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JOB-SEEKING EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH PARTICIPANTS IN A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN JOHANNESBURG

BY

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Abstract

Unemployment is a concerning social phenomenon globally, associated with poor socio-economic outcomes for individuals, communities and societies (Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008). Youth unemployment is a critical issue, given the youth bulge in many countries, including South Africa. The marked challenge with youth unemployment is that it negatively impacts on the economy, as it is associated with a lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP), due to the loss of economic productivity stemming from the absence of youth in the labour market (Aliber, 2003). The inadequacies in the education system, and structural inheritances from apartheid such as the urban-rural divide and the racialisation of unemployment are some of the contributors to the high unemploymnet rate, especially among the youth. Furthermore, literature indicates that youth unemployment is associated with poor physiological and mental health.

A substantial body of knowledge exists on unemployment and youth unemployment, with emphasis on the causes and intervention responses, both internationally and locally. There has been little focus on institutions that support the youth as they seek employment, and, there is a paucity of research on the experiences of the youth in their job-seeking endeavours. This qualitative study was aimed at exploring the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth Twelve participants aged 18-24 were selected through purposive sampling from a youth development programme in Braamfontein. Of the twelve participants, six participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, while the remaining six formed part of a focus group discussion. The data was recorded electronically using an audio recorder and analysed using ATLAS.TI using a thematic analysis.

The study found that youth employ multiple job-searching strategies, with web-based searching and in-person inquiry as the most common. Youth face several job-seeking challenges, including difficulty in accessing employment due to limited financial resources, pressure to support family financially, and the underutilisation of their skills and talents. In addition, it was found out that the youth benefit from social support particularly from friends and family, and spirituality buffers unemployed youth from the stresses of job-seeking. It is recommended that collaboration between stakeholders such as government, corporates and civil society be promoted to address some of the access-related challenges unemployed youth face. Future research can explore the impact that youth development programmes have on employability, as well as the plausibility of a youth transport and job-search subsidy to reduce job-searching costs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Unemployment is a significant social phenomenon that has negative social and economic implications for individuals, communities, and societies (Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008). While unemployment is a global phenomenon found in both developed and developing countries, higher rates of unemployment are more prevalent in the developing world. Generally, unemployment rates have steadily decreased, particularly in developed countries, although the 2008 recession negatively impacted the global economy (Weir-Smith, 2014). This phenomenon has continued to decrease in Europe, with the exception of Greece, Spain, and Italy, which were severely affected by the 2008 global recession (Internation Labour Organization, 2017). Comparatively, however, unemployment rates in the developing world, particularly of youth, continue to be significantly higher, and is predicted to continue growing (ILO, 2015).

Youth unemployment has gained local and international attention, as evidenced in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Weir-Smith, 2014) and the new post-2015 United Nations development framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). The global youth unemployment rate peaked at approximately 13.1% for 2016, and has since decreased to 11.9%. While youth unemployment in Africa is decreasing, rates remain comparatively higher. Unemployment in Northern Africa was reported at 28.8% in 2017 (ILO, 2017, p. 17; ILO, 2016). Interestingly, while the rate of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 11.1% for 2017 (ILO, 2016, p. 5; World Bank, 2018), the youth unemployment rate for South Africa is significantly higher, estimated at 53.4% for 2016 and with a slight increase to 53.5% in 2017, indicating the vulnerability of South African youth in the labour market. These statistics are depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Changes in youth unemployment rates in 2016-2017

