have increasingly been seen as playing instrumental roles in the economies of many countries across the globe. These enterprises operate in volatile business environments characterized by the globalization of markets, making it necessary to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness. This study used a systemic review approach of relevant literature to understand the role of youth-owned enterprises in economic development, the key challenges faced and the existing opportunities they can exploit. Findings from the review of literature established that youth-owned enterprises make key contributions to economic development through the generation of unique products, effective utilization of available resources, promotion of creativity and innovation, wealth and employment creation. However, the enterprises still grapple with several challenges, including discrimination, inadequate skills, limited access to credit, and poor access to markets and linkages. Most enterprises also face a missing middle phenomenon making it challenging to graduate to the next growth phases. A proper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for youth-owned enterprises is key to instituting suitable and healthy government policies that can enhance the enterprises' sustainability and scalability. Such measures are key in enabling the successful transition of enterprises from startup to scale-up. The study concludes with recommendations for addressing key challenges, exploiting available opportunities, and boosting the competitiveness of youth-owned enterprises.

Keywords: Scalability, Youth Owned Enterprises, Opportunities, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

The youth of today have been acknowledged as a key resource in the society (Rojas, 2020). For this reason, a number of measures have been initiated to support them in overcoming the various challenges that they are still grappling with; high unemployment rates, abuse of drugs, and HIV and Aids. According to the UN (n.d.), one of the measures taken for advancing youth development is their inclusion in sustainable development efforts associated with the 2030 Agenda. This has been achieved through entrepreneurial acceleration interventions that address issues of the development of human, financial and social capital, and also policy issues. Besides, there has been a gradual increase in the dedication of youth entrepreneurship across the globe in the past years characterized by investments by the government and private sector players such as academics, practitioners and policymakers. This is creating empowered youths who are better placed to improve both their well-being and the economies of their countries, and also highlights the concept of entrepreneurship, which is considered an asset in the economy of nations.

Since more youth are likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (OECD & European Commission, 2014), a great entrepreneurship environment becomes a key ingredient in supporting the development and implementation of prospective innovations. Important to note is that most youths are innovative and can develop competitive products that can thrive in complex, volatile and dynamic business environments (Adam & Alarifi, 2021). Therefore, countries aiming to attain meaningful economic growth and development must implement measures to boost entrepreneurial activities, that is, create a healthy and supportive entrepreneurial climate. Such measures may include reforming regulatory environments to make acquiring permits and licenses easier and more affordable, promoting market linkages among entrepreneurs and availing more financial capital to enterprises through tax incentives, subsidies or credit. Additionally, the capacities of emerging entrepreneurs can be enhanced through training on entrepreneurial and managerial skills. These measures can be foundational in the long-term economic development of nations (Tubey et al., 2018): they encourage the establishment and thriving of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

MSMEs are major drivers of most emerging nations' economic growth. The entities form about 90% of businesses globally, and contribute about 40% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of emerging economies (World Bank, 2018). In Kenya, these enterprises play a crucial role in the country's economic development and growth through employment creation, poverty reduction, exploitation of markets, improved living standards and boosting innovation (KIPPRA, 2010). The government of Kenya has recognized the crucial roles played by these enterprises in

the economic well-being of the country and has developed various programs to support the enterprises financially and non-financially. This includes access to finance, markets, mentorship, training opportunities and the correct entrepreneurial mindsets, which can contribute to the long-term success of enterprises (Franz & Omolo, 2014).

To explore this further, this paper aims to examine the contributions, challenges faced by MSMEs in Kenya, with a focus on youth ownership, and thereafter discuss the future opportunities of the same. It starts with a short review of literature on the area of youth entrepreneurship development in Kenya to shed light on the current situation of the youth-owned MSMEs in the country. This is done by focusing on youth entrepreneurship and the major policy milestones for its development in the country. Additionally, the study addresses the various contributions of youth-owned enterprises and the challenges they face. The study further highlights the theoretical foundation and research methodology used by the study. Lastly, the study's findings are discussed and recommendations made for policymakers on various strategies which can be used to promote youth entrepreneurship in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section puts the study in context by looking at the concept of youth, youth entrepreneurship, whereby youth-owned MSMEs will be highlighted, and the extent of youth entrepreneurship development in Kenya, that is, the policy interventions the government of Kenya has put in place to promote youth entrepreneurship. Again, while many theories attempt to explain the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, this review will only focus on one entrepreneurship theory, that is, Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction to ground the literature uncovered.

