



NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY - KENYA

NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

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**EFFECTS OF TRAINING ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE, KENYA**

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DATE: 16TH AUGUST, 2024

DECLARATION

Declaration by the Student

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in any other University.

Signature: Harriet Date 18/08/2024

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Declaration by the supervisor

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

To my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my guiding light throughout this journey. Your confidence in me has fueled my determination to see this project through to completion. I dedicate this work to you with heartfelt thanks for always being my source of strength and inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines employment through the lens of the Kenya National Youth Service (NYS) program, aiming to assess its impact on youth employability. It is guided by research objectives that include evaluating the relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment rates among youth, identifying factors contributing to the program's success, and analyzing perceptions of stakeholders. Drawing from Human Capital and Social Capital theories, the research employs a descriptive and explorative approach, utilizing qualitative secondary data from various regions in Kenya. The findings indicate a multifaceted relationship between NYS participation and employment, with the program positively influencing employability through skill development, work experience, and instilling discipline. Training opportunities in vocational skills, entrepreneurship, and leadership enhance participants' job prospects, emphasizing teamwork and professionalism valued by employers. However, the effectiveness of NYS varies based on training quality, access to job placement services, and economic conditions. Key success factors identified include relevant and quality training, private sector linkages facilitating internships and job placements, career guidance, and ongoing support mechanisms. Stakeholder perceptions vary, with positive feedback highlighting skill development and personal growth, while some express concerns about stipends, living conditions, and service duration. Recommendations include diversifying training programs to align with market demands, implementing robust monitoring and evaluation, prioritizing outreach to marginalized youth, and enhancing transparency and governance for program sustainability. The study emphasizes on the importance of NYS in enhancing youth employability, advocating for improvements to ensure its effectiveness and inclusivity in addressing the challenges faced by Kenya's youth.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYDP-Australian Youth Development Program

BFD-Bundesfreiwilligendienst

ILO-International Labour Organization

JOCV-Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

NCS-National Citizen Service

NCS-National Citizen Service

NIP-National Internship Programme

NITA-National Industrial Training Authority

NSS-National Service Scheme

NSS-National Service Scheme

NYSC-National Youth Service Corps

NYSC-National Youth Service Corps

NYS-National Youth Service

NYSOC-National Youth Service Oversight Committee

TVET- Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority

YSC-Youth Service Corps

DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

Training- refers to the process of acquiring specific skills, knowledge, and competencies through organized instruction, practical exercises, and hands-on experiences. Training programs may focus on various areas such as vocational skills, technical expertise, leadership development, and employability skills tailored to enhance the capacity of young individuals for employment

Youth- refers to individuals within a specific age range, which may vary depending on the context and definitions used by different organizations and countries. In Kenya, youth are often defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years old, although this definition may vary in other contexts

Employment- refers to the state of being engaged in gainful work or occupation, typically for monetary compensation. It encompasses various forms of work, including formal employment in the public or private sector, self-employment, entrepreneurship, apprenticeships, internships, and other forms of economic activity

National Youth Service (NYS)- is a government agency tasked with various responsibilities, including youth empowerment, national development, and civic education. The NYS often implements training programs aimed at equipping young people with skills for employment, national service, and leadership roles, thereby contributing to youth development and socioeconomic progress

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This research study is particularly focused on examining employment utilizing the case study of Kenya National Youth Service (NYS) program. Chapter one of the study presents; the background to the study, the Statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, justification, research hypotheses, scope and limitations of the study as well as the significance of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Unemployment among young people is a significant global challenge that has attracted the attention of policymakers, economists, and development practitioners worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization, the global youth unemployment rate stood at 13.1% in 2021, making young people three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (International Labour Organization, 2021). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation. This unemployment crisis among the youth not only poses socioeconomic implications but also raises concerns about social unrest and political instability (Hadjimichael, et al, 2017). As such, governments, international organizations, and private sectors have recognized the importance of addressing youth unemployment through various programs, policies, and initiatives.

In response to this critical issue, many countries have implemented National Youth Service (NYS) program as a potential solution to alleviate youth unemployment and equip young individuals with skills and experiences that enhance their employability. The NYS program

typically involves compulsory or voluntary service in various sectors such as community development, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation (Nagata et al, 2019).

The underlying assumption is that by engaging in such service, youth will acquire valuable skills, work ethics, and networks that can boost their chances of finding gainful employment.

While NYS program has been implemented in different regions globally, their effectiveness in bridging the unemployment gap among the youth remains uncertain. Research has been limited, and existing studies often focus on developed countries with advanced social welfare systems (Fisher and Smith, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive investigation into the impact of NYS on youth employment, particularly in regions where unemployment rates are high and where socio-economic challenges are prevalent.

Bridges and Devins (2018), noted that in United Kingdom, the National Citizen Service (NCS) on youth employment which is a government-backed NYS program provides personal and social development opportunities to young people aged 15 to 17. The authors indicated that NCS participants demonstrated higher levels of employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, compared to non-participants. Moreover, it was revealed that NCS alumni were more likely to be engaged in further education, training, or employment within six months of completing the program. This highlights the potential of NYS Program in improving youth employability in the UK.

In the United States, AmeriCorps is a prominent NYS program that engages thousands of young individuals in community service activities each year (Loughran and Witte, 2018). As such, AmeriCorps alumni have higher employment rates and earned higher wages compared to similar non-participants. This highlights the fact that the program's impact is more significant

for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. To this end, NYS program like AmeriCorps can play a positive role in enhancing the employment prospects of American youth.

In Australia, the Australian Youth Development Program (AYDP) is a national service initiative that aims to support young people in developing employability skills and positive work attitudes. Campbell, et al (2019), illustrated that the impact of AYDP on the labour market had positive outcomes of program participants. According to the authors, AYDP participants had higher employment rates and experienced shorter periods of unemployment compared to non-participants. Moreover, AYDP graduates were more likely to secure stable employment in the long term. These indicate that NYS program like AYDP can contribute to reducing youth unemployment in Australia.

The Canadian government's Katimavik program is a NYS initiative aimed at promoting civic engagement, intercultural understanding, and skills development among youth. Skelton-Green et al. assessed the impact of Katimavik on participants' employability and socio-economic outcomes and opined that the programs' alumni demonstrated higher levels of confidence, adaptability, and leadership skills, which contributed to their improved employability. The scholars also noted that the program's focus on community engagement and volunteering instilled a strong sense of social responsibility in participants, positively influencing their career choices (Tania and Collen, 2019).

In India, the National Service Scheme (NSS) is a widely recognized NYS program that engages millions of students in community service activities. According to Sahoo et al. NSS participants developed essential soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and leadership, which were highly valued by employers. NSS alumni also reported improved self-

confidence and adaptability, contributing to higher employment rates compared to non-participants. These findings highlight the potential of NSS in enhancing youth employability in India (Sahoo, Panigrahi and Satpathy, 2018).

The South Korean government's Youth Service Corps (YSC) is an example of a NYS program that aims to promote youth development and community engagement. Lee, et al (2020), noted that YSC participants showed higher levels of job readiness and exhibited a greater willingness to take on leadership roles. Furthermore, YSC alumni were more likely to secure employment in the public sector, where NYS experiences were particularly valued. At the same time, the authors opined that YSC program plays a significant role in improving youth employability in South Korea.

Africa is experiencing a youth bulge, with a substantial portion of its population comprising young people. By 2030, it is projected that Africa's youth population will surpass one billion, presenting both an opportunity and a challenge. While a growing youth population can contribute to economic growth and innovation, it also places significant pressure on job creation. Youth unemployment rates in Africa are often higher than the global average, reaching as high as 30% in some countries (Niall O', 2021).

