

# Youth Unemployment and its Psychological and Socio-Economic Effects on Career Development: A Case Study of Gokwe Rural Community, Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the effects of unemployment on youth career development in Gokwe Rural Community, Zimbabwe. Employing a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, the research involved a population of 375 individuals, with a final sample size of 104 participants—90 for quantitative data (88 completed questionnaires) and 14 for qualitative insights. Sampling techniques included purposive, random and convenience sampling. Data were collected from youths, community members, ward councillors and Ministry of Youth officials. The findings revealed that high unemployment rates significantly contributed to psychological challenges, such as depression and anxiety, which adversely affect self-esteem and motivation. Economically, the study highlighted a concerning trend of stagnation, as educated youths often migrate to rural areas in search of better opportunities, further exacerbating local poverty. The results underscored the urgent need for targeted youth development programmes aimed at enhancing employability and providing psychological support to improve overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Youth unemployment, career development, community development, psychological effects, economic stagnation, mental health and employment

## Introduction

Youth unemployment is a multifaceted global challenge with profound economic and social consequences. The persistent skills mismatch, where formal education systems fail to equip young people with the practical, digital and soft skills demanded by a rapidly evolving job market, is a significant barrier to career development. This challenge has a deep psychological impact, as young people feel a growing sense of anxiety and unease about their job stability and financial independence. This is reflected in a decline in happiness levels among youth in some regions, who, despite being the most educated generation in history, struggle to find secure work (ILO, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2024). The broader economic impact is a loss of human capital and potential, as a generation's skills and energy are underutilised, leading to economic stagnation and a strain on social support systems.

In Africa, the negative impact of youth unemployment is particularly acute. The continent's rapidly growing youth population creates a "youth bulge" that the formal economy struggles to absorb, leading to widespread underemployment and vulnerable work. The psychological toll

is significant, with a sense of anxiety about the future and a heightened risk of social unrest and conflict, particularly in regions with political instability (ILO, 2024). The economic impact is severe; with a large portion of its population unemployed or in insecure jobs, the continent fails to harness its greatest asset for economic growth and productivity. The lack of decent job creation drives many young people into the informal sector, which provides little social protection and perpetuates a cycle of poverty.

Southern Africa faces some of the highest youth unemployment rates globally, with the impacts evident in a high prevalence of "discouraged work-seekers." This is a significant psychological effect, as young people lose hope and motivation after a prolonged and unsuccessful job search. The economic impact is a stunted workforce and the loss of potential lifetime earnings for individuals who take longer to find decent employment (Stats SA, 2025). The challenges are further amplified by a "double burden" for young women, who face greater barriers to employment. This deepens economic and social inequalities, with disproportionate opportunities between rural and rural areas.

Youth unemployment is a critical national issue, and its impact is profoundly felt at the individual and community levels in Zimbabwe. The document notes that unemployment in the Gokwe Rural Community has a severe psychological impact on youths, leading to violent and criminal behaviour as well as mental health issues like depression and anxiety. These psychological effects act as a significant barrier to career development, making it difficult for individuals to sustain motivation and a positive outlook. The economic consequences are equally devastating. Unemployment perpetuates a cycle of poverty, as impoverished children lack the resources to access education and skills training. It also results in a significant "brain drain," where educated and skilled youths migrate to rural areas or other countries in search of better opportunities, leading to a loss of human capital and economic stagnation for the community. The study, therefore, is crucial for understanding these impacts and exploring effective interventions in this specific rural context.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Youth unemployment is a significant challenge in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural areas such as Gokwe. Despite various governmental and non-governmental initiatives aimed at addressing this issue, many young individuals continue to struggle with securing meaningful employment. The high rates of unemployment among youths not only affect their economic prospects but also have profound implications for their psychological well-being and overall quality of life. In Gokwe, the local economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, which offers limited job opportunities due to factors such as land access issues and inadequate infrastructure. Many youths lack the necessary qualifications and skills to compete effectively in the labour market, leading to feelings of hopelessness and disenfranchisement.

This situation raises critical questions about the long-term effects of unemployment on youth career trajectories and the broader socio-economic landscape of the community. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies that not only promote job creation but also support the mental health and empowerment of young people. Thus, this study aims to investigate the multifaceted impacts of unemployment on youths in Gokwe, providing insights that can inform future interventions and policies.

## **Research Objectives**

- To identify the key factors contributing to high unemployment rates among youths in the Gokwe Rural Community
- To examine the psychological impacts of unemployment on young individuals, focusing on issues related to mental health, self-esteem and overall well-being
- To analyse the economic implications of youth unemployment on the local community, including effects on productivity, migration patterns and economic stagnation.

## Research Methodology

This study utilised a mixed-methods-derived explanatory sequential design to examine the effects of unemployment on youth career development in Gokwe Rural Community, Zimbabwe. The target population comprised 375 individuals, with a final sample size of 104 participants: 90 for quantitative data (88 completed questionnaires) and 14 for qualitative insights. Sampling techniques included purposive, random and convenience sampling. Data was collected from youths, community members, ward councillors and Ministry of Youth officials. Sampling techniques included purposive, random and convenience sampling to ensure diverse representation. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews, analysed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative insights. Ethical considerations were prioritised, with informed consent obtained from participants and measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