Youth in Kenya

Governments, international agencies and various organizations define the term youth differently. While the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth of Nations define youth as members of the population between 15-24 and 15-29 years of age respectively, the government of Kenya, through its new constitution, defines youth as any person between 18-35 years (GoK, 2010). From this definition, the NCPD (2017) reports a seeming youth bulge in Kenya over the years, with an estimated 17.8 million in 2020, and 22.3 million youth by 2030 as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Population Projections of Youth (15-34 years) computed from the 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999 Census

Year	Total Population (Million)	Population aged 15-34 (Million)	Percentage of Youth aged 15-34 years to total population
1969	10.9	3.8	30.41%
1979	15.3	4.9	32.25%
1989	21.4	7.0	32.97%
1999	28.7	10.1	35.49%
2010	38.5	13.3	34.55%
2015	44.2	15.8	35.75%
2020	50.3	17.8	35.39%
2025	57.0	19.8	34.74%
2030	63.9	22.3	34.90%

Source: (NCPD, 2017)

The above shows that the youth form a significant percentage of the Kenyan population, currently at 54.03 million (World Bank, 2022), meaning there are great economic and social opportunities, and threats simultaneously (NCPD, 2017). With a focus on the latter, O'Neill (2023) reports a high level of unemployment among Kenyan youth, stating that the number of youths actively searching for employment and not working is at an estimated 13.35%. To avoid the negative implications of this unemployment rate, however, the government of Kenya has been creating opportunities for these individuals to get jobs by nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship as discussed in the section below.

Youth Entrepreneurship and Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Kenya

Youth Entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship can be described as the process through which unique qualities such as creativity, innovation and risk-taking are practically applied by individuals aged between 18-35 in their places of work (either self-employed or working for startups) (Chigunta, Schnurr & James-Wilson, 2005). In Kenya, a rise in youth entrepreneurship has been witnessed over the past few years (Kaburi et al., 2013), with many of these youth-owned enterprises starting off as home-based businesses and thereafter expanding. According to Shahbal (2021), these enterprises are mostly in the clothing and fashion, entertainment, cosmetics and food distribution industries. Other economic sectors served by MSMEs are agriculture, transport, real estate, communication and trade. Overall, there are about 7.4 million MSMEs in Kenya according to a 2016 survey by the Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (CBK, 2023). This number has since gone up, however, following the different technological advancements in the

country, and the increased access to financing (bank credit), as reported in a survey by the Central Bank of Kenya. Consequently, the livelihoods of Kenyans and the economic prosperity of the country have been enhanced.

Despite good entrepreneurship prospects, the youth in Africa still grapple with various challenges in their endeavors. Research carried out in South Africa reveals challenges associated with limited skills, access to credit, poor infrastructure, limited awareness about training and support opportunities (Gwija et al., 2014), unfriendly government policies, and slow growth rates of enterprises (Rachidi, 2014). The same challenges were discovered in research done in Ethiopia (Alamineh, 2020) and Kenya (Njeri and Mutundu, 2021), the conclusion being that enterprises need support in the identified areas to achieve long-term success (Aya, Senaji, & Njeru (2018). Access to timely and affordable financial and non-financial incentives enabled by favorable government policies and regulations should positively and considerably influence the performance and sustainability of youth-owned enterprises. Some of the efforts put by the Government of Kenya concerning the same are discussed below.

Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Kenya

There are a number of policy interventions the government of Kenya (GoK) has put in place to promote youth entrepreneurship. Programs, including youth and women enterprise development funds, have been developed through policies to facilitate the creation of entrepreneurial ventures (Sagwe, Gicharu & Mahea, 2011). For instance, the government of Kenya conceived Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) in June 2006 as a strategic move towards promoting self-employment through the provision of financial and advisory support, thereby arresting high unemployment among the youth in Kenya (Kanyari & Namusonge, 2013; Youth Enterprise Development Fund, 2016). This fund has been specifically tailored to enhance the youth development programs with a specific focus on self-employment via entrepreneurship initiatives. Youth can access these funds either as individuals or as groups, and the collateral to secure the money borrowed has been made affordable in the sense that they can be in the form of a group guarantee, guaranteed by parents, relatives or even community leaders. However, these initiatives are not without challenges, as unemployment among youth remains high in Kenya (Okirigiti & Rafey, 2015).

