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Assessing the Barriers Faced by Youth-Owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Johannesburg

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Abstract:

Youth entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a key driver of economic growth and a solution to high unemployment rates in Johannesburg and South Africa. This is especially true in urban centers like Johannesburg, where the potential for youth-driven economic activity is particularly significant. However, young entrepreneurs face several barriers that hinder their ability to establish and grow successful businesses. This study explores these barriers, being financial regulatory, education or socio cultural. The research employed a qualitative design, using theoretical interview schedule to gather in-depth insights from a diverse group of young entrepreneurs. This is complemented by snowball sampling technique to extend the reach within the entrepreneurial community and capture a broad spectrum of experiences. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes in the data, such as financial challenges, regulatory barriers, and educational gaps. Key findings indicate that young entrepreneurs struggle to secure funding due to strict collateral requirements, limited credit history, and a lack of awareness about alternative funding options such as crowdfunding and venture capital. Additionally, complex regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic inefficiencies add to the financial burden and delay the formalisation of youth-owned businesses. Gaps in entrepreneurial education are also evident, as many young entrepreneurs lack practical skills despite having formal education. The study advocates for comprehensive support, including improved access to financial resources, regulatory simplification, enhanced entrepreneurship and improvement in the education system, and cultural shifts that promote entrepreneurship as a viable career path for youth.

Keywords:

Youth Entrepreneurship, Financial Constraints, Regulatory Barriers, Entrepreneurial Education, Socio-cultural Factors, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Introduction and Background

Despite Johannesburg's vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, young entrepreneurs face significant barriers, including financial constraints, educational gaps, and socio-cultural challenges. Jakubczak (2015) and Shambare (2013) note that many struggle to access capital due to a lack of collateral and financial literacy, while formal education often fails to provide practical skills like business management. Radebe (2019) and Ndebele, Ndlovu, Mlambo, and Thusi (2022) further highlight that cultural norms that favour formal employment over entrepreneurship limit opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

Adenle (2017) and Chimucheka (2014) emphasise that strict lending requirements and limited access to alternative financing options, such as venture capital, exacerbate financial challenges. Gindling and Newhouse (2012) add that regulatory complexity increases financial and operational burdens, delaying business formalisation.

In addition to financial and regulatory barriers, formal education lacks practical training in essential skills like financial planning and risk management, leaving young entrepreneurs unprepared to compete (Shambare, 2013; Fatoki & Garwe, 2010). Abisuga-Oyekunle and Fillis (2017) note that cultural attitudes continue to favour formal employment over entrepreneurship, discouraging youth from starting businesses. Addressing these barriers would enable youth entrepreneurship in Johannesburg to thrive, contributing to economic development and reducing unemployment.

Young entrepreneurs face significant barriers, including limited access to capital, inadequate training, and regulatory complexities (Radebe, 2019). These issues limit business growth and sustainability. Chimucheka (2014) notes that financial constraints, including stringent loan requirements, are a major obstacle, while Gindling and Newhouse (2012) highlight complex bureaucratic processes that increase operational costs.

Many young entrepreneurs struggle to access funding due to a lack of collateral, while complex legal requirements and high costs make it difficult for them to formalise their businesses (Sindambiwe & Mbabazi, 2014). Makina (2022) argues that societal expectations often prioritise formal employment over entrepreneurship, with many young people feeling pressured to seek traditional jobs rather than starting their own businesses. They further state that cultural preference discourages risk-taking and innovation, particularly among youth, who may lack the confidence to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

Shambare (2013) highlights that many young graduates show little interest in entrepreneurship due to the lack of practical business training during their education. Although initiatives like the National Development Plan encourage youth entrepreneurship, insufficient infrastructure and support leave many unprepared for business ventures.

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Ndebele, Ndlovu, Mlambo, and Thusi (2022) state that the challenges facing youth entrepreneurs in Johannesburg are multifaceted, involving financial, regulatory, educational, and socio-cultural barriers. Radebe (2019) agrees, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address these obstacles. Shambare (2013) highlights the importance of improving access to finance, simplifying regulatory processes, and enhancing practical entrepreneurial education. Fatoki and Garwe (2010) further stress the necessity of fostering a cultural shift that values entrepreneurship. Chimucheka (2014) concludes that by overcoming these barriers, young entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and reducing unemployment.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine the barriers faced by youth entrepreneurs in Johannesburg during the establishment and growth of their businesses, which impede the development of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises). Sambo (2015) notes that these barriers contribute to South Africa's lower rate of youth entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study will address the question: “What barriers do young entrepreneurs in Johannesburg encounter when trying to establish and grow their businesses?”

