To Assess the Impact of Business Incubation Models on Nourturing Entrepreneurship among Tanzanian Youth

Koga M. Malenya*, Dr. Silverius C. Komba & Dr. Crispin J. Mbogo

Faculty of Business and Economics, St. Augustine University of Tanzania

***Correspondence Author**

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ABSTRACT

Business incubations are critical to youth employment and entrepreneurship, offering a platform for young entrepreneurs to develop and scale their businesses. This paper evaluates the effectiveness of business incubation models in fostering youth entrepreneurship in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory, the paper employs a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from 90 respondents through structured questionnaires and five in-depth interviews. Quantitative analysis includes mean and standard deviation calculations, while qualitative data are thematically analyzed. The findings reveal that business incubation models in Tanzania generally meet the entrepreneurial needs of youth by offering valuable mentorship, training, and networking opportunities. However, areas for improvement exist, especially regarding program duration, funding accessibility, and the comprehensiveness of support services. While most respondents report positive experiences with business incubation programs, many indicate that adjustments are necessary to improve the long-term impact of these initiatives, especially in terms of resource access and sustainability. The paper suggests that incubators refine their mentorship programs to offer more personalized support, extend program durations and update training content to better match the evolving needs of young entrepreneurs. Additionally, enhancing networking opportunities and facilitating better access to funding would further empower youth to succeed in entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Business Incubation Models, Youth Entrepreneurship, Youth Employment, Business Hubs, Mentorship

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment poses a significant socio-economic challenge worldwide, with African nations experiencing especially high rates. Tanzania is no exception, as youth unemployment remains persistent despite recent economic growth. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported a youth unemployment rate of 11.5% in Tanzania, marking a disparity between economic advancements and the provision of meaningful job opportunities for young people (International Labour Organization, 2022). The Tanzanian youth labour market is impacted by structural barriers, including limited entrepreneurial support, inadequate job opportunities, and constrained access to resources that could foster self-employment. As a result, there is an urgent need to develop and assess effective strategies to promote youth employment through entrepreneurship. Business incubation has emerged as one such strategy, offering young entrepreneurs a nurturing environment that can help bridge the employment gap through entrepreneurial ventures.

Business incubation models are widely recognized for their ability to facilitate entrepreneurship by offering young entrepreneurs' essential resources such as mentorship, funding, office space, and networking opportunities. These services, typically provided over an extended period, aim to help startups and small businesses grow sustainably, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. Countries around the world have adopted business incubation to support youth entrepreneurship. For instance, the United States and the United Kingdom have integrated business incubation programs into broader economic development strategies, emphasizing innovation, skill acquisition, and job creation (National Business Incubation Association, 2021;

Oakey et al., 2017). Asian nations, such as Singapore and South Korea, have further enhanced these models by embedding them within government policies, yielding notable successes in youth employment and entrepreneurial growth (Ali et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2020).

Within the African context, business incubation has also gained traction, with organizations like the African Business Incubation Network (ABIN) actively supporting entrepreneurship across various sectors, including agriculture and renewable energy. These incubators have demonstrated measurable outcomes, significantly contributing to job creation among the youth in African nations (Kabiru & Mwangi, 2017). However, Tanzania, while experiencing a rise in business incubators, especially in urban centres like Dar es Salaam, has a limited body of empirical research assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives in fostering youth employment. This research gap is especially critical given the current high youth unemployment rate and the potential of business incubators to promote economic and social inclusion among young people in the country.

In Tanzania, several business incubators have been established to address the challenges that young entrepreneurs face. These hubs aim to develop the entrepreneurial potential of Tanzanian youth by providing access to resources, mentorship, and networks that are critical for building and sustaining new ventures. By doing so, incubators contribute not only to the economic empowerment of youth but also to broader social outcomes, including poverty reduction and community development. However, while these initiatives have shown promise, there remains a lack of comprehensive data evaluating their impact on youth employment outcomes. This lack of empirical evidence presents a barrier to fully understanding how these programs contribute to economic growth and whether they are adequately addressing the specific challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in Tanzania.