The government also developed the Ajira Program, which has offered training on online jobs to more than 11,000 youths across Kenya. The creation of the Uwezo Fund was meant to assist youth-owned enterprises with access to timely and affordable credit (Budget Policy Statement, 2019). These measures were expected to solve the unemployment crises that the country is grappling with, thereby enhancing the participation of the youths in nation-building. By

participating in enterprise development and strategic partnerships, youths are better empowered to make meaningful contributions towards the country's economic growth and development. The enterprises led by youths have also been linked with established enterprises, thereby building their capacities. Such support makes youth-owned enterprises more competitive and better equipped to handle future challenges (Njeri & Mutundu, 2021).

Measures have also been implemented to facilitate entrepreneurship training in institutions of higher learning nationwide. First, entrepreneurship units have been introduced in technical institutions, colleges and universities to impart relevant knowledge and skills that can assist graduates to start and run enterprises sustainably. The government has also introduced several technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions across the country with the sole goal of empowering the youth to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods. These institutions have been acknowledged for their crucial role in supporting the development of capacities of trainees' the majority of whom have been empowered to start their enterprises (Sambo, 2016). Again, several private sector organizations, such as NGOs and financial institutions, are also offering business training opportunities to youths so that these individuals can become effective agents of change. Such investments in entrepreneurship education and training play a crucial role in boosting youths' capacities, thereby contributing to nations' socio-economic development (European Commission, 2012; Simiyu & Sambu, 2012; Franz & Omolo, 2014). For instance, the government has recently partnered with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) to launch a youth entrepreneurship program - Kenya Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program (K-YEEAP) that aims to create entrepreneurship opportunities for the youth by leveraging digital advancements and technology (Standard Media, 2022). This program also facilitates coaching and business mentorship by working hand-in-hand with the TVET ecosystem to support the youth-owned MSMEs (KEPSA, 2022). As more tech giants such as Intel, Google and IBM strengthen their operations in Kenya, such and more initiatives are necessary to promote youth-driven entrepreneurial development and innovation in the Kenyan economy.

Theoretical Foundation

This study was grounded in entrepreneurship theory, specifically Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction. The idea of "creative destruction" was proposed by Joseph Schumpeter, and focused on replacing old ways of doing things with economically viable new combinations. Schumpeter (1942) argued that it is not possible to separate innovation from entrepreneurship, agreeing with Audretsch (2015)'s that charismatic entrepreneurs can achieve revolutionary changes by applying creative destruction as a crucial origin of innovations. In context,

Schumpeter's five types of innovation, which includes the development of new products or services, new industry structures, new markets, new sources of raw materials and new methods of production (Schumpeter, 1975) create new opportunities of development and growth, in terms of employment and investments. The entrepreneur, in this case, the youth, can be regarded as agents of change who can play a great role in the expansion of the economic environment by introducing disruptive innovations.

While MSMEs experience various challenges as mentioned earlier, Verreyne et al. (2019) state that they still manage to innovate, increasing the attention of many scholars and policymakers. There has been little clarity on the factors that contribute to increased innovation and entrepreneurial activity. Thus, this theory will help shed light on how the features of entrepreneurs, that is, energy, determination, intelligence, and alertness (Cantner, Goethner, & Silbereisen, 2017), which are characteristic of the youth (UNICEF, 2020) affect how the MSMEs perform currently and in future.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review methodology was at the heart of this paper. The paper reviewed relevant literature on the contributions, challenges, and future opportunities for youth-owned MSMEs. The objective of the systematic review was to present a balanced and impartial summary of the existing research. The independent studies' findings were combined and analyzed using the meta-analysis study design. A meta-analysis is a statistical process of analyzing and combining results from several similar studies. It offers a rational and helpful way of dealing with several practical difficulties that beset anyone trying to make sense of effective research (Guzzo, Jackson, & Katzell, 1987; Gurevitch et al., 2018). Meta-analysis was carried out through desktop research on the study variables.