Youth entrepreneurship has the potential to address unemployment and drive economic growth, however, it is hindered by limited access to capital, regulatory hurdles, and inadequate training. Dzisi, Yeboah, and Ofori-Darko, 2018 emphasise that the education system's focus on theory leaves young graduates ill-prepared for practical business management. Additionally, Abisuga-Oyekunle and Fillis (2017) point out that cultural biases discourage many young people from considering entrepreneurship. This research aims to analyse these barriers and propose strategies to improve entrepreneurial outcomes in Johannesburg.

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on three key theories to understand youth entrepreneurship and the barriers faced by young entrepreneurs in Johannesburg.

Schumpeter’s Innovation Theory (1934) emphasises the role of innovation as a driver of economic growth, focusing on the creation of new products, processes, or market strategies. In Johannesburg, youth entrepreneurs face significant barriers to innovation, including limited access to funding and market opportunities. These constraints hinder their ability to introduce unique solutions that address unmet needs or disrupt established markets.

By leveraging Schumpeter's theory, the study examines how youth entrepreneurs contribute to local economic development through innovation while identifying the barriers that stifle their creativity. This perspective helps propose targeted interventions to build an environment that fosters growth.

Kirzner's Entrepreneurial Alertness Theory (1973) highlights the importance of recognizing and capitalizing on market opportunities. In Johannesburg, many young entrepreneurs struggle to identify gaps in the market due to limited access to mentorship, training, and market intelligence. The education system often falls short in equipping youth with the skills required to stay alert to emerging opportunities.

Applying Kirzner's theory, the study analyses how young entrepreneurs respond to market gaps and explores ways to enhance entrepreneurial alertness through improved mentorship programs, access to market insights, and educational reforms. This framework provides actionable recommendations to strengthen market awareness and opportunity recognition among youth.

Emerson's Social Exchange Theory (1976) emphasizes the value of reciprocal relationships in overcoming entrepreneurial barriers. In Johannesburg, the lack of strong support networks and limited access to mentorship programs significantly restricts youth entrepreneurs' ability to leverage social capital for business growth, financial aid, and knowledge sharing.

This study uses Emerson's theory to investigate how mentorship, peer networks, and community support can address these challenges. By emphasizing the importance of collaborative exchanges, the research highlights the need for robust support ecosystems that enable young entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses through reciprocal relationships.

Together, these theories guide the study by analysing how financial, regulatory, and educational barriers limit youth entrepreneurs' ability to innovate, recognize opportunities, and develop support networks. Each framework provides a lens to understand the struggles faced by youth entrepreneurs

Selected Findings from the Literature

Youth entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth, particularly in regions with high youth unemployment rates. Oseifuah (2010) highlights that youth entrepreneurship is influenced by various factors, including individual attributes, financial literacy, and the broader context, such as access to resources and mentorship. Brixiová, Ncube, and Bicaba (2015) add that barriers such as a lack of entrepreneurial skills, limited financial resources, and insufficient professional networks hinder young people's ability to start and sustain businesses. Bhorat, Asmal, Lilenstein, and van der Zee (2018) and Ndebele, Ndlovu, Mlambo, and Thusi (2022) further emphasize the financial constraints young entrepreneurs face, particularly the lack of access to capital. Maebane (2023) and Radebe (2019) remark that addressing these challenges requires a focus on training and mentorship to equip youth with the necessary skills and networks to succeed.

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Ndebele, Mbatha, Sithole, and Mncube (2022) observe that numerous barriers still prevent young entrepreneurs from establishing and expanding their businesses. Bhorat *et al*., (2018) similarly highlight these challenges, noting the difficulty in accessing the necessary resources. Brixiová *et al*., (2015) add that entrepreneurship offers a path to economic inclusion, particularly in regions with limited formal employment opportunities, by empowering youth to create jobs and inspire others in their communities. Geldhof, Porter, Weiner, Malin, Bronk, Agans, Mueller, Damon, and Lerner (2014) argue that promoting youth entrepreneurship requires a multi-faceted approach that includes both personal development and support from the surrounding environment. They highlight key factors such as the presence of role models, risk tolerance, and self-regulation skills, which can foster entrepreneurial intent. Oseifuah (2010) points out that youth entrepreneurship plays a key role in addressing South Africa's high unemployment rates and fostering economic growth.