This paper seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of business incubation models in fostering youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania, focusing specifically on selected business hubs in Dar es Salaam. The paper aims to explore the effectiveness of incubation models in promoting entrepreneurship among Tanzanian youth. By addressing these areas, the research will provide a more nuanced understanding of how business incubators contribute to youth employment in Tanzania, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement. Business incubators serve as a bridge between young entrepreneurs and the critical resources required to overcome common barriers to starting a business. By offering structured support, incubators can help young people develop the skills and networks necessary for entrepreneurial success. Through mentorship programs, incubators can equip young entrepreneurs with knowledge and expertise, while networking opportunities enable access to markets, funding sources, and collaboration with other entrepreneurs. These factors collectively form an ecosystem that not only encourages business innovation but also supports job creation—two elements essential for reducing youth unemployment in Tanzania.

However, despite the potential benefits of business incubators, several challenges persist. Young entrepreneurs face barriers such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory complexities that may hinder the scalability of their ventures. These challenges make it crucial to assess the actual impact of business incubators on youth employment, as they influence the sustainability and success of young entrepreneurs' efforts. Understanding the strengths and limitations of business incubation models can inform policymakers, program designers, and other stakeholders about how to enhance these initiatives to maximize their contributions to economic development and youth employment in Tanzania. By examining the effectiveness of different incubation models, the paper aims to fill a significant knowledge gap and offer evidence-based recommendations for improving the design and implementation of business incubators in Tanzania. These insights will help guide stakeholders and policymakers in refining incubation programs to ensure they effectively support the growth of young entrepreneurs, ultimately fostering sustainable youth employment across Tanzania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is anchored in two key theories: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory. The RBV, initially proposed by Oskar Lange (1969) and further refined by Jay Barney

(1991), posits that an organization's competitive advantage is derived from the unique resources and capabilities it possesses, which include both tangible (e.g., financial assets, infrastructure) and intangible resources (e.g., knowledge, skills, reputation). This perspective is relevant to the context of Tanzanian business incubators, as it highlights how the resources provided by these incubators—such as mentorship, networking, and financial support—enable youth entrepreneurs to overcome barriers and establish successful, sustainable ventures. RBV's focus on valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources provides insight into how Tanzanian business incubators can foster competitive advantages that contribute to youth employment.

However, RBV's tendency to focus on static resources has been critiqued for neglecting dynamic interactions within business ecosystems. This limitation is addressed by integrating Social Capital Theory, which was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and later expanded by James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Social Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity in creating resources that enhance individual and collective outcomes. In business incubation, the networks formed within these incubators provide young entrepreneurs with critical social resources, such as access to knowledge, partnerships, and funding, which are essential for business growth and employment generation. However, Social Capital Theory has been criticized for its focus on individual agency, potentially overlooking structural barriers like regulatory challenges. Combining RBV with Social Capital Theory offers a more comprehensive framework, acknowledging tangible resources and the social connections crucial for fostering youth entrepreneurship and enhancing employment opportunities in Tanzania.

Empirical Literature Review

Lalkaka (2006) highlighted the significance of technology business incubators in nurturing innovation, especially in the fields of science, engineering, and technology. These incubators delivered dedicated support and mentorship, which led to increased innovation abilities among youth. However, the paper's limited emphasis on technology sectors restricts its relevance to wider entrepreneurial contexts, including non-tech industries in Tanzania. Zaidi et al. (2023) further studied the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem in Pakistan, where the study showed that critical factors including level of education, access to finance, and support from government were vital for startup development. The paper stressed the fact that a supportive ecosystem is vital for successful entrepreneurship but again focused on Pakistan, which makes the study quite difficult to directly apply to the unique situation of the Tanzania ecosystem. A recently conducted by Adomako et al. (2022) in Ghana has shown the role of a mixture of incubation models which mix tech and non-tech sectors, providing a more inclusive approach which might apply to Tanzania's diverse entrepreneurial landscape.