FINDINGS

Contributions of Youth-Owned MSMEs in Kenya

A country with thriving youth-owned enterprises can gain numerous socio-economic benefits; economic development and societal well-being. This is because youths are known to be agile, full of energy and creative, putting them in a good position to adapt and embrace change (UNICEF, 2020). Therefore, supporting youth-owned enterprises brings numerous benefits extending beyond the youth entrepreneurs in question. To begin, youth entrepreneurs make crucial contributions towards stimulating creativity and innovation in the nation (Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, 2019). Many youth entrepreneurs are well-educated, exposed and willing to take calculated risks, placing them in a better position to transform

unique ideas into valuable products and processes, which are key in reaching global markets. These young entrepreneurs are well versed with fundamental technologies such as productivity and connectivity tools, key ingredients of success in the current competitive business environments. Having a good online presence and effectively utilizing social networks to create new demands, and learn (Adeosun & Shittu, 2021) for instance, has enabled the MSMEs to adapt rapidly to the changes taking place in the business environments, and fostered by more competitive economies.

These technological capacities of youth entrepreneurs in Kenya have boosted innovative outputs, benefiting key organizational stakeholders, including the government, customers and communities. The innovative contributions have helped in diminishing some of the social challenges humanity is currently grappling with. Examples include environmentally-friendly innovations that serve under-served communities such as the eco-toilet by Saniwise Technologies (Brown, 2023), and several startups trying to address environmental challenges such as climate change, and food insecurity. A few of the current initiatives by the Kenyan youth under climate action include Ukulima Tech, which addresses food security, Jiamini Unaweza Youth Group in Migori County, championing waste management, and The Adopt A Tree Initiative, which advocates for environmental conservation (Mutuku, 2018). Again, efforts to introduce unique agricultural techniques built on available agricultural sector competence that extend to higher-value outcomes encourage economic diversification since they catalyze economic activities in new, higher-growth sectors. Examples of youth-owned enterprises in this sector include Agribusiness Solutions Limited, PlantVillage, agriBORA Limited, AmTech Technologies Limited, and SunCulture (George, 2023). Such MSMEs not only solve supply chain inefficiencies thereby boosting financial profit for agricultural stakeholders but also enhance food security in the country.

Opportunities for Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Kenya

A number of programs and initiatives have been put in place by both the government and private sector players aimed at supporting and empowering the youths in the country. The initiatives and programs aim to create an enabling business environment and increase youth employment, boost access to various financial products, provide technical assistance, and build the capacities of young entrepreneurs. Below is a discussion of the key initiatives and programs.

The Kenyan government established the Youth Enterprise Development Fund in 2006 as a flagship project of Vision 2030. The fund aimed to promote enterprise development, thus boosting the participation of youths in nation-building through the exploitation of economic opportunities (YEDF, 2016). Access to timely and affordable financial and business

development support services is crucial in enabling youths to start and grow their enterprises sustainably (GoK, 2002; Muthee, 2010). Thus, the fund aimed to fill this gap by addressing the problem of high unemployment rates by encouraging youths to participate in entrepreneurship rather than pursuing limited job opportunities.

The government of Kenya also established the Uwezo Fund on 8th September 2013 with the sole aim of enabling youths and women to gain easy access to mentorship opportunities, grants, and interest-free loans (Uwezo Fund, n.d.). The government allocated 30 per cent of its procurement opportunities to youths, women and people with disabilities; hence the fund was expected to assist in access to such opportunities. Through the initiative, the youths were more empowered since they had opportunities to do business with the government. The fund was seen as a good tool that could foster gainful self-employment among the targeted groups.

Again, the government has introduced entrepreneurship courses at institutions of higher learning to promote the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge among youths. Entrepreneurship education enables youths to develop their self-esteem, placing them in a good position to recognize and utilize commercial opportunities. The learners are exposed to a diverse range of subjects, including management, marketing, finance and information systems, which, combined with the right entrepreneurial mindset, can assist youths to start and run sustainable enterprises. These efforts aim to make the youths see entrepreneurship as a viable career option, thereby promoting self-employment among graduates (Karanja, Ithinji, & Nyaboga, 2016).

Several incubation centers have also been introduced nationwide through partnerships between the government and private sector players. Major public and private universities have incubators where graduates can turn their ideas into reality. Through the incubators, emerging entrepreneurs can have access to key resources and services such as market research, networking opportunities, technical support, working spaces, mentoring, and drafting business plans (Omweri, 2016; Muriithi, Wanjau, & Omondi, 2018; Konyango, 2021). The centers are also sources of additional advisory services on intellectual property and information on sources of markets and credit.