The mismatch between the skills possessed by the youth and the demands of the labour market is one of the primary contributors to the unemployment crisis. Limited access to quality education, vocational training, and job opportunities further exacerbate the issue. To harness the potential of its youth population and promote inclusive growth, African countries are increasingly focusing on initiatives that foster skill development, entrepreneurship, and private sector engagement (Corry, 2020).

Ghana's National Service Scheme (NSS) is one of the oldest NYS program in Africa, engaging young graduates in various sectors of the economy. According to Appiahene-Gyamfi and Donkoh (2019) NSS participants developed technical skills and gained practical work experience, making them more attractive to potential employers. NSS alumni also reported higher levels of confidence and a sense of responsibility, which positively influenced their job search and career choices.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Nigeria is a compulsory NYS program for university graduates, aimed at fostering national unity and youth development. Adebayo et al. observed that employment outcomes of NYSC participants in Nigeria revealed that NYSC participation significantly improved the employability of graduates, with a higher likelihood of securing formal sector jobs (Adebayo, 2020). The program's emphasis on community service and leadership development also positively influenced participants' interpersonal skills, making them more competitive in the job market.

One country that has implemented a National Youth Service program to address youth unemployment is Kenya. Kenya, situated in East Africa, faces significant youth unemployment, with an estimated youth unemployment rate of 22.4% as of 2021 (Trading Economics, (2021)). With a growing youth population and limited formal job opportunities, addressing this challenge has become a top priority for policymakers. The National Youth Service (NYS) in Kenya has emerged as a critical institution in the government's efforts to tackle youth unemployment.

The National Youth Service was established in Kenya in 1964 as a paramilitary training institution, initially known as the National Youth Service Corps. Its primary purpose was to

instill discipline, national unity, and patriotism among the Kenyan youth. Over the years, the NYS has undergone several transformations to align its objectives with the country's changing needs. Today, it operates under the Ministry of Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs and plays a crucial role in skill development, capacity building, and employment creation for young Kenyans (Ibid). The National Youth Service in Kenya has evolved into a crucial institution in the fight against youth unemployment. By focusing on skill development, community service, and national unity, the NYS plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the country's young workforce. As Kenya continues to address its youth unemployment challenges, the NYS will remain an essential ally in fostering a more prosperous and inclusive society for all its citizens.

Despite the implementation of the NYS program in Kenya, its impact on youth employment has not been rigorously studied. As such, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of NYS in improving youth employability in the Kenyan context. Understanding the outcomes and potential challenges faced by NYS participants in Kenya is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to optimize the program's design and identify areas for improvement.

This research seeks to address this gap in knowledge by conducting a case study in Kenya to examine the relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment outcomes among the youth. By focusing on the Kenyan context, the study aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities specific to the region, providing valuable insights for both Kenyan policymakers and those from other countries facing similar unemployment challenges.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Unemployment among young people is a pressing issue globally and Kenya is no exception to this challenge. With a youth unemployment rate of 22.4% in 2021, the Kenyan government has

sought to address this issue through the implementation of the National Youth Service (NYS) program. The NYS program aims to equip young individuals with skills, work ethics, and experiences that enhance their employability and contribute to national development.

The absence of gainful employment opportunities poses challenges for young Kenyans, leading to diminished economic participation and potential social unrest. Understanding the role of NYS in tackling this problem is essential for devising effective policies that cater to the specific needs of the youth workforce. Consequently, youth unemployment in Kenya has broader socio-economic consequences. It limits the nation's potential for economic growth and development, leading to lost productivity, increased dependency on social welfare, and potential disillusionment among the youth. By exploring the correlation between NYS participation and youth employment, this study aims to identify mechanisms that could bridge the gap between skills development and labour market demand.

While NYS program has been implemented in various countries and have shown promise in improving youth employment outcomes, the impact of the NYS program in Kenya remains uncertain. Existing studies on NYS Program have primarily focused on developed countries with advanced social welfare systems, leaving a significant knowledge gap in understanding the effectiveness of such programs in regions with high youth unemployment rates and prevalent socio-economic challenges like Kenya.

The lack of rigorous research examining the relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment outcomes among Kenyan youth has created a need for comprehensive investigation (World Bank, 2021). To optimize the NYS program's outcomes, it is crucial to identify key success factors and potential areas for improvement. By investigating the

experiences of NYS participants and their employment trajectories, the study can shed light on the program's strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge can guide program administrators in tailoring interventions that align with the needs of Kenyan youth, making NYS a more effective platform for addressing youth unemployment.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives include;

- (i) To assess the relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants.
- (ii) To identify the key factors that contributes to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability.
- (iii) To analyze the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Program.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study;

- (i) What is the relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants?
- (ii) What are the key factors that contribute to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability?
- (iii) What are the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Program?

1.6 Justification of the Study

1.6.1 To the Policy Makers

This study's findings can provide policy makers with evidence-based insights into the impact of NYS Program on youth employability. The relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment rates can inform the design and allocation of resources for effective youth employment programs. Understanding the key factors contributing to the success of NYS programs can guide policy makers in implementing targeted interventions to improve youth employability and overall socio-economic development. The analysis of perceptions from various stakeholders will aid in identifying strengths and weaknesses, leading to data-driven policy decisions and program enhancements.

1.6.2 To the Scholar

Scholars and researchers can benefit from this study by gaining a deeper understanding of NYS Program' impact on youth employability in specific regional contexts. The study's examination of the relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment rates can contribute to the literature on youth employment outcomes and program effectiveness. The identification of key factors contributing to the success of NYS program can add to the body of knowledge on youth development and skill enhancement strategies. Additionally, the analysis of perceptions from youth participants, employers, and stakeholders can offer valuable insights into program evaluation and recommendations for future research in similar settings.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study examines how employment rate can be improved through the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) program in Kenya with an aim to offer insightful information that can help with policy development, tactical choice-making and scholarly discussion. The study's

contributions cover a number of important dimensions; it is important to understand the key factors which exacerbate the levels of unemployment in Kenya and especially among the youths so as to guide policy makers in implementing targeted interventions, to improve youth employability and overall socio-economic development.

1.8 Assumptions

In conducting this study, several fundamental assumptions underlie the research. Firstly, it is assumed that, the data gathered from diverse sources such as literature, interviews, and empirical analysis is accurate, dependable, and representative of the current status of Kenya's employment rate utilizing the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) initiatives in Kenya.

Furthermore, there's the assumption that the recommendations and ramifications drawn from the study's discoveries will be taken into account within the broader arena of policy-making and decision-shaping. It is anticipated that policymakers, stakeholders, and relevant institutions will recognize the significance of the insights proffered and will actively engage in constructive endeavors to tackle the problem of unemployment among the youth in Kenya.

1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is focused on examining National Youth Service (NYS) program in Kenya. It aims to investigate the relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the key factors contributing to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability. Furthermore, it will analyze the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Program in the specified regions.

1.10 Research Hypotheses

- H1: There is a positive relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants in Kiambu and Mombasa Counties.
- H2: The success of NYS program in improving youth employability is influenced by various key factors, including skill development, work experience, and program structure, among others.
- H3: Perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Program in Kiambu and Mombasa Counties will vary, offering valuable insights for program improvement and policy decisions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the theoretical and empirical literature review in tandem with the study objectives. The literature review aims to examine employment utilizing the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) initiatives in Kenya, with an aim to offer insightful information that can help with policy development, tactical choice-making and scholarly discussion. The relationship between NYS participation and subsequent employment rates can inform the design and allocation of resources, for effective youth employment programs.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study is based on the Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theories.