Among the most significant barriers to youth entrepreneurs expanding their businesses are financial constraints. According to Bhorat *et al*., (2018), many young entrepreneurs lack the financial assets needed to qualify for traditional loans, and alternative funding sources, such as venture capital and crowdfunding, remain inaccessible for most. Sadly so, Adenle (2017) notes that while these alternative funding mechanisms exist, they are often poorly promoted and difficult to access, particularly in underserved regions. Similarly, Fatoki and Garwe (2010) add that these challenges are further compounded by the rigid requirements of financial institutions, which demand collateral that most young entrepreneurs do not possess. As a result, these financial constraints limit the ability of young entrepreneurs to grow and sustain their businesses, especially in highly competitive sectors (Bhorat *et al*., 2018).

Ndebele *et al.* (2022) highlight that the absence of tailored financial instruments for youth, such as microloans or youth-specific credit products, significantly limits their ability to secure necessary funding for their ventures. Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2015) emphasize that youth entrepreneurs often face significant financial constraints, hindering their ability to start and grow businesses, and also note that financial literacy is frequently insufficient, leaving them ill-equipped to manage available resources. Financial literacy is essential for the success of young entrepreneurs. It enables better decision-making, particularly in managing resources and risks. In South Africa, studies such as that of Oseifuah (2010), show that financial literacy contributes to improved entrepreneurship outcomes among youth, particularly when programs are implemented in schools and tertiary institutions. Gindling and Newhouse (2012) stress that financial exclusion often forces young entrepreneurs to rely on informal lending networks, which come with their own risks and limitations. Fatoki and Asah (2011) state that without access to affordable and accessible financing options, many youth-owned businesses struggle to survive, l*et al*one grow. However, there is a need for more practical, localised training to address the specific needs of youth entrepreneurs in rural and underdeveloped regions.

The gap between formal education and the practical skills needed for business success remains a barrier for young entrepreneurs. Maebane (2023), and Ngwenya and Mashau (2020) emphasize that entrepreneurship education must go beyond theory to include practical skills such as financial planning, risk management, and market entry strategies, which are critical for equipping young entrepreneurs to run successful businesses. Radebe (2019) points out that many young people in South Africa do not receive adequate entrepreneurial training, as educational institutions tend to focus more on theoretical knowledge than on practical skills. Green (2013) emphasizes that tailored education programs combining real-world experiences and mentorship are vital in developing entrepreneurial skills. Fatoki and Garwe (2010) further argue that the lack of practical business skills, such as financial management and strategic planning, leaves young entrepreneurs ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of running a business.

Socio-cultural attitudes also function as a barrier to youth entrepreneurship. Ndebele *et al.,* (2022) note that societal pressure in South Africa, combined with a lack of entrepreneurial role models, discourages youth from pursuing self-employment as a viable career option. Radebe (2019) adds that parents and society often promote white-collar jobs over entrepreneurship, making it difficult for young people to consider business ventures. Madzivhandila and Dlamini (2015) highlight that, especially in more traditional areas, societal norms view entrepreneurship as a risky and less prestigious career path compared to formal employment. Dupuis and de Bruin (2003) emphasize that cultural norms frequently dissuade youth from pursuing entrepreneurship, as societal expectations favour traditional employment over innovation and risk-taking. Changing these perceptions and promoting a culture that values entrepreneurship is important to fostering an environment where young people feel encouraged to start their own businesses.

Additionally, regulatory and bureaucratic challenges further hinder youth entrepreneurship. Ndebele *et al*., (2022) emphasize that complex legal processes and high costs associated with starting a business in South Africa make it difficult for young entrepreneurs to formalize their ventures. These regulatory barriers are further exacerbated by burdensome requirements related to tax compliance and labour laws, which add to the financial and administrative strain on youth-owned businesses (World Bank, 2020). Similarly, Madzivhandila and Dlamini (2015) note that regulatory inefficiencies often delay business registration, leading to operational setbacks for young entrepreneurs. Dupuis and de Bruin (2003) add that navigating these legal requirements can result in significant financial strain and operational delays for many youth entrepreneurs, making it difficult for them to sustain and grow their businesses.