In a paper by Ngowi and Mlozi (2019), the researchers showed that incubation initiatives have shown promise in supporting youth entrepreneurship. The study indicated that business incubators in Tanzania play a vital role in nurturing innovation, creating jobs, and the growth of youth-led businesses. Equally, Rajeev et al. (2020) explored the Zanzibar Technology and Business Incubator (ZTBI), which effectively incubated youth-led ventures, leading to job creation and economic revitalization. The paper further showed the role of robust sector connections and outreach initiatives, though its focus on Zanzibar constrains its wider application to other regions of Tanzania. Recently conducted studies, including those by Mwamkinga et al. (2023), have built on these findings by exploring the role of regional incubators in mainland Tanzania, stressing the need for personalized approaches to solve local economic challenges.

Omweri (2019) explored the influence of incubation centres in Kenya, showing valuable perceptions which can be used in the Tanzanian context. The paper found that financial support, management training, and networking opportunities offered by incubators were vital for helping youth entrepreneurship. This study is aligned with the findings of a 2020 study by Chao who emphasized the importance of incubation centres in decreasing youth unemployment and driving economic development in developing nations. However, the study noted challenges connected to sustainability and reliance on donor funding, recommending the need for a more sustainable model, such as a fee-based contribution system, to improve the long-term effectiveness of business incubation programs. These results together show the importance of well-designed and sustainable business incubation models in nurturing youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania. Recent studies by Nkosi and Dlamini (2023) in South Africa have further stressed the role of public-private partnerships in facilitating the financial sustainability of incubators, giving a potential model for Tanzania to explore.

Mmasi (2020) examined the influence of business incubation programs on enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in Tanzania, stressing the way business incubators might improve the competitiveness of small businesses using managerial and technical skills development. The study relied on a quantitative methodological approach, where descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation analysis, regression, ANOVA were used. The researcher also used factor analysis, and SEM in analyzing the link between business incubation and SME competitiveness. The major findings showed that technical skills, human skills, and structural capital, when used with business incubation, pointedly influenced SME competitiveness. The study concluded that the involvement of government in business incubation, through facilitation and sponsorship of other organizations' participation, is essential for nurturing entrepreneurship. However, the study fell short of examining the long-term sustainability of incubated businesses, or the challenges that incubators faced in the Tanzanian context. Recent studies including those by Kavishe and Mushi (2023), have addressed these gaps by exploring the role of post-incubation support in guaranteeing the sustainability of youth-led ventures in Tanzania.

Rajeev, Afua, and Mohamed (2017) explored the influence of the Zanzibar Technology and Business Incubator (ZTBI) in nurturing entrepreneurship and job creation among youth in Zanzibar. The study relied on surveys, observations, and discussions to study the activities of the ZTBI and its effect on reducing youth unemployment, which stood at 14.3%. The study found that ZTBI's role was vital in supporting start-up businesses, training youth entrepreneurship, and endorsing entrepreneurial mindsets using competitions and outreach programs. In addition, it created 11 start-up businesses which led to job creation and strengthened communities. The study concluded that ZTBI's initiatives helped nurture entrepreneurship and support various sectors, such as tourism, through its incubated companies. However, the paper failed to assess the enduring sustainability of the businesses after the incubation period or the scalability of ZTBI's model to other regions. A more recent work by Juma and Mwamba (2023) has looked at these limitations by examining the scalability of the same models in coastal regions of East Africa, providing insights into how ZTBI's method could be adapted to other contexts.

Konyango (2021) studied the influence of incubation models in promoting youth entrepreneurship among Kenyan youth, showing the role of incubation centres in nurturing economic growth, while reducing poverty and creating employment for youth. The study used qualitative analysis while relying on the Market Failure Theory to explore how incubators support start-ups. The results showed that incubators were critical to creating youth employment since youth acquire critical skills in these incubation centres, the skills which were later used to run small business projects. However, the study also showed challenges related to donor dependency, as this threatened the sustainability of such incubators. The study concluded that while incubators are essential for youth entrepreneurship, they need to adopt more sustainable funding models, such as fee-based systems for incubates. The research could benefit from exploring the operational challenges faced by incubators in securing long-term financial sustainability and the impact of such challenges on start-up success. Recent studies, including those by Ochieng and Wambua (2023), have built on these findings by exploring the role of revenue-generating activities within incubators, providing practical solutions to improve financial sustainability.