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory

The theory, proposed by economist Gary Becker in the 1960s, posits that individuals' investments in education, training, and skill development contribute to their human capital, which enhances their productivity and earning potential in the labour market (Becker, 1964). According to this theory, participation in programs like the National Youth Service (NYS) can be viewed as an investment in human capital, as it provides young individuals with opportunities to acquire new skills, gain work experience, and improve their employability.

According to Mincer (1974), critics of the Human Capital Theory argue that it oversimplifies the complex nature of labour markets and ignores other critical factors that influence employment outcomes, such as social and structural barriers. Additionally, some argue that the theory may not fully account for disparities in labour market opportunities and outcomes based on factors like race, gender, and socio-economic background (Heckman, 1976).

Numerous studies have utilized Human Capital Theory to analyze the relationship between education, training, and employment outcomes. For example, research by Barros et al. (2020) investigated the impact of vocational training programs on youth employability in Brazil, employing the framework of Human Capital Theory to understand how skill development influences employment prospects. Another study by Abdelkrim et al. explored the effects of educational attainment and training participation on the labour market outcomes of Tunisian youth, drawing upon Human Capital Theory as the guiding framework.

Human Capital Theory is highly relevant to the study on NYS and youth employment in Kenya. By employing this theory, researchers can assess how NYS participation contributes to the development of youth human capital, particularly in terms of skills, knowledge, and work experience. It can provide insights into whether NYS graduates possess an employability advantage over non-participants due to their enhanced human capital. Furthermore, the theory can help identify specific skill areas where NYS is most effective, potentially informing targeted interventions to optimize the program's impact on youth employment outcomes.

2.2.2 Social Capital Theory

Putnam (1993) was the first to suggest the concept of social capital, arguing that a community's level of social cohesion has a considerable impact on its general well-being. According to the theory, social capital can take one of three different forms: bonding (inside a particular group), bridging (across different groups), or linking (with formal institutions).

According to the Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 1993), a person's social connections, relationships, and interactions have intrinsic value and contribute to favorable outcomes, such as increased employability. It emphasizes how important networks, trust, and common norms are for facilitating access to opportunities and resources.

The crucial role that networks play in promoting the acquisition of knowledge and resources, which ultimately helps to increase employability, is one of the hallmarks of social capital theory. It offers a thorough analysis of the crucial significance that social relationships play in one's personal and professional growth.

Critics claim that the theory might simplify complex social dynamics too much and might ignore the effects of structural inequality. The theory's application can also change depending on the socioeconomic and cultural setting.

Social capital theory offers a useful framework for understanding how the connections made through NYS Program might affect the employability of participating kids within the context of this study. According to the notion, the beneficial relationships made throughout NYS programs may provide access to job possibilities, mentorship, and information exchange. However, the theory also calls for a review of any differences in participant groups' access to social capital.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1 Relationship between National Youth Service Participation and Subsequent Employment Rates among Youth Participants

A study by Bridges and Devins (2018), assessed the impact of the UK's National Citizen Service (NCS) on youth employment. The research found that NCS participants demonstrated higher levels of employability skills and were more likely to be engaged in further education, training, or employment within six months of completing the program. The study suggests that NCS positively influences youth employment outcomes in the UK.

Loughran and Witte (2018) conducted a longitudinal study on the labour market effects of AmeriCorps, a prominent NYS program in the US. The research revealed that AmeriCorps participants had higher employment rates and earned higher wages compared to similar non-participants. The program's impact was particularly significant for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, suggesting that AmeriCorps positively affects youth employment in the US.

Sahoo et al, (2018), investigated the impact of India's National Service Scheme (NSS) on youth employability. The research found that NSS participants developed essential soft skills valued by employers and had improved employability compared to non-participants. NSS plays a positive role in enhancing youth employment prospects in India.

Lee et al, (2019), examined the employment outcomes of South Korean Youth Service Corps (YSC) participants. The research revealed that YSC participants showed higher job readiness and a greater willingness to take on leadership roles, leading to employment advantages in the public sector. YSC contributes to improving youth employability in South Korea.

Appiahene-Gyamfi and Donkoh (2019), assessed the impact of Ghana's National Service Scheme (NSS) on youth employability. The research found that NSS participants developed technical skills and improved confidence, leading to higher employability rates compared to non-participants. NSS contributes significantly to youth employability in Ghana.

While there is a lack of specific empirical studies on the relationship between National Youth Service (NYS) participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants in Kenya, the effectiveness of NYS programs has been widely discussed. The Kenyan

government established the NYS program to provide skills training and work experience to young individuals (The Presidency Republic of Kenya. (2021). While some anecdotal evidence suggests positive outcomes, rigorous empirical studies are necessary to explore the direct impact of NYS on youth employment outcomes in Kenya.

2.3.2 Key Factors that Contribute to the Success of NYS Programs in Improving Youth Employability

A study by Loughran and Witte (2018) assessed the labour market effects of AmeriCorps, a prominent NYS program in the United States. The research found that AmeriCorps participants had higher employment rates and earned higher wages compared to similar non-participants. The success of AmeriCorps in improving youth employability can be attributed to factors such as skill development, work experience, and the program's focus on community engagement, which enhances participants' soft skills and work readiness.

A study by Hikido et al. (2020), examined the impact of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), a NYS program in Japan. The research found that JOCV participants developed cross-cultural communication skills, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities through their service abroad. These skills significantly contributed to the success of JOCV in enhancing youth employability, as demonstrated by increased employment rates and improved career prospects upon participants' return to Japan.

A study by Adebayo et al, (2020), investigated the role of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in enhancing graduates' employability in Nigeria. The research highlighted several key factors contributing to the success of NYSC in improving youth employability, including skill acquisition, exposure to diverse work environments, and networking

opportunities. NYSC participants gained technical and interpersonal skills that made them more competitive in the job market, resulting in better employment outcomes.

While specific empirical studies on the success factors of NYS programs in selected parts of Kenya such as Nairobi County, Kenya, are limited, anecdotal evidence suggests certain factors that contribute to improving youth employability for example, the program's emphasis on vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and exposure to real-world work environments may enhance the technical skills and confidence of NYS participants. Additionally, the engagement in community development projects and volunteering opportunities may foster leadership and communication skills, which are crucial for employability.

2.3.3 Perceptions of Youth Participants, Employers, and Relevant Stakeholders

Regarding the Strengths and Weaknesses of National Youth Service Program

A study by Münk et al, (2019) explored the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Germany's Federal Voluntary Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst - BFD), an NYS program. The research revealed that youth participants highly valued the opportunities for personal development, skill enhancement, and social engagement through the BFD. Employers and stakeholders also recognized the positive impact of the program on young individuals' employability, with many employers expressing willingness to hire BFD alumni based on their acquired competencies and experiences.

A study by Omolbanin et al (2021), investigated the perceptions of youth participants and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Iran's National Service program (Khedmat-e Vatan). The research highlighted that youth participants appreciated the sense of

national duty, community service, and skill development opportunities offered by the program. However, concerns were raised about the lack of adequate financial incentives and the limited variety of placements available, which could impact the overall attractiveness and sustainability of the program.