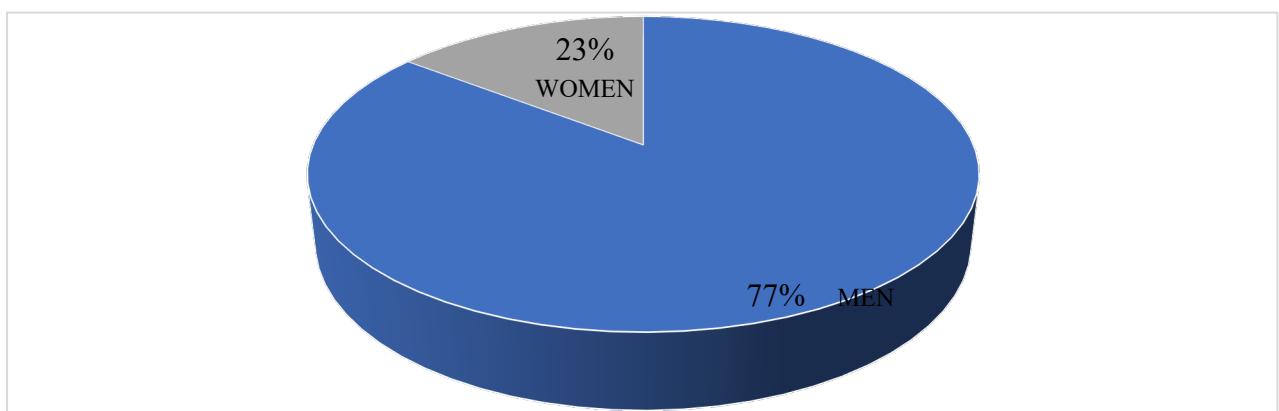
## Results and Discussion

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section focused on the various demographic characteristics of the respondents. The section includes demographic information on gender, age, the highest educational level, position held and work experience at their current organisation.

### Gender of Respondents

The respondents were asked to provide responses concerning their gender. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Gender participation (N=88)**

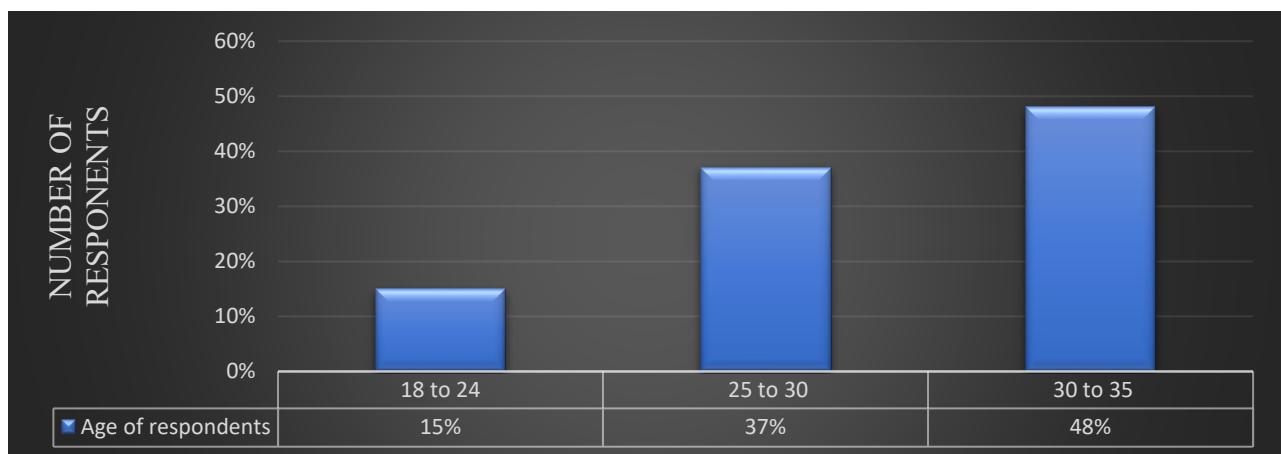
**Source:** Fieldwork (2024)

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were men, while women were 23%. These results show that men are too exposed to different programmes than women because they still embrace

the cultural norm that men are the head of the family and therefore, they have a say in all matters and it also reveals that the environment still holds on to the cultural values of male dominance hence it's patriarchal in nature. According to Chirimuuta (2006), the patriarchal nature of the society has shaped and perpetuated gender inequality to the extent of allowing male domination and female subordination. Despite all that, women were also represented and views for both men and women were put forward which makes the information reliable and credible.

### Age of Respondents

The results are presented in Figure 2 below. Fifteen percent were aged 18 to 24. The results from the study also showed that all the phases of youth were represented from the young youths who are still school goers to those who have finished school and those who are actively in the working industry. Those aged 25 to 30 with 37%, and those aged 30 to 35 with 48%. This means that the views of people with different age groups with difference perspectives were considered in the study, which improved the quality of the study



**Figure 2: Participants" age (N=88)**

**Source:** Fieldwork (2024)

### Level of education

Figure 3 below shows the level of education for respondents. The results Those with secondary school level with 23%, 35% paraprofessionals, professional certificates with 17%, professional diploma 15% and bachelor's degree 10%. These findings show that the respondents are adequately educated to people to provide reliable information concerning the effects of unemployment in their area. Additionally, the views of people with different educational levels with difference perspectives were considered in the study, which improved the quality of the study.