Chimucheka (2014) highlights that market entry presents a significant challenge for young entrepreneurs, as they often lack the financial resources needed to compete effectively in saturated markets. They further state that limited access to capital restricts their ability to invest in marketing, branding, and other competitive strategies essential for business growth. Gindling and Newhouse (2012) add that young entrepreneurs face additional obstacles due to limited access to networks, such as distribution channels and customer bases, which further constrain their ability to establish a presence and thrive in competitive markets.

Finally, the lack of a supportive entrepreneurial culture is another major barrier. Maebane (2023) notes that business support services play a crucial role in the growth and sustainability of youth-owned enterprises. However, many youth entrepreneurs feel that the support provided does not meet their needs. Customised business support programmes that focus on their specific challenges, such as mentorship and market access, are essential for improving their success rates. Radebe (2019) argues that South Africa's entrepreneurial environment is not conducive to the growth and sustainability of small businesses, with high failure rates and limited opportunities for youth entrepreneurs to thrive. Gem (2017) argues that entrepreneurs flourish in environments that foster innovation and risk-taking, however, in the absence of a supportive business culture, entrepreneurial activities are discouraged, leading to reduced innovation and hindering the growth of new businesses.

The literature reveals that barriers to youth entrepreneurship in South Africa are multi-faceted, involving financial constraints, inadequate education, socio-cultural pressures, regulatory challenges, and a lack of supportive business culture. Addressing these barriers will require a comprehensive approach that includes improving access to finance, enhancing entrepreneurial education, changing societal attitudes, simplifying regulatory processes, and fostering a culture that values entrepreneurship.

Best Practices from the Literature

Addressing the challenges of youth entrepreneurship in South Africa requires a multi-faceted approach. Chimucheka (2014) emphasises the need for tailored financial products like micro-loans and grants, while Adenle (2017) calls for improved access to alternative funding sources such as venture capital and crowdfunding. Olaniran and Mncube (2018) highlight the importance of financial literacy programs to help young entrepreneurs manage resources effectively.

Radebe (2019) emphasizes the need for practical entrepreneurial training through internships, incubators, and mentorship, which aligns with Fatoki and Garwe's (2010) highlighting of university-based incubators as crucial for fostering long-term success. Olaniran and Mncube (2018) further advocate for the inclusion of vocational education to equip youth with essential technical and managerial skills. Mentorship and networking are equally important, as Abisuga-Oyekunle and Fillis (2017) argue that these connections provide vital support for business growth. Similarly, the Global Entrepreneurship

Monitor report (Geldhof *et al.* 2014) highlights the importance of linking young entrepreneurs with professional networks to facilitate access to markets and business services.

Regulatory reform is crucial, Ndebele *et al*. (2022) emphasize the need for tailored regulatory guidance, while Gindling and Newhouse (2012) advocate for simplified frameworks, such as "one-stop shops" for business registration. The OECD (2013) report notes that public sector interventions have had mixed results, with some programs failing to address the unique barriers faced by young people. However, programs that combine financial support and entrepreneurial training, especially when tailored to specific subgroups within the youth population, have been more successful (Brixiová *et al*., 2015).

By improving financial and non-financial support, practical education, regulatory processes, and mentorship, South Africa can build a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem, driving economic growth and reducing unemployment.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative design, and inductive approach, utilising thematic analysis to examine the challenges and needs of youth-owned MSMEs in Johannesburg. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, which, according to Creswell (2014) is beneficial due to flexibility and effectiveness in uncovering rich, detailed insights.

Research Design

The research design involves studying the entrepreneurial environment to identify key challenges and opportunities for young entrepreneurs, aiming to uncover the challenges of youth-owned enterprises in Johannesburg. An inductive, cross-sectional approach using survey interviews was ideal, providing flexibility and deep qualitative insights (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This method balances standardised data collection with open-ended questions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016) while reaching a diverse audience (Patton, 2002). The inductive approach ensures theory development is based on real-world data (Creswell, 2014), and the cross-sectional time horizon captures a snapshot of entrepreneurs' attitudes and experiences efficiently (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The population for this study comprised youth entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, aged 18 to 35, who operate Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This demographic represents a critical segment of South Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017) young entrepreneurs are key drivers of innovation and economic growth but often face unique challenges.