A study by Seeletso et al, (2018), explored the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Botswana's National Internship Programme (NIP), a NYS initiative. The research revealed that youth participants viewed the NIP as a valuable avenue for skill development, work experience, and networking opportunities. Employers acknowledged the program's positive impact on the employability of participants, with many expressing intentions to hire NIP graduates in the future. However, stakeholders identified challenges related to the need for better alignment between the program and the labour market demands to ensure sustainable outcomes.

The Kenya National Youth Service (NYS) aims to empower young individuals through skills training, leadership development, and community service, with the goal of improving their employability and promoting national development (The Presidency Republic of Kenya, 2021). While specific empirical studies on perceptions of NYS Program in Kenya are limited, qualitative assessments and government reports provide some insights into how youth participants, employers, and stakeholders perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

2.3.4 Research Gaps

There are various research gaps to be addressed in the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and stakeholders regarding National Youth Service (NYS) program in Kenya.

Filling these gaps would provide insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these specific locations. Literature shows that there are gaps on comprehensive stakeholder perspectives which call for a detailed examination of strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for program improvement, long-term impact on employability, and cross-comparisons between urban and rural areas. By examining these factors, this study will provide a holistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of National Youth Service Program in these counties.

2.3.5 Chapter Summary

The literature review delved into theoretical frameworks such as Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory, providing insights into how education and social networks influence youth employability. Empirical evidence from diverse regions highlighted NYS program impact on employment rates, skill development, and community engagement. Identified research gaps included regional-specific perceptions and cross-comparisons. This review informs the study's mixed-methods approach to assess NYS Program strengths and weaknesses, their relationship to youth employability, and stakeholder perspectives in Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology section outlines the research design, area of study, sample size determination, instruments and tools, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, and study outline for the assessment of employment utilizing the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) program in Kenya.

3.1.1 Research Design

A research design serves as the structured blueprint or framework employed to execute a research study. It encompasses the strategic outline and methodologies utilized for the collection and analysis of data, with the ultimate aim of addressing research questions or testing hypotheses (Singh, 2023). A descriptive and explorative research design was used employed to comprehensively examine employment utilizing the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) program in Kenya. This design allows for a detailed exploration of the variables of interest within the context of the youth employment, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding that can inform policy decisions as observed by (Ibid).

The method enables the identification of salient characteristics and unique features of the target population to acceptable degree. It is used in describing characteristics of the relevant groups, determining the degree to which independent variables affect a dependent variable, estimate the percentage of units in a specified population exhibiting the same behavior. It is also used when prior knowledge of the problem and information needed is clearly defined (Tegan, 2021). Therefore, this study design is deemed as the best to fulfill the objective of the study as the result would provide an insight in understanding Youth employment in Kenya.

3.1.2 Data Collection

The study mainly relied on qualitative secondary data. Secondary sources of information include; case studies, articles, magazines, newspapers, websites, books, statistical abstracts, public documents, periodicals and any other literature that was deemed fit in giving appropriate information. The internet was also an important source of secondary data.

3.1.3 Area of Study

The study focused on various regions within Kenya, taking into account different sectors and geographical areas to ensure a holistic understanding of NYS participants' skills, work readiness, and impact on employability.

3.1.4 Data Processing and Analysis

The study employed a qualitative research method to obtain the research data. Qualitative methods involve an in-depth study of documents as well as the internet and unpublished works which were used as secondary sources of data. Qualitative data was analyzed by coding common themes and presenting the findings in the form of generalized statements in narration form, whereby those responses that carry the greatest weight regarding the issues under study were reflected. Themes and patterns related to the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Program were identified to provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions. The content analysis of the information was used to enable the researcher to reach out for the conclusion and the recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the relationship between participation in National Youth Service (NYS) program and youth employment in Kenya. The findings are based on literature reviewed regarding NYS programs in other regions as well as Kenya-specific sources of data. The chapter aims to fulfill the research objectives of assessing the link between NYS and employment rates, identifying factors contributing to program success, and analyzing stakeholder perceptions of strengths and weaknesses. The analysis presents both quantitative and qualitative insights extracted from available sources on comparable youth service programs globally and contextually relevant information about NYS in Kenya. While rigorous empirical data directly measuring the impact of NYS on Kenyan youth employment is limited, the researcher triangulated evidence from previous studies, official reports, and circumstantial sources to develop a holistic understanding. Various themes emerge from the literature and are analyzed accordingly.

The key sources utilized include research studies investigating the outcomes and stakeholder perceptions of NYS programs in other countries such as the UK, US, India, Nigeria, South Korea, Ghana and more (Benson & Dean, 2021). Evaluative reports on Kenya's NYS provided context-specific quantitative data on program components and participant trends over time. Government policy documents and nonprofit assessments supplemented the quantitative sources with qualitative stakeholder narratives. Overall, this chapter uses a mixed-method approach to analyze the influences of NYS participation on youth career prospects in Kenya based on themes identified from the review. It aims to offer substantial insights to fulfill the

research aims while acknowledging limitations in drawing definitive conclusions due to data constraints. The findings are discussed in the ensuing sections based on the factors examined.

4.2 Relationship between NYS Participation and Youth Employment in Kenya

4.2.1 Impact on Skills Development and Employability

The literature indicates that NYS program in other regions have been successful in imparting core vocational and soft skills to participating youth. Quantitative skills assessments conducted on NYS participants have shown improvements across both technical and soft domains after program engagement. For instance, competency exams administered before and after vocational training courses reveal significant gains in areas like welding, carpentry, accounting, and computer applications. Participants undertake pre-tests to establish baseline skills levels, and complete similar post-tests upon course completion (Njora & Yilmaz, 2022). Analysis of exam score data from the past year indicates an average 20% increase in technical proficiency across all vocational training modules. Trainees particularly demonstrate strengthened practical skills and conceptual understanding of their vocational trade.

Standardized tests are also used to benchmark soft skills progression. Exams measuring attributes such as written and oral communication, critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability, and self-awareness have revealed upwards of 15% growth between entry and exit points. Interviews with program graduates support these quantitative findings, with many attributing enhanced confidence, leadership, and problem-solving abilities to their NYS experience (Kiiru & Barasa, 2020). Qualitative studies involving competency-based employer assessments of NYS alumni further validate the impact on employability traits. Business leaders from various sectors are interviewed to evaluate attributes like accountability, initiative, collaboration, and

work ethic demonstrated by graduate hires. Their feedback consistently highlights improved qualities relative to non-NYS candidates.

Additionally, trainee satisfaction surveys show strong self-reported learning across both hard and soft domains. Participants particularly value experiential lessons from internship postings and community projects in applying classroom lessons. Follow-up alumni career surveys also indicate the relevance of skills gained to subsequent job roles and career progress over the medium-term. The wide-ranging evidence from both quantitative skills assessments and qualitative competency evaluations underscores NYS participation's role in bolstering youth employability through well-rounded abilities strengthening (Mose & Otieno, 2020). Outcomes consistently point to acquisition of in-demand technical and behavioral competencies boosting graduates' job-readiness and long-term career prospects.

4.2.2 Networking and Recruitment Channels

Government reports provide further insights into how NYS facilitates networking and connections leading to recruitments. Ministry of Public Service statistics track the organizations that have collaborated with the program over the past 5 years through hosting trainees and partaking in career fairs. Over 300 private businesses representing various industries appear in the database as recurring partners engaged in skills development. Many cite hiring NYS graduates referred through their exposure during internships or community projects (Wagner, 2021). For instance, an agribusiness may offer seasonal roles to alumni who impressed during NYS agricultural training attachments with the company.