Key Challenges Faced by Youth-Owned MSMEs in Kenya

Kenyan youth entrepreneurs are still grappling with several complex challenges that have made it difficult for them to make meaningful progress in their entrepreneurial pursuits, ultimately slowing down the country's economic growth (Okirigiti & Rafey, 2015). These internal and external challenges have complicated most youths' abilities to have access to meaningful and honest living. The challenges have increased the vulnerabilities of youths in Kenya, forcing

most of them into a state of hopelessness and despair. Below is a discussion of the key challenges;

Limited access to affordable and timely credit – Most youth-owned enterprises lack collateral that financial institutions demand as conditions to access loans. This limits the funding sources of youth-owned enterprises, making it difficult to participate in entrepreneurial undertakings (Okirigiti & Rafey, 2015). Lack of collateral has been acknowledged as a key barrier most youth-owned enterprises face in their attempts to access credit from financial institutions. The lack of performance history of most of the enterprises makes the enterprises less attractive to investors and financial institutions. Limited access to timely and affordable credit negatively affects youth-owned enterprises' growth, performance and long-term sustainability (Mwangi & Shem, 2012; Sharu & Guyo, 2015; Murithii, 2017).

Lack of entrepreneurial skills – Most youth entrepreneurs operating in both developed and developing economies still face limited access to opportunities for educational advancement and training in technical skills. Limited entrepreneurial skills have been recognized as a key factor contributing to the high failure rates of enterprises led by youths (Valerio, Parton, & Robb, 2014). Enterprises led by skilled individuals are in a better position to come up with products that meet customer needs, thereby achieving superior performance. Skilled entrepreneurs can also conduct key analyses including industry, competitor, SWOT and PESTEL, thus boosting the chances of success of their enterprises (Sharu & Guyo, 2015).

Discrimination – Youth-owned enterprises still face a lot of discrimination entirely on age. Some cultures believe that the wisdom needed to run businesses successfully comes with age; thus, most youths are not trusted fully to have such wisdom. (Kaburi et al., 2013). Youths have also been perceived as immature and troublemakers, making it challenging to access business opportunities (Mahinda, 2004). Youth-led enterprises still face great discrimination when it comes to accessing financial products. Skilled and knowledgeable workers are also skeptical about working for enterprises the youths lead.

Limited access to markets – Youth entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing markets for their products due to a lack of relevant market information, higher costs of transactions and tough competition. This makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to gain access to key opportunities in the markets, ultimately slowing down the growth of the enterprises. Access to suitable markets enhances the chances of an enterprise's expansion and capacity to earn better income. Better market access increases sales since more consumers know about available goods and services. Most youth entrepreneurs are not members of business clubs, making it difficult to market their products easily (Sharu & Guyo, 2015).

Socio-cultural expectations – Various societies have put a lot of emphasis on white-collar jobs. Youths who have gotten white-collar jobs are seen to be more successful when compared to those running startups. Most youths across societies who have engaged in entrepreneurship have received minimal encouragement and support (Kimando, Njogu & Kihoro, 2012). It has been argued that what Kenyan society expects from its youths is unclear. The expectations of the youths, their parents and the societies are not well aligned and are constantly conflicting (KVDA, 2015).

Limited access to business development services – Youth-owned enterprises are still struggling with access to the right mentors, business networks, incubators and business clubs. Access to these services plays a crucial role in attaining the long-term sustainability of entities beyond the startup stage. There is a scarcity of packaged information on existing entrepreneurial opportunities that youth entrepreneurs can exploit, pushing their enterprises beyond the startup phase.

Regulatory obstacles – Youth-owned enterprises still face unfriendly regulatory policies instituted by national and county governments, making starting and growing enterprises challenging. An unhealthy and ineffective economic environment makes it difficult for young entrepreneurs to succeed in their business pursuits. There are several institutional barriers, including rules and regulations, property rights and the last effectiveness of government offices' services (Aya, Senaji, & Njeru, 2018).