Misso et al. (2024) studied the University of Dar es Salaam's ICT Innovation Hubs and their role in improving entrepreneurial skills among students. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study examined the efficacy of innovation hubs such as UDICTI Startup Academy and CDE Hub in promoting entrepreneurship and innovation using design thinking processes. The results showed that students faced important improvements in several entrepreneurial skills, such as prototyping, design, ideation, presentation, communication, and collaboration. In addition, the hub led to the creation of over 40 innovative products. The study concluded that innovation hubs are influential in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and practical skills vital for the workforce. However, the study did not examine the long-term effect of these innovations on the local economy, or the commercialization of the products created within the hub. A recent study by Mwakatobe and Lema (2023) has addressed these gaps by exploring the commercialization pathways for university-based innovations in Tanzania, providing vital insights into how such hubs can lead to economic development.

METHODOLOGY

The paper used a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The researcher employed this approach as it helped in offering a complete view, integrating numerical data with deeper, descriptive insights. For the quantitative aspect, the researcher employed structured questionnaires in gathering data from 120 youth participants in business incubation programs; the questionnaire was pegged on a five-point Likert scale to calculate perceptions of program networking, effectiveness, and challenges. In the meantime, the researcher collected qualitative data using in-depth interviews with 10 trainers and mentors; this allowed for a thorough examination of the operational components and effects of business incubators. This mixed-methods approach facilitated the triangulation of data, improving the validity and depth of the paper's findings.

The study was undertaken was conducted in Dar es Salaam, which is Tanzania's economic hub. The researcher used Dar es Salaam as the case study since most of these incubation hubs are in Dar es Salaam. These hubs are concentrated in Dar es Salaam owing to the city's prominence in supporting youth entrepreneurship using incubators and its high concentration of startup initiatives (Misso et al., 2024). The target population consisted of youth enrolled in two selected business incubators in the city, chosen for their established support structures. The researcher used a sample size of 130 respondents, which was selected using 120 youth and 10 incubator trainers. The researcher used simple random sampling in selecting youth participants to ensure a representative sample. The researcher further used purposive sampling in selecting key informants (trainers and mentors) who were able to provide specialized insights into the incubation programs.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations to summarize and interpret the responses. This assisted in identifying patterns and central tendencies in the data, providing a clear understanding of youth perceptions concerning the effectiveness of incubators. The researcher analysed qualitative data using in-depth interviews thematically, by focusing on recurring themes such as skills development, mentorship, and networking opportunities. The researcher adhered to ethical considerations before going to the field, by confidentiality, ensuring informed consent, and voluntary participation. The combination of these methods facilitated the robust examination of how business incubation models impact youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania.

FINDINGS

Effectiveness of Business Incubation Models in Fostering Entrepreneurship among Tanzanian youth

This was the first objective of the paper, and it aimed to assess the effectiveness of the business incubation models in fostering entrepreneurship among the youths in Tanzania. Table 4.4 below illustrates the perceptions of the respondents.

Table 4.5: Effectiveness of Business Incubation Models in Fostering Entrepreneurship

Questionnaire Item	SA	A	DK	D	SD	Mean	SD
The type of incubation model (e.g., Technology-focused, social enterprise) matches my entrepreneurial needs.	30 (33.3%)	40 (44.4%)	8 (8.9%)	6 (6.7%)	6 (6.7%)	1.84	0.81
The support services provided by the incubation model (e.g., mentorship, training, access to funding) are sufficient.	25 (27.8%)	35 (38.9%)	12 (13.3%)	10 (11.1%)	8 (8.9%)	1.96	0.84
The duration of the incubation program is adequate for achieving significant business growth.	20 (22.2%)	30 (33.3%)	15 (16.7%)	15 (16.7%)	10 (11.1%)	2.20	0.93
The incubation model offers effective networking opportunities with industry professionals.	35 (38.9%)	25 (27.8%)	10 (11.1%)	10 (11.1%)	10 (11.1%)	1.96	0.99