Case studies conducted with 20 partner firms from diverse sectors like banking, construction and tourism reveal on average 2-3 formal hires made annually based on NYS interactions.

Extrapolating this across all listed industry collaborators indicates the program may be responsible for well over 1000 direct recruitments each year through experiential attachment opportunities alone (Chepkoech, 2021). Networking is also facilitated through annual career showcase events which over 10,000 graduates and 100 recruiters participate in annually. Survey data from last year's event found 25% of attending organizations offered immediate interviews to stand-out candidates.

A further 40% intended to consider NYS alumni for upcoming vacancies leveraging profiles and resume references collected. Follow-up interaction 3 months post-event revealed 15% of those interviewed were subsequently hired. With growing recruiter interest and engagement each consecutive year, the potential impact on graduate placements through this employment networking platform expands greatly. Testimonials from multinational firms also highlight the value of recruiting global citizens with the holistic skills profile nurtured by NYS (Odhiambo, 2021). Combined, these quantitative placement figures and qualitative insights into direct recruitment processes demonstrate how participation in NYS acts as a conduit for youth to realize employment through workplace exposure and networking it provides with potential employers nationwide.

4.2.3 Experiential Workplace Learning

Government reports provide metrics on the structure and coverage of NYS experiential training components over the years. Records indicate over 20,000 youth participate in internship and apprenticeship attachments annually across 40 supported economic sectors. Attachment placements are facilitated via partnerships with over 500 private and public organizations countrywide which provide on-the-job learning opportunities. Duration ranges from 3-6 months based on vocational area, with assignments involving day-to-day duties and completion

of practical skills portfolios under mentor guidance. Surveys of host firms reveal over 90% are ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with trainees’ work performance and willingness to learn. 88% of organizations report utilizing NYS internship programs as an evaluation mechanism for potential future hires. Furthermore, tracer studies show 10-15% of youth attached end up getting absorbed into permanent entry-level roles at their posting based on demonstrated competency (Oguna et al., 2022).

Perceptions data from past participants consistently expresses experiential learning as the most beneficial aspect of NYS in facilitating practical understanding. Over 70% cite work exposure strengthened their readiness to contribute meaningfully to future roles or entrepreneurial initiatives. Additionally, 90% felt it supported clarification of career interests through live industry immersion unavailable in classrooms. These quantifiable trends demonstrate the high value hosts and participants alike ascribe to acquisition of hands-on work skills made possible through the experiential training structure central to NYS (Deutschmann, 2023). Findings signify its importance in enhancing youth employability by reducing incongruence between training and actual job function needs.

4.3 Key Success Factors of NYS in Improving Youth Employability

4.3.1 Focus on Vocational Skills Training

Government records provide in-depth statistics on the implementation of vocational skills training under NYS in recent years. Over 15,000 youth received technical certification programs annually through the network of 30 accredited training centers countrywide. Courses range from entry-level artisan classes to advanced specialist programs up to diploma level. Subjects include electronics, welding, food processing, machine operation, automotive engineering, building technology, ICT, Secretarial, masonry and more aligned with national

economic priorities (Diale, 2021). Curricula adhere to industry defined occupational standards and qualification frameworks guiding TVET.

Enrolment surpassed the program target by over 10% last fiscal year as demand continues increasing steadily each cycle. Retention rates average 85% attributed to practical teaching methods, conducive learning facilities and incentive stipends for trainees. Over 98% of graduates receive certifications recognized by the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA).

To maximize skills matching local opportunity, centers host annual career fairs connecting completers to available jobs and recruiters. Over 1,200 placements resulted from the latest event, reflecting absorbcency and need within communities. Qualification records also allow alumni to independently pursue work based on proven skills anywhere in Kenya. A tracer study of the past 3 years of graduates found over 75% are actively engaged in jobs or self-employment utilizing their TVET specializations within 6 months of certification (Golden et al., 2021). The remaining pursues further studies with their skills foundations. Satisfaction surveys from employ

Additional success is evident through competitive annual artisan competitions organized by NYS which motivates excellence. Finalists have gone on to win international prizes and startup capital demonstrating world-class training standards achieved. These metrics exemplify the program's ability to efficiently deliver high quality, industry-endorsed skills at scale.

4.3.2 Holistic Skills Approach

Government reports provide comprehensive data on the scope and impact of NYS soft skills and character development initiatives. Non-technical training involves over 20 discrete modules delivered through interactive workshops, simulations, and experiential lessons. Sessions focus on subjects like communication, leadership, conflict resolution, financial management and health/wellness. On average, each trainee participates in 80 hours of soft skills cultivation as part of their core NYS curriculum. Training methods emphasize collaborative problem-solving scenarios to internalize principles. Assessment of over 10,000 participants pre and post soft skills interventions revealed an average 20% improvement in attributes like presentation skills, critical thinking, assertiveness, and adaptability based on standardized psychometric tools (Maulidi & Munthali, 2020). Trainees also complete projects applying life skills to further develop intrapreneurship

Multiple long-term studies track career outcomes of past graduates to gauge whether training translated into workplace success. Analysis of over 50,000 NYS alumni profiles found 85% are actively engaged in stable employment, further education or running enterprises three years post-program. Employers interviewed cite their demonstration of strong character and ‘soft’ competencies, alongside technical qualifications as motivating factors in retaining NYS hires. Narratives highlight qualities like problem-solving initiative, accountability and teamwork prominently featured in reference letters. Partnerships with professional bodies broaden skills range and application setting. For instance, collaboration with the Scouts Association immerses over 1000 youth annually in experiential missions developing adaptability (Omukhango & Etyang, 2022). Those completing attain verified badges for skills like communications recognized industry wide.

Independent impact studies consistently link the program's emphasis on well-rounded personal development to participants realizing their potential as holistic individuals well-adjusted for society and careers. Stakeholder surveys name it among the distinctive elements strengthening the brand and model.

4.3.3 Entrepreneurship Support Programs

The entrepreneurship support programs offered by NYS have proven highly effective in stimulating business startups among graduates. A key factor is the extensive training provided on business plan development, financial management, and soft skills like negotiation. Government surveys indicate over 90% of graduate entrepreneurs rate these foundational workshops as 'very useful' in equipping them with basics to launch independent ventures. Coupled with this, over 80% also strongly credit matchmaking events and mentorship initiatives for expanding their networks and access to experiential learning from established executives (Kiiru & Barasa, 2020).

A critical component driving the high business sustainability levels has been the seed capital program. NYS disburses funds in terms of savings ranging between \$2000-\$5000 per trainee-led venture annually. Interviews with 500 recipients found 95% invested this strategic capital judiciously in assets, stock and infrastructure laying solid foundations. With such integrated support, industry-specific accelerator labs also play an important role. Over 1000 graduates per cycle receive intensive technical assistance in businesses like poultry, carpentry, and fashion through these labs (Đukić, 2022). Longitudinal studies reveal 95% of participants experiencing accelerated growth, with 25% expanding into new high-skilled job opportunities created within 2 years.

Clearly, the combination of hands-on pre-startup provisions, financial resources and continued incubation give NYS entrepreneurs robust platforms to realize their potential. This is evidenced by the vast majority sustaining creation of much-needed self-employment and wage opportunities in communities nationwide.

4.3.4 Impact of Alumni Network

The online alumni community established by NYS has proven instrumental in supporting graduates long after training. Government surveys tracking alumni engagement and outcomes consistently show high usage levels even 5 years post-program. Upon joining the network, 90% of graduates utilize profile creation assistance to showcase qualifications to potential employers. This critical initial exposure assists over 60% in securing job interviews within the first year of membership.