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The initial target sample size ranged from 10 to 30 participants, with data saturation achieved at 19. Consequently, the final sample size was set at 19, as no new themes or insights emerged from additional data collection. Fusch and Ness (2015) highlight that data saturation is reached when further data collection no longer provides new information, ensuring the sample size is sufficient to meet the study's objectives.

Snowball sampling was employed to extend the study's reach, leveraging referrals to access a broader and more diverse group of youth entrepreneurs. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) advocate for this technique as an effective method for reaching hard-to-access populations, making it particularly suitable for identifying youth entrepreneurs who might otherwise be overlooked. This approach ensured a representative sample that reflected the varied experiences and challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in Johannesburg.

The use of snowball sampling allowed the study to capture a broader range of experiences and perspectives while ensuring the relevance of participants to the research objectives. By focusing on this population and sample size, the study provides rich, contextual insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by young entrepreneurs in Johannesburg.

Method of Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview data. This method systematically identifies recurring themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included coding, identifying, and refining themes (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

The thematic analysis process began with the researcher immersing themselves in the data, reading and re-reading participants' responses to identify recurring challenges, such as the lack of pre-seed funding and high startup costs. Initial codes like "funding difficulties," "regulatory challenges," and "mentorship needs" were then generated to capture key issues. These codes were grouped into broader themes, such as "Financial Challenges" and "Regulatory and Legal Hurdles." The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and relevance to the research questions. Themes were clearly defined and named, with "Financial Challenges" encompassing all funding-related issues and "Regulatory and Legal Hurdles" covering legal compliance and certification barriers.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability was ensured through standardised interview questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018), while validity was achieved via triangulation with existing literature (Creswell, 2014). The study employed an interpretivism, inductive, cross-sectional approach using survey interviews, allowing for an in-depth exploration of youth entrepreneurs' experiences. The combination of standardised and open-ended questions ensured data-informed theory development and grounded the findings in real-world contexts.

Results

Thematic analysis revealed financial constraints as the most significant barrier, with 89.5% of participants reporting difficulties accessing affordable financing. Challenges included limited access to pre-seed funding and broader funding opportunities, which often favour established businesses. Respondents highlighted prohibitive costs associated with launching and growing a business, including operational expenses and service fees, as key obstacles. Regulatory burdens were identified by 68% of participants as a significant challenge. Participants described difficulties navigating complex legal frameworks, including delays in business registration and ongoing compliance issues. Common concerns included inter-country payment laws, stringent local regulations, and requirements for specific certifications. Market entry and competition were reported as significant barriers, participants cited challenges in gaining a customer base, navigating market saturation, and building a strong brand. Limited financial resources and high marketing costs further hindered their ability to compete effectively. Although 78.9% of participants hold tertiary qualifications, many reported feeling unprepared for entrepreneurship. They highlighted gaps in their education, particularly the lack of practical training in critical areas such as financial planning, marketing, and risk assessment, which left them ill-equipped to handle the demands of running a business.

Despite the availability of entrepreneurial support services, participants indicated that they underutilised these services. Most early-stage startups plan to engage with services like incubators and accelerators only after finalizing their ideas, while others remain unaware due to insufficient advertising or exposure. Additional barriers included fear of losing control or equity, time constraints, and perceptions that such services were unnecessary. Some respondents also noted that existing programs do not meet their specific needs. Participants expressed a need for comprehensive support to elevate their businesses over the next five years. The most critical need, highlighted by 89.5% of respondents, is access to funding through grants, loans, and financial aid. Networking opportunities were also emphasized by 73.7%, as essential for market access and collaboration, while 68.4% valued mentorship programs for practical guidance. Educational support, including workshops and training, along with business plan development, marketing assistance, and business management training, were each identified by 57.9% of participants as crucial for building entrepreneurial capacity. Additionally, 42.1% stressed the need for centralized resources for startups, and 31.6% sought help in refining business concepts.