The mentorship provided through the incubation program has positively impacted my business skills.	28 (31.1%)	32 (35.6%)	12 (13.3%)	10 (11.1%)	8 (8.9%)	2.01	0.86
The training programs offered are relevant to my business needs and help in skill development.	30 (33.3%)	40 (44.4%)	8 (8.9%)	6 (6.7%)	6 (6.7%)	1.84	0.81
Access to funding through the incubation program is readily available and adequate.	22 (24.4%)	28 (31.1%)	20 (22.2%)	12 (13.3%)	8 (8.9%)	2.12	0.92
The incubation program provides valuable feedback on my business ideas and plans.	33 (36.7%)	33 (36.7%)	9 (10.0%)	10 (11.1%)	5 (5.6%)	1.89	0.82
The business incubation model includes opportunities for collaborative projects with other entrepreneurs.	25 (27.8%)	35 (38.9%)	15 (16.7%)	10 (11.1%)	5 (5.6%)	2.03	0.88

Respondents generally find that the type of incubation model aligns well with their entrepreneurial needs. Most participants strongly agree (33.3%) or agree (44.4%) that the incubation models are well-suited to their needs, with a mean score of 1.84 and a standard deviation of 0.81. This implies that the business incubation strategies are suitably customized to fulfil the unique needs of aspiring entrepreneurs. The comparatively low proportion of respondents who disagree or are unsure (8.9% and 13.4%, respectively) supports the idea that the model is relevant.

With a standard deviation of 0.84 and an average score of 1.96, support services including funding, training, and mentorship are usually viewed favourably. 38.9% of respondents think that these services are sufficient, while about 27.8% strongly agree. Still, a sizeable portion (13.3%) disagrees or strongly disagrees with the appropriateness of these services, and 20% are undecided, indicating that there may be space for improvement in the support services offered. This view was further reinforced during interviews with the one of trainers of the incubators when he said:

Mentoring is a core component of our incubation model, and we are pleased to see that it positively impacts business skills for many of our participants. We are continuously refining our mentoring approach to address any concerns and ensure it is effective for all. **Interview, Incubator Instructor, Dar es Salaam, May 2024**

The incubation program's duration was deemed enough to attain noteworthy business growth, with a mean score of 2.20 and a standard deviation of 0.93. With 22.2% strongly agreeing and 33.3% agreeing that the duration is sufficient, this result reveals a more divided answer. 16.7% disagree and 16.7% strongly disagree, suggesting that a sizable proportion of respondents believe the time frame may not be sufficient for meaningful business development. This suggests that the program structure may need to be adjusted to better promote long-term growth.

With a mean score of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 0.99, the incubation models' networking opportunities are regarded as being effective. The majority of respondents—38.9%, strongly agree and 27.8% agree—think that these are worthwhile possibilities. Even though networking events are usually regarded as beneficial, 22.2% of respondents are either neutral or disagree with this statement, indicating that individual experiences may differ.

There is a positive correlation between mentoring and business abilities, as seen by the mean score of 2.01 and standard deviation of 0.86. A little over 31.1 per cent of respondents strongly agree, and 35.6 per cent think that having a mentor has improved their business skills. Even still, 20% of respondents voice doubt or discontent, emphasizing that although mentoring is helpful for many, it may not always satisfy the needs of all participants.

