



Youth Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Management: A Pathway to Sustainable Job Creation in Kenya

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment is an increasing problem around the world that makes poverty and dependency cycles worse, which slows down progress. In response, governments and development partners have introduced national policies, programs, and funding to furnish young people with the essential knowledge and skills to overcome these challenges. Despite the efforts made by various stakeholders to enhance youth empowerment, the outcomes have consistently fallen short of expectations. The education levels in Kilifi County, currently at 60%, have significantly impacted coastal youth's access to entrepreneurial training. The research aimed to determine the impact of entrepreneurship management practices on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya. The study extensively analyzed the effects of resource orientation, entrepreneurship culture, growth orientation, and management structure on youth empowerment

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programs in Kilifi County, Kenya. The empowerment theory, stakeholder's theory, dynamic capability theory, and theory of innovation anchored the study. The study used a descriptive and explanatory research design. The target population consisted of four hundred youths participating in youth empowerment initiatives across seven distinct sectors; however, a sample size of two hundred was chosen via stratified and random sampling methods. Data were collected using semi structured questionnaires and analyzed through regression modeling. Findings indicated that entrepreneurship management practices significantly and positively influence youth empowerment programs ($R^2 = 0.774$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, entrepreneurship culture, growth orientation, management structure emerged as the strongest predictors of youth empowerment. The study concluded that ongoing evaluation of the needs of young individuals, the strategic distribution of financial, human, and material resources, along with proactive collaboration with various stakeholders, fosters accountability, optimizes decision-making processes, and improves operational effectiveness.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship management practices; youth empowerment programs; Kilifi County; Kenya.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The increase in youth unemployment to 6.5% now impacts approximately 220 million individuals worldwide, exacerbating poverty and perpetuating cycles of dependency that hinder progress (UN, 2021). Poverty, vulnerability, violence, and disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa are deeply interconnected, forming a complicated cycle that intensifies the difficulties encountered by youth (Lwanga-Ntale & Owino, 2020; UN, 2024). To address these issues, various governments and organizations have introduced entrepreneurship programs to combat young people that are unemployed (Sikenyi, 2017; Sheikhdon, 2020). "The ultimate objective of these initiatives is to provide young individuals with entrepreneurial skills and encourage their personal and economic development, thereby contributing to a more stable and prosperous society" (Adam and Muathe, 2025).

Consequently, entrepreneurship has become a critical strategy for fostering economic development in a nation, attracting a significant number of young individuals (Bosma *et al.*, 2018). Kaumbulu *et al.* (2019) articulated concerns regarding project continuity, highlighting that despite notable advancements in credit accessibility and entrepreneurial mentorship during project implementation, the post-implementation phase poses significant challenges, resulting in a limited number of projects being sustained over time. Geza *et al.* (2022) assert that the integration of youth empowerment is essential for assuring accountability and illustrates a dedication to establishing conducive conditions

that allow young individuals to manage their well-being.

"Kilifi County is located along the Kenyan Coast and lies between Mombasa to the south and Tana River County to the north. It covers an area of approximately 12,246 square kilometers and has a population of about 1.5 million people" (KNBS, 2022). Youth is defined differently across countries, indicating variations in cultural, social, and policy viewpoints (IOM, 2019). The 2010 Kenyan constitution defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years. The study encompassed 200 Kenyan youths participating in youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County across six distinct sectors (UN, 2024; UNFPA, 2010).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts made by various stakeholders to enhance youth empowerment, it has continued to fall short of expectations. Current data shows that the state is experiencing one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, standing at 65% (World Bank, 2019). Furthermore, the low education levels, which stand at 60%, have significantly hindered the ability of youth in Kilifi County to access entrepreneurial training (Ahmed, 2024; Kulmie *et al.*, 2023).

"Empirical studies conducted in a variety of contexts indicate that research conducted on a single component of entrepreneurship management practices in Europe, Asia, and the United States" (López-Cabarcos *et al.*, 2019; Valencia-Arias *et al.*, 2022; Noone *et al.*, 2024). None of these studies have focused on youth empowerment programs, despite their potential

to yield socio-economic advantages for national economies. Moreover, the majority of existing research have not integrated many ideas of entrepreneurship management practices within a single investigation to elucidate the cumulative impact of various elements of entrepreneurship management practices on youth empowerment (Eze et al., 2017; Kiyabo & Isaga, 2020; Bărbulescu et al., 2021).

The study's conclusions lack generalizability to other sectors and contexts due to insufficient methodological rigor, arising from non-probability sampling methods, exploratory research designs, and case studies based on small sample numbers (Kassem et al., 2019; Bărbulescu et al., 2021; Liñán et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2022).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the effect of resource orientation on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the effect of entrepreneurship culture on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of growth orientation on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.
- iv. To find out the effect of management structure on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H0₁: Resource orientation has no significant effect on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.

H0₂: Entrepreneurship culture has no significant effect on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.