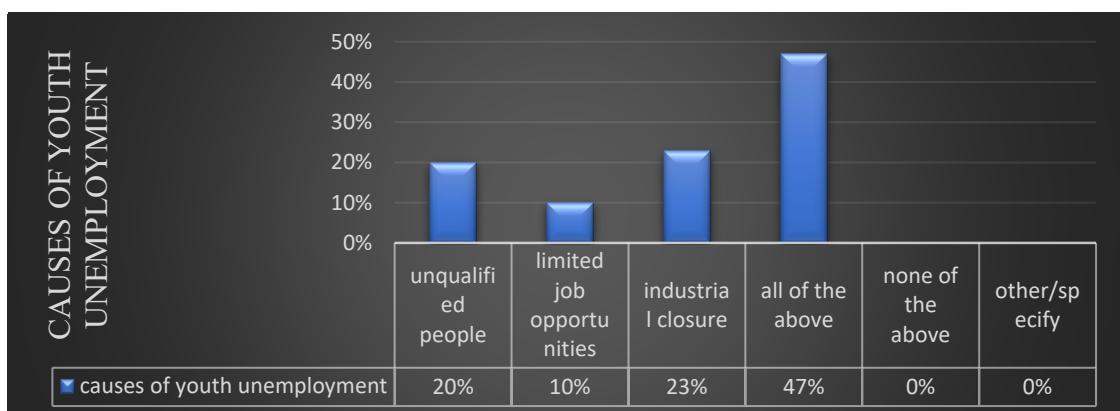
**Figure 3: Respondents level of education (N=88)**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Descriptive statistics showed higher unemployment rates among younger participants (18–24 years) compared with older youths (25–35 years). Unemployment was more prevalent among participants with only primary or secondary education than among those with tertiary qualifications.

### Factors Contributing to High Unemployment Rates Among Youths

The causes of unemployment identified were: unqualified of the people with 20% it highlights that other people in Gokwe does not have the qualification needed in job seeking, 10% gave a suggestion that its limited job opportunities that results in unemployment, 23% shows that industrial closure poses threats of unemployment, 47% suggests that all the above answers are the causes of unemployment and none of them select none of the above and other issues apart from the provided information.



**Figure 4: Causes of unemployment (N=88)**

Source: fieldwork (2024).

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that the majority stated that being unqualified was the main cause of unemployment. One the youths said, *“Due to being unqualified, our age mates are mainly distracted by drug and substance abuse, how can a person work when he is intoxicated, drugs make a person lazy”*. However, the minority indicated that industrial closure is the cause of unemployment. One of the youths said,

*“Industrial closure is a serious issue to take into consideration, young people like me have the zeal to work, learn and grow but all industries are closed so unemployment will remain a dilemma”.*

Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them suggested that there is no work because of industrial closure. One community member said, *“There are no jobs due to industrial closure, so how can the youth find jobs if the industries are closed”.*

Key Informants Interview data gathered is illustrated below in Figure 5. It is highlighted in an ascending order, the causes of unemployment were mainly criminality ways of earning a living, underqualified because of lack of tertiary level opportunities and vocational training, no work because of industrial closure, engaging in drug and substance abuse and being lazy to work



**Figure 5: Reasons for Unemployment Among Youth**  
(Source fieldwork: 2024)

A common societal perception that personal choices significantly impact employment opportunities was brought up in the belief that engaging in drug use leads to a lack of motivation or capability to seek work. An emphasis on qualifications which was highlighted suggests that there may be a mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and those required by employers which will lead to unemployment. This dual perspective on criminality underscores the complexity of unemployment causes while some youths may resort to illegal activities due to lack of opportunities, others might view these actions as symptomatic of broader systemic failures. This acknowledgment points towards an understanding that when legitimate job opportunities are scarce, some may turn to illicit activities out of necessity.

According to Chikanda and Chabaya (2020), inadequate educational infrastructure and lack of vocational facilities hinder acquisition of relevant skills needed for employment which causes unemployment. The causes of unemployment are limited job opportunities, corruption is at its peak lack of funding which is causing uncertainty and hopelessness the youth populace (Musasa 2022). Madziva (2015) concurs that lack of vocational facilities and educational infrastructure hinder acquisition of relevant skills which leads to unemployment to the youth in Zimbabwe.

The findings of this study provided critical insights into the multifaceted effects of unemployment on youth career development in Gokwe Rural Community, Zimbabwe. The high unemployment rates, particularly among educated youths, significantly contributed to psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety. This aligned with existing literature,

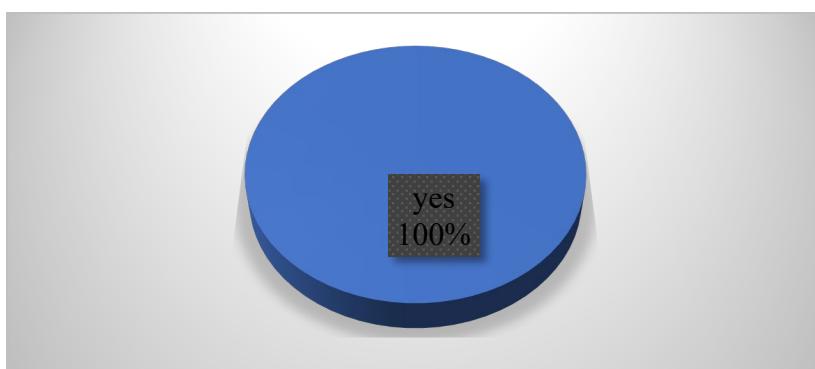
which highlights that prolonged unemployment can lead to diminished self-esteem and a pervasive sense of hopelessness (Musiyiwa & Masere, 2017; Kanyenze, 2018). The psychological toll of unemployment was particularly acute in a context where young individuals felt disconnected from opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfilment (ILO, 2024). The identification of key factors contributing to unemployment, such as lack of qualifications and limited job opportunities, reflects the findings of previous research that underscores the disconnect between educational outcomes and labour market demands (World Bank, 2019; ILO, 2018). The qualitative data collected from interviews further illuminates the perspectives of youths and community members, revealing that many perceive unemployment because of systemic failures, including industrial closures and inadequate vocational training facilities (Chikanda & Chabaya, 2020).