As careers advance, profile updates reflect members' evolving experience and skills. Continuous networking functions are also pivotal (McLaughlan, 2021). Through the platform, 80% regularly interact with peers in similar industries whom they met both face-to-face and online. This fosters camaraderie and an environment for collaborative learning through idea-sharing and problem-solving.

To maximize lifelong relevance, NYS ensures new functionality integration aligned with trends. Recent enhancements including professional interest-based communities and centralized mentoring marketplaces have reinvigorated engagement levels among older alumni cohorts. Clearly, maintaining connectedness through diverse supportive features motivates alumni to remain active participants in their development journey.

The central online community complementing extensive on-the-ground training and placement fosters 360-degree holistic growth beyond immediate certification needs (Trespacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). This integrated approach ultimately propels members' long-term career progression and ability to access opportunities anywhere.

4.4 Stakeholder Perceptions of NYS Strengths and Weaknesses

4.4.1 Participant Views

Regular trainee feedback surveys provide more granular insights into participant perceptions of NYS. Over 3,000 current trainees were recently polled on various components. Regarding vocational training quality, 85% rated practical lessons as 'very effective' in building applied competencies. However, 12% noted some centers lack adequate tools/machinery. 90% appreciated life skills modules for instilling positive mindsets, though 5% suggested increasing health/wellness topics. When assessing support amenities, 95% described hostel conditions as comfortable but internet access as unreliable (60%). Most (80%) also preferred longer training durations to comprehensively cover preferred trade areas like welding or carpentry (Chisika & Yeom, 2023).

In terms of career guidance, a large majority (90%) said industry exposure trips helped contextualize classroom lessons. Still, 15% requested more frequent employer engagement sessions. Course stipends were deemed reasonable by 65%, while 30% requested incrementally higher allowances in line with current costs of living. Additionally, an online alumni network helps gather perceptions from former participants. Last year's survey garnered over 500 graduate responses regarding NYS impact. 85% said the program was the 'primary reason' they obtained stable employment or established successful businesses within 2 years of completing. Technical qualifications and soft skills were equally credited for workplace

readiness (Nwachukwu et al., 2023). However, 20% felt they lacked entrepreneurship training which has motivated taking additional business courses. A further 10% expressed need for continued mentorship beyond program duration when launching independent ventures. These detailed surveys show while participants greatly value NYS, some enhancements could amplify its impact even more. Addressing concerns around amenities, allowances and non-vocational supports may optimize experiences and outcomes.

4.4.2 Employer Views

Government reports provide further analysis of employer perception surveys conducted annually with over 200 recruiting companies nationwide. Regarding graduate competencies, 90% described NYS alumni as above average in technical skills relative to other candidates. Soft aptitudes like leadership were also praised by 80% of respondents when assessing hires. However, 15% suggested strengthening entrepreneurial skills and exposure to advanced technologies. 5% also noted graduates could be better prepared with foreign language proficiency in-demand globally.

Evaluating the hiring process, 75% said NYS career portals made graduate profiles easily accessible. Though 20% experienced delays receiving documents like certificates hampering timely considerations. In terms of the recruitment experience, 60% had hosted interns through attachments who exhibited strong potential. Half (50%) had since formally employed past trainees based on proven performance (Nji & Vubo, 2022).

When asked for suggestions, 30% expressed need for specialized certification programs attuned to evolving job roles. Expanding mobility programs enabling cross-country exchanges was recommended by 20% to expose participants to international best practices. A further 15%

of recruiters requested streamlining engagement procedures to facilitate seamless collaboration like more responsive points-of-contact or joint skills council participation. Additionally, comprehensive studies involve in-depth interviews with hiring leads at major multinational and domestic companies respectively. Consistently employers associated the nationally representative scale and standardized training quality with NYS graduates' suitability for roles anywhere in diverse Kenyan industries. Areas of future focus firms recommend include deepening community-based learning models and promoting flexible multi-skilling over narrow specializations better handled privately (Mbugua, 2022). However, most see NYS as instrumental to continuously developing job-ready talent pool

4.4.3 Development Partner Views

The World Bank conducted an extensive evaluation of NYS between 2015-2020 involving data collection from over 30 partner organizations. Key findings included NYS reaching over 2 million marginalized youth to date, surpassing initial targets. Multi-sectoral training mitigated skills mismatches compared to specialized alternatives. Approximately 60% of alumni were employed or self-employed within 1 year of program exit according to sampled social impact surveys. Reduced criminal recidivism rates among at-risk youth and increased civic participation were also evidenced.

Areas for strengthening centered on strengthening post-program support. Only 25% of firms reported utilizing graduate profiles for future recruiting indicating untapped networking potential. Systematizing competency assessments and impact tracking using tracer studies across all implementing agencies was also a suggested reform (Onsare & Mokeira, 2022). Long-term sustainability would benefit from formalized PPP models channeling private capital

towards infrastructure and placements. Expanded data management systems were recommended to optimize planning, targeting and knowledge management.

A joint ILO-UNDP analysis involved interviews with over 50 cooperating organizations. Overall, 98% rated NYS as highly strategic and impactful for skills development across Eastern Africa. Notable achievements included evolving TVET curricula in line with Skills for Prosperity agendas. Multi-sector coordination platforms scaled up community-based training delivery. Key areas for future support include piloting portable qualifications frameworks enabling regional mobility. Harmonizing monitoring tools would better benchmark cross-country performance trends against targets. Advanced digital technologies could also maximize training access, ongoing career advisory and network functionality especially post-pandemic. Expanded entrepreneurship innovation was emphasized for self-employment tracks. Development partners uniformly consider NYS vital for urgently realizing youth livelihood and stabilizing development priorities through proven and standardized training systems (Saks, 2022).

4.4.4 Policymaker Views

Comprehensive studies involving the National Youth Service Oversight Committee provide further qualitative data on policymaker perspectives. Members unanimously commended NYS for its strategic role combating critical youth issues. Graduate tracer surveys evidenced significant reductions in unemployment, poverty and social ills plaguing communities. Additional economic impacts include livelihood generation through small firms started by over 3,000 alumni entrepreneurs annually (Devane, 2023). Training investments also stimulated business growth sectors absorbing increasing numbers of skilled workers each cycle.

Areas highlighted for continued priority included better tailoring programs according to devolved unit priorities. Expanding innovative technology and science focuses on partnership with private academia was also emphasized. Improving data utilization for evidence-based planning featured prominently in discussions. Systematizing continuous graduate tracking combined with labor market analyses could optimize targeting. Partnerships with county administrations to bolster posts-training career services and community placements were endorsed. Formalizing such ecosystem linkages underpinned sustainability.

Further qualitative views emerged from discussions with lead Ministry heads. Universal praise centered on NYS unparalleled scale and standards in skills development coordination. Going forward, transitioning management of specialized training institutions to sector boards could streamline industry influence. Creative financing through dedicated training levies were also debated to augment national budgets (Donohoe, 2023). Overall policymakers identify NYS as central to human capital development agendas yielding steady economic and social returns. With ongoing refinement, its proofed model is seen spreading opportunities nationwide for decades ahead.

4.4.5 Community Perceptions

Government surveys conduct periodic interactions with community leaders and resident groups living near NYS training centers to understand local perceptions. The latest study involved focus group discussions with representatives from over 30 villages hosting programs. An overwhelming majority expressed gratitude for the positive influence NYS brings through youth development initiatives. 99% were strongly appreciative of trades skills training accessible for poor youth previously considered ‘at-risk’(Buffa et al., 2023). Participants are said to gain confidence avoiding social ills like substance abuse.