H0₃: Growth orientation has no significant effect on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.

H0₄: Management structure has no significant effect on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: empowerment theory, dynamic capabilities theory and stakeholder's theory.

The empowerment theory emerged in the 1990s, notably through the work of Perkins and Zimmerman in 1995. The theory posits that individuals possess the capacity to recognize and address their own needs, as they have a superior understanding of these needs compared to others. Empowerment refers to the process through which individuals assume control over their lives, engage actively in community activities, and develop a critical awareness of their environment.

Freeman, (1984) developed stakeholder theory, emphasizing the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders in strategic management. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders as the key factor in achieving organizational success (Freeman et al., 2021). The theory suggests that youth empowerment programs establish agreements with various stakeholders. Consequently, failure to meet these obligations may expose them to a range of economic and non-financial risks, along with potential reputational damage (Harjoto et al., 2019).

The Dynamic Capability Theory, introduced by Teece and Pisano, (1994), builds upon the RBV by highlighting the importance of a firm's ability to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure internal and external competencies in response to changing environments (Gregory et al., 2019). Unlike the RBV, which treats the environment as relatively stable, the Dynamic Capability Theory acknowledges the constantly evolving nature of the external business landscape (Fabrizio et al., 2022). The dynamic capacities theory addresses the long-term sustainability of youth empowerment programs by demonstrating their ability to alleviate competitive risks through resource reallocation.

2.2 Empirical Review

The review was based on individual concepts of entrepreneurship management practices. Resource orientation is a strategic method employed by entrepreneurs to identify, acquire, and manage resources for the creation, sustainability, and growth of a business. On matters as pertains to Resource orientation, López-Cabarcos et al., (2019) analyze product innovation and organizational performance in Portugal. Secondary data

were employed, with response rates recorded at 29%. Product innovation has a significant impact on performance. Portugal constitutes a developed economic market. Moreover, industrial organizations differ from youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County. The analysis utilizes secondary data, which does not accurately represent current market trends.

Entrepreneurship culture is a collection of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Valencia-Arias *et al.*, (2022) explored "how entrepreneurial culture influences entrepreneurial mentality, which influences financial performance, in order to foster entrepreneurship at 10 Colombian universities. A sample from 10 colleges in Colombia was collected. The findings suggest seeing an entrepreneurial culture and receiving instruction, the more entrepreneurial mentality students develop. Additionally, it was shown that entrepreneurial culture had a good impact on the academic atmosphere. Only 10 Colombian colleges were sampled, thus generalizations are impossible. Furthermore, the factors explored here may not adequately represent the actual extent of the entrepreneurial programs in such universities therefore, they should allow universities to adapt their policies around this crucial subject".

Growth orientation refers to an entrepreneur's strategic emphasis on achieving continuous expansion and development in business operations. Kiyabo and Isaga, (2020) examined the impact of growth orientation on the performance of SMEs through the lens of competitive advantage, employing metrics of firm growth and personal wealth. Data was obtained from 300 owner-managers of SMEs in the welding sector in Tanzania. Analysis of data utilizing AMOS software. The sample data consisted of 200 samples to investigate the indirect influence of entrepreneurial attitude on the success of SMEs, specifically within the comp welding sector, as measured by development and personal wealth performance indicators. Tanzania's SMEs exhibit structural and operational differences compared to youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County.

The management structure serves as a systematic framework that delineates roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and

communication flows, all meticulously organized and coordinated to facilitate entrepreneurial endeavors within a business context. Ali *et al.* (2022) undertook a study to assess the relationship among leverage, management structure, and corporate performance. This research employs a panel data analysis methodology, utilizing information derived from 70 enterprises listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange. This investigation utilized a random sampling strategy. This research revealed that the management structure, institutional framework, and familial organization all influenced the performance of listed companies on the Pakistan stock exchange. The study was conducted by companies registered on the Pakistan Stock Exchange, which presents distinct structural and operational characteristics compared to youth empowerment initiatives in Kilifi County. The utilization of secondary data is commendable; however, it would be prudent to incorporate primary data as well to accurately reflect real-time events.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research embraced the positivist philosophy. Within this paradigm, the researcher maintains an external and neutral role, ensuring that the findings are free from personal bias or influence (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). A combination of descriptive and explanatory research designs that is cross-sectional in nature, were employed in the study. Saunders *et al.*, (2011) posits that descriptive research functions as a fundamental basis for qualitative studies, providing an extensive overview and significant insights into the variables that merit quantitative analysis.

The study focused on 400 Kenyan youth engaged in youth empowerment initiatives across seven distinct sectors within Kilifi County, Kenya (UN, 2024).

To ensure representativeness, the study employed a proportionate stratified and random sampling technique. This approach involves selecting samples from each stratum in proportion to their presence within the overall population (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). Using Yamane formula of 1967 for determining sample size, 200 youths were selected for participation in the study.