Discussion

The results align with the literature while uncovering additional nuances regarding challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs in Johannesburg. Financial constraints emerged as the most significant barrier, reflecting observations by Ndebele *et al*. (2022) and Fatoki and Asah (2011), who emphasize stringent lending requirements, limited credit histories, and inadequate financial literacy. Respondents' struggles with pre-seed funding and operational expenses align with findings by Bhorat *et al*. (2018) on the lack of tailored financial products, such as microloans. However, the inaccessibility of alternative funding mechanisms, like crowdfunding, contradicts the literature's expectations (Ngwenya & Mashau, 2020). Regulatory burdens also pose a challenge, echoing Gindling and Newhouse (2012) and Radebe (2019), with inter-country payment laws and stringent local regulations compounding compliance costs, as noted by Fatoki and Garwe (2010).

Market entry and competition were significant barriers, aligning with Fatoki and Garwe (2010) and Radebe (2019), as youth entrepreneurs struggle with brand visibility, access to distribution channels, and established competitors. Underutilisation of support services, reported by 60% of participants, aligns with Radebe (2019) and Ngwenya and Mashau (2020), who highlight poor awareness and accessibility. Deterrents like equity loss, time constraints (Fatoki, 2014), and limited mentorship programs (Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017) further hinder engagement. The findings on education highlight gaps between formal qualifications and practical entrepreneurial readiness. Despite 78.9% of participants holding tertiary qualifications, many felt unprepared for business realities, aligning with critiques by Shambare (2013) and Radebe (2019) on the education system's theoretical focus. Maebane (2023) and Ngwenya and Mashau (2020) advocate for experiential learning and mentorship to close this gap.

Participants' expressed need for funding, mentorship, and networking aligns with Olaniran and Mncube's (2018) call for holistic support models. Their demand for practical workshops and centralized resources underscores gaps in existing support structures, reinforcing the need for tailored, accessible solutions to address the multifaceted realities of youth-led startups.

Conclusion

Research Summary and Key Findings

This study identified key barriers to youth entrepreneurship in Johannesburg, emphasising the need for targeted interventions. Financial constraints were the most significant, with many participants citing difficulties in securing funding due to stringent lending requirements, lack of collateral, and high interest rates, limiting their ability to start or grow businesses. Regulatory and bureaucratic complexity also posed challenges, increasing operational costs and delaying business growth. Simplifying these processes through regulatory reform and guidance could ease these burdens.

Additionally, a gap in entrepreneurial education emerged, as many young entrepreneurs lacked practical skills like financial management, marketing, talent management, and risk management, despite formal education. Market entry and competition further constrained youth entrepreneurs, with high marketing costs and limited financial resources hindering their ability to establish a customer base in saturated markets.

Future research should focus on investigating how cultural norms favour formal employment over entrepreneurship, exploring how education, media, and policy can promote entrepreneurship as a viable career. The role of community leaders and successful entrepreneurs in changing perceptions and providing mentorship should also be investigated to enhance youth participation in business ventures.

Recommendations

A holistic support addressing financial, regulatory, and educational barriers can significantly enhance youth entrepreneurship in Johannesburg. Consequently, the study recommends the following solutions.

1. **Financial Constraints:**
    - Introduce youth-specific microfinance loans with flexible repayment terms.
    - Implement government-backed grants prioritizing first-time entrepreneurs from underserved communities.
    - Launch comprehensive financial literacy programs to improve young entrepreneurs' understanding and access to available funding options.
2. **Regulatory and Bureaucratic Hurdles:**
    - Establish centralized digital hubs for business registration, licensing, and tax compliance to reduce delays and costs.
    - Provide tailored regulatory guidance to assist young entrepreneurs in navigating complex legal requirements.
3. **Educational Gaps:**
    - Integrate entrepreneurial training across educational curricula, emphasizing practical skills such as financial planning, marketing, and digital literacy.
    - Establish partnerships with industry to offer internships, incubators, and mentorship programs that prepare students for entrepreneurial challenges.
4. **Market Entry and Competition:**
    - Strengthen mentorship programs and networking opportunities to help youth entrepreneurs build customer bases and access markets.

- Facilitate partnerships with established businesses to provide market access and enhance brand visibility.

Addressing the multifaceted barriers faced by youth entrepreneurs in Johannesburg through targeted interventions, including financial reforms, regulatory simplification, practical education, and tailored support services, will create a more enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem that not only fosters individual success but also contributes to broader economic development and job creation.

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