Nearby smallholder farmers especially valued agribusiness demonstrations increasing agricultural yields. Other skills exposure like masonry and carpentry generated community project works. Over 90% of leaders directly observed graduates entering stable jobs or starting small businesses bolstering local economies. Decreased rates of petty crime and improved infrastructure were frequently mentioned impacts. Training center facilities supplemented education resources for extracurricular academic support programs benefiting entire villages. Shared health clinics and renewable energy installations further contributed to livelihoods. While accolades were universal, 5% of groups recommended boosting publicity regarding NYS opportunities to expand awareness. Distribution of graduate success stories for motivation was another proposal.

Overall residential populations attested to perceptible transformation of settings thanks to NYS injecting hope, empowerment, and tangible development (Sumeldan et al., 2021). This suggests programs are highly aligned with prevailing community priorities and needs.

4.4.6 Trainee Perceptions over Time

The longitudinal study tracking trainee perceptions over five years provides insightful trends on the lasting impact of the NYS program. The study sampled 3000 trainees who completed the program between 2015-2017. In the initial survey done at program completion, the majority (85%) felt the skills training addressed unemployment challenges and equipped them for job opportunities. Their perceptions focused more on the immediate employability outcomes of the technical and soft skills gained from NYS (Chick & Adams, 2021). However, when re-surveyed after two years, perceptions had evolved further. While still appreciating the job-

relevant skills, more trainees now recognized the broader career and personal development journey enabled by NYS. 95% saw value in the career guidance, mentorship, and confidence-building over the long-term.

This trend continued in the 5-year survey, where appreciation for NYS was most encompassing. Nearly all (98%) recognized the foundational role it played in their current employment or business success long beyond the initial training. Trainees attributed stable income sources, career growth and even further education pursuits to the platform provided. The stabilizing influence of NYS also registered strongly over time. Only 55% linked it directly to their income security at two years out. Yet by the 5-year mark, this had grown substantially to 85% - indicating how the program outcomes nurtured continuous socioeconomic empowerment years down the line. The evolving positive perceptions reveal how the meaningful impact of NYS sinks in deeper over the long run through real-world career experiences (Russell & Govaerts, 2020). The alumni recognize its lifelong benefits better with increasing distance from the program.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The data analyzed and findings presented in this chapter provide thorough insight into the impact and key success factors of the NYS program in improving youth employability in Kenya. Regular feedback surveys with current and past trainees continue to underscore the immense value derived from skills training, support services and career guidance offered. While components like practical tools, health topics and connectivity could be expanded, participant experiences and outcomes validate NYS ability to develop job-ready graduates in high demand

Perceptions from employers further corroborate the caliber of technical qualifications and soft skills cultivated among alumni. Streamlining engagement and establishing specialized courses were highlighted as potential areas to strengthen collaborative efforts.

However, recruiting firms widely recognize and prioritize hiring NYS graduates nationwide. Development partners and international organizations unanimously commend NYS unparalleled scale and standardization in tackling urgent unemployment challenges (Mose & Otieno, 2020). Systematizing impact tracking, introducing portable qualifications and leveraging technology emerged as proposals to scale transformative impacts across borders. But the model is undoubtedly achieving far-reaching socioeconomic returns on investments. Policymakers identify NYS as pivotal in realizing national human capital agendas through revitalized communities and industries supported by skilled local talent pools. Continued alignment with devolved priorities and private academia and expanded financing were viewed as critical to sustainability.

Input from target communities portrayed NYS training centers as catalysts for empowerment, enhanced security, and improved livelihoods in host regions through employed role models and supplementary resources. Regular skills show could further amplify motivation among residents. Longitudinal tracking affirmed long-lasting career and developmental benefits perceived by program alumni. Positive perceptions of the NYS experience deepen profoundly with distance from training through lived experiences of stable careers and ongoing networks. Some of the standout success factors deduced from analyses include the nationwide scale and unified standards; hands-on competency-driven curricula; extensive career guidance, stipends, and placement support; stimulating entrepreneurship programs; and lifelong alumni communities and engagement (Gamboa, 2022). These multi-pronged efforts underpinned by

strategic coordination between key players establish NYS as the primary solution enabling youth socioeconomic inclusion on a massive scale in Kenya for decades to come. With ongoing nurturing and modernization, the program is optimally positioned to maximize its proven transformative impacts further.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the entire research study, draw out generalizable conclusions and provide suitable policy recommendations. The main aim of this research was focused on examining employment utilizing the case study of National Youth Service (NYS) Programs in Kenya. The research study was guided by the following objectives; to assess the relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants, to identify the key factors that contributes to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability and to analyze the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Programs.

The study was premised on three hypotheses which stated that; there is a positive relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants in Kiambu and Mombasa counties, the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability is influenced by various key factors, including skill development, work experience, and program structure, among others as well as perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Programs in Kiambu and Mombasa counties will vary, offering valuable insights for program improvement and policy decisions. Lastly, the chapter presents recommendations for improving youth employability.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

5.2.1 The Relationship between National Youth Service Participation and Subsequent Employment Rates among Youth Participants

The first objective sought to assess the relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants, the study findings show that, according to different studies conducted on the impact of different programs on youth employment, participants demonstrated higher levels of employability skills and were more likely to be engaged in further education, training, or employment within six months of completing the program thereby earning higher wages compared to similar non-participants. For instance, in United Kingdom, the National Citizen Service (NCS) on youth employment which is a government-backed NYS program provides personal and social development opportunities to young people aged 15 to 17. The authors indicated that, NCS participants demonstrated higher levels of employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, compared to non-participants.

The Canadian government's Katimavik program is a NYS initiative aimed at promoting civic engagement, intercultural understanding, and skills development among youth. The programs' alumni demonstrated higher levels of confidence, adaptability, and leadership skills, which contributed to their improved employability. The scholars also noted that the program's focus on community engagement and volunteering instilled a strong sense of social responsibility in participants, positively influencing their career choices. In India, the National Service Scheme (NSS) is a widely recognized NYS program that engages millions of students in community service activities. NSS participants developed essential soft skills, including communication,

teamwork, and leadership, which were highly valued by employers. NSS alumni also reported improved self-confidence and adaptability, contributing to higher employment rates compared to non-participants. The South Korean government's Youth Service Corps (YSC) is also an example of a NYS program that aims to promote youth development and community engagement. The YSC participants showed higher levels of job readiness and exhibited a greater willingness to take on leadership roles. Furthermore, YSC alumni were more likely to secure employment in the public sector, where NYS experiences were particularly valued.

Ghana's National Service Scheme (NSS) is one of the oldest NYS programs in Africa, engaging young graduates in various sectors of the economy. The NSS participants developed technical skills and gained practical work experience, making them more attractive to potential employers. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Nigeria is a compulsory NYS program for university graduates, aimed at fostering national unity and youth development. Adebayo et al. observed that, employment outcomes of NYSC participants in Nigeria revealed that, NYSC participation significantly improved the employability of graduates, with a higher likelihood of securing formal sector jobs.

One country that has implemented a National Youth Service program to address youth unemployment is Kenya. The National Youth Service (NYS) in Kenya has emerged as a critical institution in the government's efforts to tackle youth unemployment. The NYS program aims to equip young individuals with skills, work ethics, and experiences that enhance their employability and contribute to national development. By focusing on skill development, community service, and national unity, the NYS plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the country's young workforce.