### Youth Programmes for Career Development

Figure 6 below showed the youth programmes for career development that are in the area. Gokwe rural community have 100% youth career programmes which are meant for empowering the youths. All the youths have a knowledge of how they work and their work is identified as they create employment opportunities; some provide them with grant to start their own businesses.

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that the majority highlighted that youth development programmes was in place. One youth said, *“Indeed there are youth development programmes in the area a lot of youths are benefiting”*. However, the minority stated that the development programmes was in place but not for all the youths. One youth said, *“Yes the programmes are in place but as for employment only youths with 5 O level are being employed to be workers of such organisation and they are the ones who are paid others are only trained and given grants to do their own work”*.

Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them stated that youth career development programmes was in place. One community member said, *“Youth development programmes are in place like the issue of a project called Pfumvudza”*, (FAO designed farming technique). Youths were taught to dig and put manure before farming; this method helps even those without cattle as they will dig with their own hand.



**Figure 6: Youth career programmes in the area (N=88)**  
Source fieldwork (2024).

Key Informants Interview data gathered indicated that youth career development programmes were in place. One of them said, *“Organisations like, Welt Hunger Life, ABC are working hard*

*to eradicate hunger and drought because they are teaching skills to the youths on how to have a good yield and they are offering projects like poultry and gardening”.*

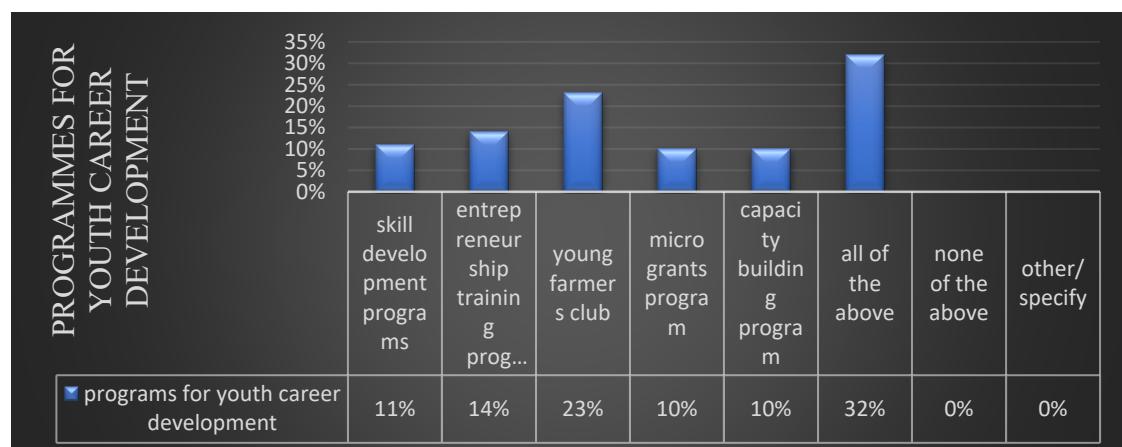
The view indicated a strong consensus regarding the existence and recognition of youth development programmes among various stakeholders. This alignment suggests that such programmes were integral to community dynamics and play a significant role in supporting youth growth when different groups agree on a particular issue, it enhances credibility. This indicates that there is a shared understanding across various sectors of society about the role and impact of these programmes.

According to Dube (2017), the youth career programmes focus on skills development, entrepreneurship and distributing grants to help the livelihood of the youths. Mhazo and Thebe (2021) argues that the youth career development programmes had helped lot of youths in their career programmes. The youth programmes help in eradicating poverty in the country (Muchazonidza and Mukorera, 2022).

Despite the existence of youth development programmes aimed at mitigating these challenges, the study finds that access and effectiveness remain significant barriers. While 60% of respondents believe that these programmes secure employment, a notable minority remains sceptical about their impact, citing issues such as funding constraints and a lack of alignment with actual job market needs (Dube, 2017). This reflects a critical gap in the design and implementation of these, suggesting that they may not fully address the complexities of youth unemployment in rural settings.

### Specific Programmes in Place for Youth Career Development

Figure 7 below highlighted the programmes which are in place for youth career development. Eleven percent of the respondents shows that programmes which are in place are skill development programmes, 14% are entrepreneurship training programmes, 23% are young farmers club, 10% are micro grant programmes, 10% capacity building programmes and 32% state that all the above are in place for youth career development. None of them choose none of the above or other option.



**Figure 7: Programmes in place for youth career development 9N=88)**

Source fieldwork (2024).

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that the majority highlighted that skill development programmes, entrepreneurship programmes, young farmers club and capacity building was in place for youth career development. One of the youths said, “*We are educated to do self-employed jobs and so far, we have learnt a lot of skills and we are being offered grants to start businesses*”. However, the minority indicated that only micro grants programme was in place for youth career development. One of the youths said, “*We have access to loans through Ministry of Youth which directs us to Empower bank which offers loans to capable youths with vision*”.

Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them suggested that micro grants programme was in place for youth career development. One community member said, “*Due to lack of knowledge and impoverishment and ignorance some are not developing these skills and using the grants in a good way they are misusing it to beer and other luxurious stuff which will lend them back to the same position of being vulnerable*”.

Key Informants Interview data indicated that all of them highlighted that skills development programmes, micro grants programme, young farmers” clubs, entrepreneurship and capacity building was in place for youth career development. One of them said, “*As ministry of youth we equip the youth with many skills we have entrepreneurship programmes aims to build them to be wise in the business world, we also offer capacity building programmes, vocational skills like carpentry, brick and block laying and we also provide grants and loans through the Empower bank which offers loans to reliable youths*”.

This divergence in opinion may stem from varying levels of awareness or access to these programmes among different groups within the community. It raises questions about how effectively these programmes are communicated and whether all youths have equal access to them.

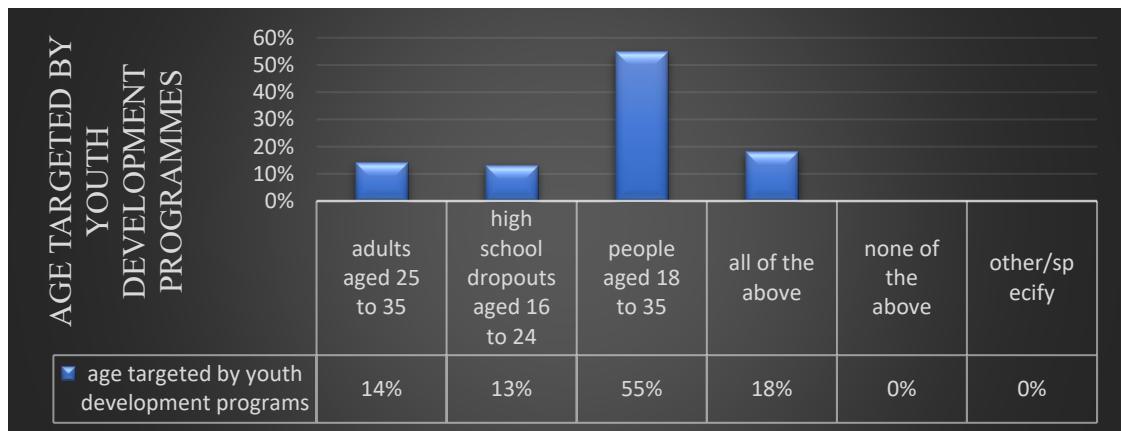
According to Gootman and Eccles (2022) postulates that there is substantial support for multiple career development initiatives aimed at youths but attention must be given to ensuring that all young people are aware of and can access these resources effectively because, it is crucial to note that there was a contrasting viewpoint from one youth and some community members who believed that only the micro grants programme was relevant for youth career development and it is also important to consider that some respondents opted for specific skills or programmes rather than endorsing all available options. This divergence in opinion may stem from varying levels of awareness or access to these programmes among different groups within the community. It raises questions about how effectively these programmes are communicated and whether all youths have equal access to them.

According to Brown (2010), rural entrepreneurship emphasises the role of skills development programmes and support for entrepreneur ventures as viable strategies to empowering youths in rural communities to overcome the challenges that was posed by unemployment. Hence critically thinking the development programmes in place are valid and advantageous to youth in Gokwe Community.

### **Age Targeted by Youth Development Programmes Focused for Employment**

Figure 8 below illustrates the age which is primarily targeted by youth development programmes focused on employment. Fourteen percent of the respondents stated that the demographic age targeted by youth career development is adult aged 25-35, 13% suggests that

its high school dropouts aged 16-24, 55% suggests that people aged 18-35, 18% said it is all the above.



**Figure 8: Age targeted by youth development programmes (N=88)**

Source fieldwork (2024)

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that all of them suggested that people aged 18 to 35 was targeted by youth development programmes. Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them suggested that people under the age of 18 was targeted by youth development programmes. One community member said, "Young people are the ones who is targeted by youth development programmes because they are fit and able to work".

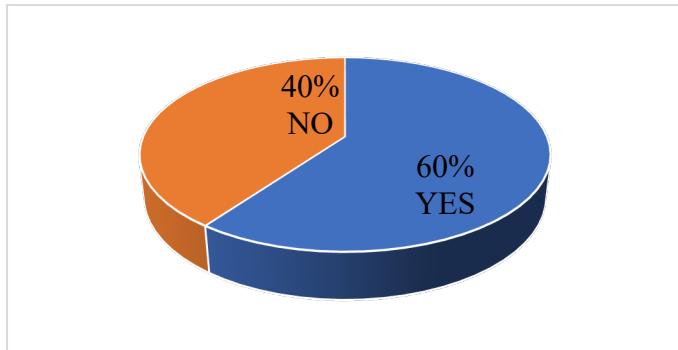
Key Informants Interview data indicated that all of them highlighted that people aged 18 to 35 was targeted by youth development programmes.

The view of both the respondents and informants were in line to each other that the age mostly targeted is 18 to 35 because that the age range of a person considered a youth. The focus on the age group of 18 to 35 by official sources suggests an intention to address issues relevant to young adults who are likely to be more engaged in economic activities and require specific support systems as they navigate adulthood. However, the emphasis on targeting those under 18 reflects grassroots understanding that many youths face significant challenges before reaching adulthood (Musevenzi, 2012). This could include educational barriers, lack of access to resources, or socio-economic factors that necessitate earlier intervention.