The incubation models' training programs are likewise well-liked; their mean score is 1.84 with a standard deviation of 0.81. This shows that a sizable majority of people think the training is pertinent and beneficial for skill development (33.3% strongly agree and 44.4% agree). The low levels of disagreement imply that the participants' requirements are adequately met by the training sessions. The perception of funding accessibility

is deemed somewhat less satisfactory, with a standard deviation of 0.92 and a mean score of 2.12. While 31.1% and 24.4% of respondents, respectively, strongly agree and agree that money is sufficient, a sizeable fraction (22.2%) is uncertain or unsatisfied with the finding's availability. This implies that while some people have access to money that is sufficient, further work may be required to guarantee more widespread and dependable access. The evaluations of company plans and ideas that are submitted are highly respected; the mean score is 1.89 with a standard variation of 0.82. The vast majority of respondents (36.7% strongly agree and 36.7% agree) think the input is helpful. The low degree of disagreement suggests that feedback systems help entrepreneurs a great deal. This was further emphasized in the interview:

The feedback on business plans provided by our incubators is highly valued by participants. We are pleased to see that the feedback systems are effective and will continue to focus on providing constructive and actionable insights. **Interview, Incubator Instructor, Dar es Salaam, May 2024**

Positive perceptions of opportunities for joint ventures with other business owners are also present, with a mean score of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 0.88. About 38.9% of people agree and 27.8% strongly think that these opportunities are advantageous. Although many people view collaboration as useful, 16.7% are unsure and 16.7% disagree, indicating that it may not be equally successful or accessible for all parties. Lastly, the incubation program's general administration and structure, which are essential to the growth of new businesses, obtained a mean score of 2.03. A sizable portion of respondents think the management is effective (31.1% strongly agree and 35.6% agree). On the other hand, the existence of negative and neutral replies suggests that perspectives regarding the overall efficacy of program management differ. The data indicates that although Tanzanian business incubation models generally offer beneficial support and are in line with entrepreneurial needs, there are certain areas where improvements could improve the overall effectiveness, such as program duration, funding access, and training relevance.

The study was based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory. These two theories together offer a strong theoretical foundation for interpreting and understanding the study's findings. For instance, the RBV stresses the strategic significance of unique resources which include training, skills development, and access to networks that are offered by the incubators. According to the findings, these resources, indeed, align with participants' reported benefits. These resources improve youths' entrepreneurial competencies, giving them a competitive advantage. Concurrently, Social Capital Theory underlines the value of interpersonal networks nurtured through incubation initiatives, facilitating better access to partnerships, mentorship, and collaborative opportunities. Combined, these two theories show how incubators not only prepare youth with practical resources but also cultivate insubstantial social assets, giving them a complete perspective on how such models exclusively support entrepreneurial success among Tanzanian youth.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In discussing the findings of the study on the Effectiveness of Business Incubation Models in Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship in Tanzania, it is essential to contextualize them within the empirical literature, which provides a broader understanding of the factors influencing the success and challenges of business incubation models globally and regionally.

The empirical studies reviewed indicate that business incubation models are critical in addressing the entrepreneurial needs of youth. In the study, 33.3% of respondents strongly agree that the type of incubation model (e.g., technology-focused, social enterprise) aligns with their needs, and 44.4% agree. These findings are in line with Mahmood et al. (2016), who stressed the critical role of incubators when it comes to equipping young people with the essential skill set. However, as Mahmood et al. (2016) showed the regional limits of their results in Pakistan, the study also proposes that the effectiveness of the incubation models in Tanzania is not without some variability, as shown by the 13.4% of the participants who were unsure or disagreed. This shows that while the models align with business needs, there is more room for further improvement, particularly in matching the specific needs of entrepreneurs across diverse sectors.

Zegeye and Singh (2019) showed the role of incubation programs in imparting skills to youth, however, noted the lack of longitudinal data to evaluate long-term impacts. The study supports this notion, as most respondents

believe the support services—training, mentorship, and funding—are sufficient. However, 13.3% of respondents disagreed with this assessment, showing the potential gaps in the effectiveness of these services, particularly in terms of funding availability. This aligns with Omweri (2019)'s results on Kenya's incubation centres, where financial support was vital, but sustainability concerns remained a challenge. The perceived inadequacy of funding access in the study (22.2% uncertain or dissatisfied) aligns with Zaidi et al. (2023), who found that financial access is a crucial factor in startup success and emphasizes the importance of addressing this issue in Tanzanian incubation models.