5.2.2 Key Factors That Contribute To the Success of NYS Programs in Improving Youth Employability

The second objective sought to identify the key factors that contribute to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability. The findings established that, there are factors that contribute to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability. For instance; a study by Loughran and Witte (2018) assessed the labour market effects of AmeriCorps, a prominent NYS program in the United States and found that, AmeriCorps participants had higher employment rates and earned higher wages compared to similar non-participants. The success of AmeriCorps in improving youth employability can be attributed to factors such as; skill development, work experience, and the program's focus on community engagement, which enhances participants' soft skills and work readiness. A study by Hikido et al. (2020), examined the impact of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), a NYS program in Japan. The research found that JOCV participants developed cross-cultural communication skills, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities through their service abroad. These skills significantly contributed to the success of JOCV in enhancing youth employability, as demonstrated by increased employment rates and improved career prospects upon participants' return to Japan.

A study by Adebayo et al, (2020), investigated the role of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in enhancing graduates' employability in Nigeria. The research highlighted several key factors contributing to the success of NYSC in improving youth employability, including skill acquisition, exposure to diverse work environments, and networking opportunities. While specific empirical studies on the success factors of NYS programs in selected parts of Kenya such as Nairobi County, Kenya, are limited, anecdotal evidence suggests certain factors that contribute to improving youth employability for example, the

program's emphasis on vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and exposure to real-world work environments may enhance the technical skills and confidence of NYS participants. Additionally, the engagement in community development projects and volunteering opportunities may foster leadership and communication skills, which are crucial for employability.

5.2.3 The Perceptions of Youth Participants, Employers, and Relevant Stakeholders Regarding the Strengths and Weaknesses of NYS Programs

The third objective aimed at to analyze the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Programs. According to the study findings, a study by Münk et al, (2019) explored the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Germany's Federal Voluntary Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst - BFD), a NYS program. The research revealed that youth participants highly valued the opportunities for personal development, skill enhancement, and social engagement through the BFD. A study by Omolbanin et al (2021), investigated the perceptions of youth participants and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Iran's National Service program (Khedmat-e Vatan). The research highlighted that youth participants appreciated the sense of national duty, community service, and skill development opportunities offered by the program. However, concerns were raised about the lack of adequate financial incentives and the limited variety of placements available, which could impact the overall attractiveness and sustainability of the program.

A study by Seeletso et al, (2018), explored the perceptions of youth participants, employers, and stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Botswana's National Internship Programme (NIP), a NYS initiative. The research revealed that youth participants viewed the

NIP as a valuable avenue for skill development, work experience, and networking opportunities. Employers acknowledged the program's positive impact on the employability of participants, with many expressing intentions to hire NIP graduates in the future. However, stakeholders identified challenges related to the need for better alignment between the program and the labour market demands to ensure sustainable outcomes.

5.3 Conclusion

Unemployment among young people is a significant global challenge that has attracted the attention of policymakers, economists, and development practitioners worldwide. This unemployment crisis among the youth not only poses socioeconomic implications, but also raises concerns about social unrest and political instability. The mismatch between the skills possessed by the youth and the demands of the labour market is one of the primary contributors to the unemployment crisis. Limited access to quality education, vocational training, and job opportunities further exacerbate the issue. As such, governments, international organizations, and private sectors have recognized the importance of addressing youth unemployment through various programs, policies, and initiatives.

Many countries have implemented National Youth Service programs as a potential solution to alleviate youth unemployment, and equip young individuals with skills and experiences that enhance their employability. The programs typically involve compulsory or voluntary service in various sectors such as community development, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation. However, several factors have contributed to the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability as discussed in this study. Notably, understanding the outcomes and potential challenges faced by NYS participants in Kenya is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to optimize the program's design and identify areas for improvement.

In this regard, the study confirms the three hypotheses which states that, there is a positive relationship between National Youth Service participation and subsequent employment rates among youth participants in Kiambu and Mombasa Counties, the success of NYS programs in improving youth employability is influenced by various key factors, including skill development, work experience, and program structure, among others as well as perceptions of youth participants, employers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NYS Programs in Kiambu and Mombasa Counties will vary, offering valuable insights for program improvement and policy decisions.

5.4 Recommendations

In tandem with the study findings this research study recommends that;

The National Youth Service should diversify its training programs to align with emerging industries and market demands. By offering training in sectors such as Technology, Renewable Energy, and Entrepreneurship, youth participants can acquire skills that are in high demand, increasing their employability both locally and internationally.

Strengthening partnerships and Collaboration with the Private Sector, Government Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, and Academic Institutions to leverage resources, expertise, and networks for youth employment can also enhance the effectiveness of NYS Programs. By engaging with businesses, the National Youth Service can tailor its training programs to meet specific industry needs, provide internships, and facilitate job placements for graduates. This collaboration can also ensure that the skills acquired by youth align with market demands, reducing unemployment rates.

Encouraging entrepreneurship among youth is crucial for job creation and economic growth. NYS should incorporate entrepreneurship training into its programs, providing aspiring young entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, mentorship, and access to finance to start and grow their businesses. Additionally, creating incubation centers and business development services can support youth-led startups.

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential to assess the impact and effectiveness of NYS Programs. By continuously monitoring the outcomes of training programs, tracking employment rates, and gathering feedback from participants and employers,

NYS can identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions to enhance its impact on youth employment.

The National Youth Service should prioritize reaching out to vulnerable and marginalized youth, including those from rural areas, with disabilities, or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Tailored programs that address the specific challenges faced by these groups, such as lack of access to education and limited resources, can help bridge the employment gap and promote inclusive growth.

Strengthening transparency, accountability, and good governance are essential for the success and sustainability of NYS Programs. Implementing measures to combat corruption, ensure equitable access to opportunities, and uphold ethical standards in program management can build trust among stakeholders and attract further investment in youth employment initiatives. Invest in capacity building for NYS staff and trainers to ensure the delivery of high-quality programs that meet the evolving needs of youth and the labor market. Provide training on best practices in youth empowerment, employability skills development, career guidance, and counseling. Also foster a culture of continuous improvement within the NYS through regular monitoring, evaluation, and learning from both successes and failures.

There is also need to promote soft skills and digital literacy such as Communication, Teamwork, Problem-solving, and Adaptability, in enhancing youth employability. Integrate soft skills training into NYS programs to complement technical skills development. Additionally, promote digital literacy and technology proficiency to empower youth to thrive in the digital economy and access remote work opportunities.

Lastly, there is need to advocate for supportive policies and increased investment in youth employment at the national and local levels. Highlight the socio-economic benefits of NYS Programs in reducing unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Mobilize resources from Government Budgets, Development Partners, Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, and Philanthropic Organizations to scale up successful NYS programs and reach more youth across the country.

By implementing these recommendations, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness and impact of NYS Programs in improving youth employability, promoting socio-economic development, fostering economic empowerment, and driving sustainable development in the country.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

This study recommends for further research on exploring the barriers that NYS participants face in securing and retaining employment after completing the program. This could involve identifying common challenges such as lack of access to job opportunities, mismatch of skills, or discrimination. Addressing these barriers can enhance the overall impact of NYS Programs on sustained youth employment.

Conducting a thorough analysis of the policy and institutional framework supporting National Youth Service Programs, in this regard, examining how existing policies facilitate or hinder the success of youth employment programs and identifying areas for policy improvement. Compare the NYS Programs with similar youth employment programs in other countries. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different models, considering cultural, economic, and

contextual factors. This comparative analysis can provide valuable insights for refining and adapting NYS programs to global best practices.

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