According to ZIMSTAT (2016), millions of persons aged 18 to 35 years take place in pride being youthful nation as the government prioritised skills development programmes to empower youths. This emphasises that youth development programme targeted for youths are there especially for the people of the age with the highest percentages (Shizha and Kariwo, 20212)

### **Securement of Employment and Career Development by Youth Development Programmes**

Figure 9 was done to have a clear understanding if youth development programmes secure employment and career development. Sixty percent of the respondents have the view that youth development programme secure employment and career development and 40% stated that youth development does not secure employment and career development.



**Figure 9: Securement of employment and career development by youth development programmes (N=88)**

Source fieldwork (2024).

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that the majority highlighted that youth development programmes secure employment. One youth said, *“Many youth development programmes focus on providing vocational training and education that help in informal employment.* However, minority indicated that youth career development does not secure employment. One youth said, *“Although youth development programmes are important some well-trained youths are struggling to find suitable employment”.*

Key Informants Interview data indicated that all of them highlighted that youth development programmes secure youth employment and career development. One key informant said, *“We equipped a lot of youths with skills for self-employment and many youths have access to vocational trainings at Gokwe Vocational training centre through our ministry and they are taught skills that help them to be self-employed which secure employment in this area”.*

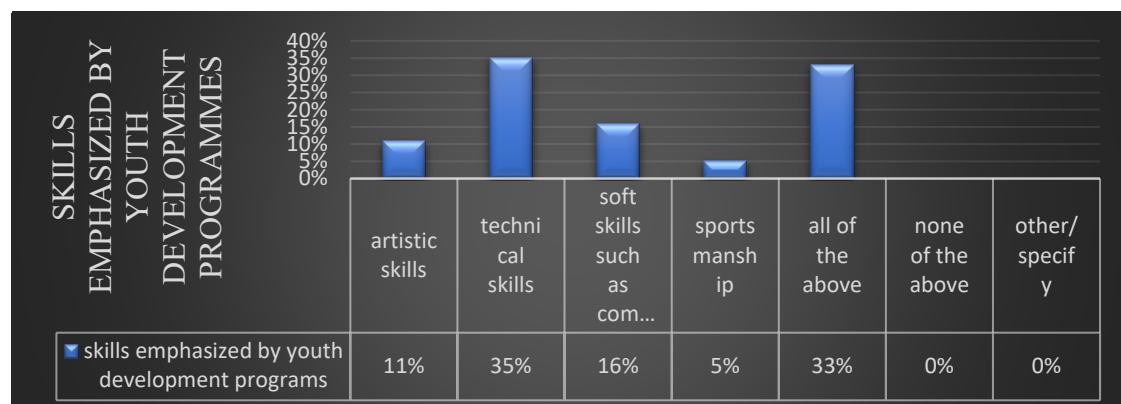
The views of the respondents and informants were in line to each other that youth development programmes secure employment and career development. While there is strong support for youth development programmes as vehicles for securing employment and fostering career growth among many stakeholders, there remains a significant minority who express scepticism about their effectiveness. Addressing these concerns through targeted improvements could enhance the overall impact of such initiatives on youth employment outcomes. Some participants might feel that existing programmes lack adequate funding or resources to make a substantial impact, there may be concerns that the skills being taught do not align with current job market demands, programmes might not be accessible to all youth due to geographic or socioeconomic barriers.

“Youth unemployment remains a global threat pushing youths to participate in various unlawful and dangerous activities, in Zimbabwe, a weak economy and domestic sociopolitical challenges have pushed youth unemployment rates to one of the highest in the continent and globally”, ( Maulani and Agwanda 2000), this clearly shows that despite the attempts that are done by youth development programmes a lot of youths are unemployed and impoverished which was started by youths in Gokwe rural community. Masunda (2002) concurs that youth unemployment remains a human security threat aggressive where youths are engaged in dangerous activities in Zimbabwe.

## Skills That are Emphasised in Youth Development Programmes Aimed at Employment

Figure 10 below are results of the findings of the study on the types of skills which are mostly emphasised in youth development programmes. Eleven percent of the respondents highlighted that artistic skills are the skills that are emphasised in youth development programmes for youth employment, 35% stated that its technical skills, 16% soft skills as communication and teamwork, 5% sportsmanship and 33% of them stated that it is all the above and none of them choose none of the above and other option.

Interview data gathered through the youths indicated that the majority highlighted that technical skills, artistic skills, soft skills and sportsmanship skills was mostly emphasised in youth employment and career development. One youth said, *“All the skills are importance as artistic skills create portfolios showcasing our work and soft skills includes scenarios where we navigated challenges or conflicts, honing our ability to think critically. And sportsmanship installs teamwork, respect, resilience and respect”*. However, the minority indicated that only technical skills was emphasised in youth employment and career development. One youth said, *“Technical skills are the only skills which every organisation that comes in this community emphasises on, we need other skills as well”*.



**Figure 10: Skills commonly emphasised in youth development programmes for youth employment**

Source fieldwork (2024)

Interview data gathered through the community members and key informants indicated that all of them stated that technical skills, artistic skills, soft skills and sportsmanship skills was mostly emphasised in youth employment and career development. One key informant said, *“Youth development programmes mainly focus on technical skills because technical skills is the evolving nature of the labour market. As industries increasingly rely on technology and specialised knowledge, there is a growing demand for workers who possess technical competencies”*.