Table 1. Target population and sample size

Sectors	Population (N)	Sample	Percentage
Employment (Youth Employment)	85	42	21
Education	32	17	8.5
Sports	50	24	12
Entrepreneurship	130	65	32.5
Health	23	12	6
Tourism	48	23	11.5
Community Engagement	32	17	8.5
Total	400	200	100

Source: (UN, 2024)

Secondary data was collected through a thorough examination of published sources concerning youth empowerment initiatives in Kenya and Kilifi County. A semi-structured questionnaire was employed to gather primary data. Questionnaires were disseminated to the youths in youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County. A pilot study was undertaken using a sample size of 20 youths in youth empowerment programs in Lamu County.

primary education, and 8.2% possessing a university degree. These results indicate that the majority of youth are literate and possess varying levels of formal education. Finally, most youth had been on the program for a duration one year and below constituting 40.9 percentage. Followed by those who had been on the program for a duration of 1- 2 years at 35.5 percent, between 3-4 years at 15.6 percent, between 5-7 years at 5.9 percent and above 8 years representing 2.2 percent.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to youths in youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County. Of these, 180 respondents completed the questionnaires, representing a response rate of 90%, while 20 questionnaires were either not returned or were incomplete, accounting for 10% non-response. In terms of gender representation, 51% of respondents were male and 49% were female. This near balance in gender distribution brings varied perspectives, decision-making styles, and problem-solving approaches within the youth empowerment programs.

Regarding the age distribution, 37% of respondents were aged 18–24, 44% were between 25–30, 17% were aged 31–35, 2% were 36–40 years. In terms of educational attainment, the largest proportion of respondents (33%) had completed secondary education, followed by 22.9% with tertiary education, 19.3% holding college diplomas or certificates, 14.1% with

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on Entrepreneurship Management Practices Metrics

Aggregate score	Mean	Std. Deviation
Resource Orientation.	3.75	1.097
Entrepreneurship Culture	4.10	.125
Growth Orientation	4.27	.187
Management Structure	4.28	.172
Youth Empowerment	4.21	.321

Source: Research Data, (2025)

Table 2 indicated that all the responses on resource orientation, entrepreneurship culture, growth orientation, management structure and youth employment had an aggregated mean score of 3.78, 4.10, 4.27, 4.28, 4.21 and a deviation of 1.097, .125, .187,.172 and .321 implying that the majority of respondents concurred with the assertion that young individuals express satisfaction with our entrepreneurship training programs.

Table 3. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.880 ^a	.775	.774	.56719

Source: Research Data, (2025)

The model summary outputs indicate that the adjusted R square stands at .774, suggesting that the independent variables collectively explain 77.4 percent of the variations observed in the influence of entrepreneurship management practices on youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County. The results revealed that 22.6 percent of the variations in youth empowerment programs could be ascribed to influences outside of entrepreneurship management practices.

5. CONCLUSION

First Entrepreneurship Management Practices contributes positively and significantly towards proper youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County, Kenya. Therefore, the study concluded that implementation of the four objectives practices markedly enhanced proper youth empowerment programs in Kilifi County.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, the study proposes a series of recommendations. The participants in the youth development programs establish a framework for resource-oriented planning and execution in all forthcoming youth-centered initiatives. This process ought to encompass an ongoing evaluation of the needs of the youth, a strategic distribution of financial, human, and material resources, as well as the active engagement of young individuals in the planning phase to guarantee both relevance and a sense of ownership. The integration of entrepreneurship training and support systems within youth programs is prioritized by policymakers, development partners, and community leaders. The initiative ought to encompass the creation of innovation hubs, provision of micro-financing and startup capital, opportunities for mentorship, and business development services specifically designed to cater to the requirements of emerging entrepreneurs.

The government, along with various stakeholders, integrates growth-focused strategies into the formulation and execution of youth initiatives, which ought to be designed to encourage young individuals to aspire for greater achievements, adopt a long-term perspective, and participate in activities that foster both personal and professional development. Program implementers develop and uphold meticulously organized management systems defined by explicit role distribution to foster accountability, facilitate decision-making, and improve

operational efficiency. Furthermore, it is essential to enhance collaborations and networks among governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and youth organizations to promote the exchange of knowledge and the mobilization of resources.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

Because the conclusions were generated from data that was collected in 2025, this study is considered to be a cross-sectional study, which means that its findings are limited to that particular time frame. Since this is the case, the survey indicates that undertaking longitudinal research could potentially result in more profound understanding of the causal relationship that exists between the variables under investigation. In addition, the structures and context that were utilized in this study-imposed limitations on the breadth of the investigation. As a consequence of this, the framework of the study could be expanded in further research such that it incorporates new aspects of management practices relevant to entrepreneurship. This study focused exclusively on youth empowerment in Kilifi County, Kenya, meaning that the findings are applicable only to this specific context. Future studies could expand their scope to include counties outside of Kilifi, offering insights relevant to diverse contexts.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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