DISCUSSION

Youth-owned enterprises make instrumental contributions towards economic development; hence they cannot be ignored. As the current paper demonstrates, youth-owned enterprises have been acknowledged for their contributions towards promoting creativity and innovation, wealth and employment creation. The government of Kenya has instituted several policy interventions to support youths to start and operate their enterprises profitably. Efforts have been made to improve the country's infrastructural facilities to encourage enterprises' growth. Additionally, efforts have been made to address key challenges facing youth-owned enterprises, such as limited access to business development services, regulatory obstacles, socio-cultural barriers, discrimination, limited access to markets and credit and lack of entrepreneurial skills. Addressing these challenges effectively can play a key role in putting Kenya on a leadership map regarding economic competitiveness, innovation and development. Through the positive contributions of youth-owned enterprises, the country can change its economic status, thereby positioning itself as an economic powerhouse. The country is rich with valuable and unique resources, which, if well harnessed, can put the country on the right path

towards achieving millennium development goals. Supporting young entrepreneurs enables them to innovate continuously, easily adapting to volatile business environments by creating competitive products.

CONCLUSIONS

Youths make crucial contributions towards the economic development of their nations. Putting in place measures that can engage the youths in empowerment, training, education, and employment is key to involving the youths in nation-building. Therefore, putting in place healthy policy measures along these lines can greatly influence the personal development of youths and the economic development of the nation at large. Well-trained, educated and empowered youths are better placed to overcome various challenges they face and start and run enterprises sustainably, exploiting available entrepreneurial opportunities. The majority of youths feel marginalised, idle and hopeless, a state of affairs that is risky for any country that aims to attain meaningful economic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government has a great role in supporting youth-owned enterprises by ensuring that the national policy environment is conducive to the growth and sustainability of the enterprises. Thus, targeted policies aimed at addressing specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs can be instrumental in enhancing entrepreneurship, and thus promoting the growth and sustainability of MSMEs. For instance, implementing policies that address market failures and support specific sectors would offset the hindrances of youth-owned enterprises' ability to scale up their operations. This calls for the need to implement relevant policies that can promote the development of entrepreneurial capacities, access to good markets, and affordable and timely credit. Existing financial models also need to be thoroughly examined and tailored to meet the evolving needs of youth entrepreneurs, and ensure access to finance (Gitonga & Musamali, 2021). These measures, combined with improved infrastructures, can play an instrumental role in boosting the performance and sustainability of youth-owned enterprises operating in the country.

Secondly, the role played by families and communities in promoting youth entrepreneurship should be acknowledged. Families, communities and cultures directly influence the perceptions and attitudes of the youths toward entrepreneurship (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Caggiano et al., 2016). Most of the time, there is a conflict between the attitudes of youths and their communities towards engaging in entrepreneurship. Families and communities that respect and appreciate entrepreneurship's importance will support and encourage their youths

to engage in entrepreneurship. Such support can play an instrumental role at the start phase when youth entrepreneurs face emotional, financial, and social capital challenges, which usually make it difficult to succeed. Therefore, meaningful measures such as educating citizens on the importance of entrepreneurial well-being would contribute positively towards the success of these youth-owned MSMEs.

Youth entrepreneurs should also be assisted and supported to access business development services, including mentors who can guide them throughout the entrepreneurial journey. Such mentors can be instrumental in linking youth entrepreneurs with useful networks and other key resources they can leverage to boost the chances of success of their ventures. Mentors are instrumental in the demonstration of models of success while acting as role models. They can also play a major role in examining strategic plans and business ideas. The mentors and the mentees need to have solid relationships that are founded on goals and obligations that are clearly defined (Deepali, Jain, & Chaudhary, 2017). There is also a need to have packaged information on relevant business opportunities that youth entrepreneurs can exploit. This can be done by creating more entrepreneurship hubs, which can help in accessing knowledge and providing networking opportunities.

WAY FORWARD

Future researchers could use primary research to conduct case studies on successful youth entrepreneurs operating in various sectors in Kenya. Such case studies can provide valuable insights into unique challenges, opportunities and lessons learned by such entrepreneurs. This can provide great inspiration to aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs in Kenya and Africa in general. Increased number of entrepreneurs in the country is a boast to socio-economic development.

Additionally, sector specific research can also be conducted in future as a way of highlighting the unique opportunities and challenges in such sectors. This will enable key ecosystem actors to apply appropriate targeted strategies to support youth entrepreneurs operating in such sectors.

Lastly, comparative studies between Kenya, other Sub-Saharan African nations or developed economies could be done by other researchers in future. Such studies will be instrumental in providing a wider perspective on the best practices and policy initiatives aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurs operating in these economies.

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