The participants highlighted that although all the skills are important technical skills are mostly emphasised. Despite the general agreement of the informants on the importance of multiple skill sets, there exists a minority who believe that only technical skills should be emphasised. This divergence may stem from differing perceptions of immediate job market needs versus long-term personal development. Given the feedback from both majorities and minorities within the community, it would be beneficial for youth development programmes to strike a balance between technical training and the cultivation of soft skills and artistic expression. This

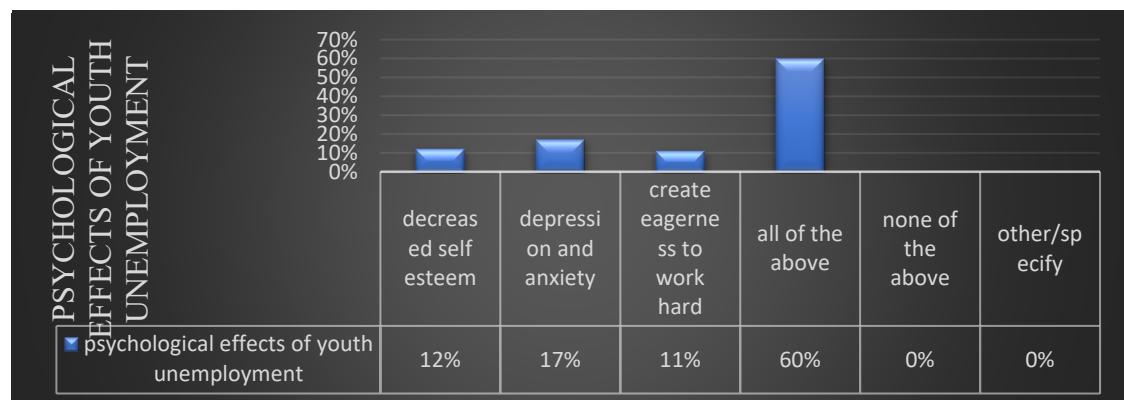
balanced approach can prepare youths not only for immediate employment but also for future challenges in an evolving job market.

The government is working together with many NGOs to make sure that they won't be a mismatch in the skills trained Magidi and Mahiya (2021). National Skills Development Policy Framework and the National Youth Policy are frameworks which provide relevant skills to individuals for sustainable economic development and self-fulfilment which is accessible, equitable and inclusive, (Mambo 2010). Madondo (2022) suggests that the skills are important to youths as they are equipped in informal sector.

## Effects of Unemployment on Career Development

### Psychological effects of unemployment on youths

The psychological effects of unemployment among youths and their implications are shown on Figure 11 below. Twelve percent of the respondents suggests that decreased self-esteem is the psychological effect caused by unemployment, 17% stated that depression and anxiety is psychological effect of unemployment, 11% stated that it creates eagerness to work, 60% suggests it is all the above options,



**Figure 11: Psychological effects of unemployment on youths (N=88)**

Source fieldwork (2024).

Interview data gathered through the youths is illustrated in Figure 12 above. It is highlighted in an ascending order. Depression and anxiety was mainly indicated as a psychological effect affecting unemployed youths which is resulting in suicidal behaviour, decreased self-esteem was also mentioned as a threat and it cause hopelessness and worthlessness and inadequacy, creation of eagerness to work hard was also highlighted as a psychological effect affecting unemployed youths because they thought the reason of being unemployed is that they might be incapable to be prosperous in their career so they will end up complicating their healthy by working hard without enough time to rest.

Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them highlighted that depression and anxiety was the psychological effect affecting unemployed youths. Key Informants Interview data gathered indicated that the majority suggested that depression and anxiety was the psychological effect affecting unemployed youths. One key informant said, *“Due to depression a lot of youth end up committing suicide, involved in criminal activities, prostitution, involvement in drug and substance abuse and youths are now perpetrators of violence”*. However, a minority indicated that decreased self-esteem was the psychological

effect affecting unemployed youths. One of minority said, “*Unemployed youth feel worthless, and hopelessness is what we see, decreased self-esteem is affecting them a lot, motivation is needed to give them hope and confidence.*

There is an agreement on both findings, the contributions from informants and the respondents shows that youths are disturbed psychologically by unemployment. The study reveals that while depression and anxiety are widely recognised as primary psychological effects among unemployed youths according to their own reports, there is also significant concern regarding decreased self-esteem highlighted by both youths and community members. The mention of eagerness to work hard by some community members introduces an interesting dynamic but appears less prevalent than the negative psychological impacts identified.

According to Holland (2012), period of unemployment result in depression, deteriorating of health, reduced of job satisfaction and young adults' heavy episode of drinking (Dangaiso and Mukucha, 2024) and smoking (De Vesser and Smith 2007). It concurs with the observation of people from what they are discovering from the unemployed youths and this can be supported by the rural development theory as articulated on the theoretical framework in the study.