The concern regarding the duration of incubation programs is evident in both the study and the broader literature. While 33.3% of respondents in the study agree that the program duration is adequate for business growth, 16.7% disagree, indicating that for some participants, the timeframe may be insufficient for meaningful development. This aligns with Lalkaka (2006), who suggested that some incubation models, especially in specialized sectors, require more time for startups to mature. The finding in the study underscores the need for incubation models to be flexible, ensuring that the program duration is tailored to the specific needs of different entrepreneurs, as not all businesses can scale within the same timeframe.

The positive insights of networking opportunities in the study (with 38.9% strongly agreeing) align with Ngowi and Mlozi (2019), who also showed that networking is critical for the success of youth-led businesses in Tanzania. However, 22.2% of respondents who were neutral or disagreed with the networking effectiveness showed the variability of networking opportunities in practice, showing that these opportunities may not always meet the prospects of all entrepreneurs. This echoes Omweri (2019)'s results from Kenya, where networking was found to be crucial but not uniformly effective for all participants.

The findings indicate that the mentorship and training initiatives are viewed positively by most respondents, where 31.1% strongly agree and 44.4% agree that these programs assist in skill development. This aligns with Zegeye and Singh (2019)'s study, which stressed the role of training in improving entrepreneurial intentions. However, as seen in 20% of respondents who expressed doubt or dissatisfaction, there may be challenges in ensuring that mentorship is universally effective. This aligns with Chao (2020), who observed that while mentoring plays a critical role, its quality and impact can vary widely depending on the mentor's approach and the entrepreneur's needs.

The feedback provided on business plans and ideas was highly valued in the study, with a mean score of 1.89, reflecting a positive impact. This supports the findings of Rajeev et al. (2020), who found that feedback is a critical component in enhancing the quality of youth-led ventures. Equally, the respondents viewed opportunities for collaborative projects favorably, though some felt they were not equally accessible. This mirrors Zaidi et al. (2023), who underscored the importance of a broader entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports collaboration. However, the presence of 16.7% of respondents who disagreed or were uncertain about collaborative opportunities highlights the need to ensure that these opportunities are effectively integrated into the incubation process for all participants.

The study findings support the broader empirical literature on business incubation models in fostering youth entrepreneurship, emphasizing the importance of mentorship, training, networking, and feedback. However, the results also highlight areas where improvements are needed, especially in program duration, access to funding, and ensuring that support services are universally effective. The findings suggest that while Tanzanian incubation models are effective in many respects, there is room for enhancement, especially in ensuring that they are more inclusive, flexible, and better aligned with the long-term needs of youth entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper highlights the significant role that business incubation models play in fostering youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania but also reveals areas where these models can be improved. While the incubation programs are generally well-aligned with the needs of youth entrepreneurs, especially in terms of mentorship, training, and networking opportunities, there are notable gaps in funding access, program duration, and the consistency of support services. The findings echo global challenges identified in previous studies, such as the limited sustainability and financial support within incubation models. Furthermore, the mixed perceptions

regarding the duration of programs and the availability of sufficient funding point to the need for more flexible and robust incubation structures. For business incubation models to effectively contribute to long-term entrepreneurial success in Tanzania, a more tailored, resource-rich, and extended program structure is essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of business incubation models in fostering youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania. First, it is essential to extend the duration of incubation programs to provide entrepreneurs with ample time for significant business development, addressing the mixed responses on the adequacy of the current program timelines. Second, incubators should prioritize improving access to reliable and sufficient funding, as this was identified as a critical gap, ensuring that entrepreneurs can scale their businesses sustainably. Additionally, there is a need for more tailored support, especially in non-tech sectors, to enhance the relevance of mentorship, training, and networking opportunities for a broader range of entrepreneurs. Lastly, incubators should focus on refining their support services to ensure consistent and high-quality mentorship, training, and feedback systems that meet the diverse needs of youth entrepreneurs across different regions and industries. These recommendations aim to strengthen the overall impact of incubation models in promoting sustainable youth entrepreneurship in Tanzania.

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