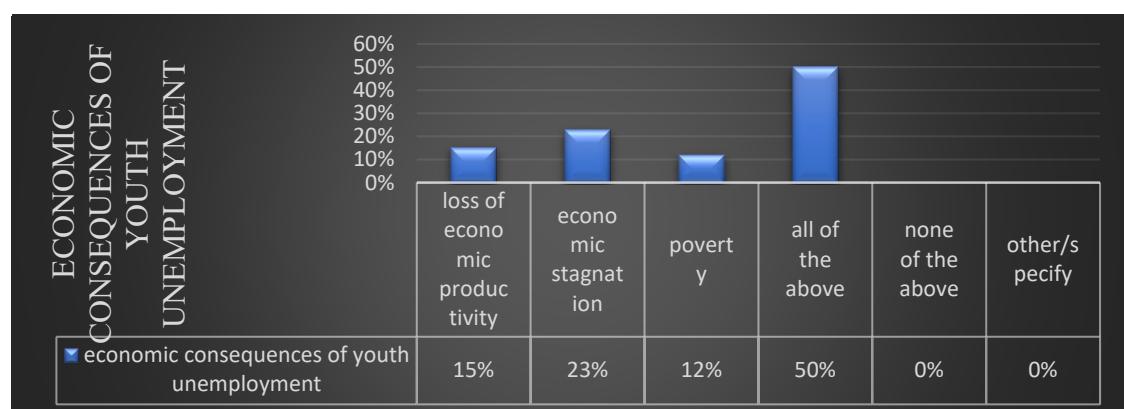


**Figure 12: Psychological effects of youth unemployment**

Source fieldwork (2024)

### Economic Consequences of Youth Unemployment in Gokwe

Figure 13 below shows the consequences of youth unemployment in Gokwe Rural Community.



**Figure 13. Economic consequences of youth unemployment (N=88)**

Source fieldwork (2024)

Fifteen percent of the respondents stated that loss of economic productivity is one of the economic consequences of youth unemployment, 23%, suggested economic stagnation, 12% suggested poverty, 50% suggest all the above.

Interview data gathered through the youths is illustrated above in Figure 14 above. It is presented in an ascending order; poverty was mainly indicated as an economic consequence of youth unemployment because it is becoming a chain and unsolvable issue because most of children that are impoverished lack funding for school which rend them back to poverty. Economic stagnation was an economic consequence highlighted which resulted since educated and skilled youths migrate in search of better opportunities instead of developing their community, loss of productivity was stated that skilled youths have no room to showcase their skills and talents due to limited opportunities.



**Figure 14: Economic consequences of youth unemployment**  
Source fieldwork (2024)

Interview data gathered through the community members indicated that all of them suggested that poverty was an economic consequence of youth unemployment. One community member said, “*Venhamo ndevenhamo vanofa vari venhamo*”, (those of poverty are of poverty, they will die in poverty).

Key Informants Interview data gathered through the councillor indicated that loss of productivity was an economic consequence of youth unemployment. One ward councillor said, “*The biggest consequence is that due to persistence unemployment educated youths migrate to rural areas or other countries in search of better opportunities. This migration result in a loss of human capital for Gokwe further exacerbating to economic stagnation*”.

There is an agreement on findings that all the economic consequences are causing a havoc on the youths’ career development. However, some of them highlighted a specific consequence that they find threatening to a lot of youths. Interviews conducted with youths revealed a strong consensus that poverty is a direct economic consequence of youth unemployment.

The agreement on findings was that all the economic consequences were causing a havoc on the youths’ career development. However, some of them highlighted a specific consequence that they find threatening to a lot of youths. Interviews conducted with youths revealed a strong consensus that poverty is a direct economic consequence of youth unemployment. This finding aligns with existing literature which often links high rates of unemployment among young

people to increased poverty levels in communities. When youths are unable to secure employment, they may lack access to essential resources, leading to a cycle of poverty that can affect their lives (Sumberg et al, 2021).

Finding stated majority of people are living in extreme poverty, poverty is higher in rural communities than urban households (Kamruzzaman, 2021). According to United Nations (2015), Zimbabwe's macroeconomic performance remains below the rate of other African countries. Moreover, the economic consequences of youth unemployment, including economic stagnation and increased poverty levels, are alarming. The study indicates that educated youths often migrate to rural areas in search of better opportunities, a trend that exacerbates local poverty and drains the community of its human capital (Bhebhe et al., 2016). This "brain drain" phenomenon is not unique to Gokwe but reflects broader regional trends in Southern Africa, where high youth unemployment rates contribute to a cycle of underemployment and economic instability (Stats SA, 2025).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions that not only enhance employability through skill development but also provide psychological support to help youths cope with the emotional impacts of unemployment. The importance of community involvement in the design and implementation of these initiatives cannot be overstated, as locally informed programmes are more likely to meet the specific needs and challenges faced by youths in Gokwe (Brown, 2010).

The major findings of this study were:

- i. The study found that gender dynamics affect individuals access to participation in youth career activities as women are regarded inferior and men are superior as per patriarchal beliefs which still exists.
- ii. The study found that youth development programmes effectively helped with good passes to gain employment skills.
- iii. The study found that people were aware of youth programmes to support youth empowerment. These programmes were entrepreneurship initiatives, micro grants, capacity building and vocational skills training.
- iv. The study found that there were micro grants programme which provided capital for starting youths' businesses
- v. The study found that technical skills were prioritised in employment and career development
- vi. The study found that long period of unemployment result in depression, deteriorating of health, reduced of job satisfaction and heavy episode of drinking and smoking (drug abuse).
- vii. The study found that poverty was the economic consequence that affected many youths.

Based on these findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. There should be gender equality among the youths and emancipation of women and awareness that advocates for women empowerment through programmes such as leadership training workshops and entrepreneurship programmes.
- ii. The Ministry of Youth and other stakeholders must have awareness of youth programmes which are based on community involvement and participation.
- iii. Community members must be involved in youth development programmes so that the programmes may continue even when partners for development left the community.

- iv. Introduction of youth development programmes to peer educators who can then teach essential skills to fellow youths in their villages
- v. NGOs and Ministry of Youth must have psychological counsellors who must offer psycho support services to affected youth from negative effects of unemployment.

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