Changes in youth unemployment rates between 2016 and 2017

Geographic region	Global	North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	South Africa
2016	13,1	29,3	10,9	53,4
2017	11,9	28,8	11,1	53,5
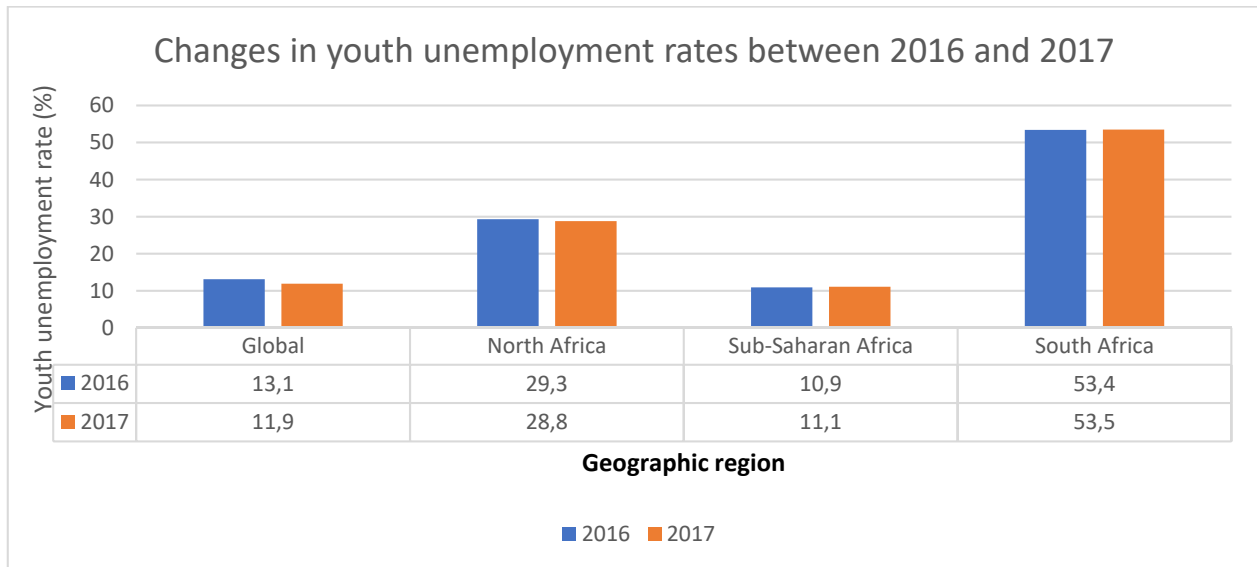
While in South Africa the term 'youth' broadly refers to persons aged 15-34, for the purpose of this study 'youth' refers to persons aged 15-24. 'Youth unemployment' thus refers to the unemployment of persons aged 15-24 who are able to work, seek work, but have been unable to secure employment (Barker, 2007; Statistics South Africa, 2015). In South Africa, youth unemployment in this age group was estimated at 52.8% for the third quarter of 2018, which is a slight decrease from the 53.5% recorded in 2017 (ILO, 2017; World Bank, 2018). Given the significantly high rates of youth unemployment, and the multifaceted factors that intersect to perpetuate youth unemployment in South Africa, it is vital that the phenomenon of youth unemployment be explored to develop ways to reduce these perpetually high unemployment rates.

1.2. Problem statement

The significant number of young persons, juxtaposed with the widespread nature of youth unemployment, both globally and locally, reveals the problematic nature of this phenomenon. Youth unemployment is a cause for concern. First, research indicates that there is a correlation between poverty and unemployment (Patel, 2015). Poverty is both a result of, and perpetuated by, unemployment. Second, the large number of youth not enrolled in training and education (NEET), and the consequent effect on the economy, illuminates the issue of youth unemployment as an important social issue to be further investigated and addressed. Third, unemployment is associated with negative health outcomes, including physiological and psychological health. It is estimated that one in three South Africans suffers from stress-related health issues, to which poverty, inequality, and unemployment may be contributors (Herman et al., 2009). Poor health impacts employability and productivity, which in turn both have an effect on the GDP and the economy, thus reiterating the

problematic nature of unemployment and, by extension, of youth unemployment. In this way, the extent of unemployment in general perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and inequality, affecting households, communities, and the economy.

Extensive research highlights how macro-factors have contributed to unemployment in South Africa. These include race, the legacy of apartheid, and the inadequacies of the Bantu education system, among others (Barker, 2007; Bhorat, 2009; Rotich, Ilieva & Walunywa, 2015). Other factors include environmental, behavioural, and socio-economic factors (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). Government policies such as the National Youth Policy (NYP) and the National Development Plan (NDP) are informed by the global efforts of the MDGs and the SDGs. These national and international policies acknowledge the severity of youth unemployment, and call for meaningful interventions to be created (Statistics SA, 2016; United Nations, 2015; United Nations Commission for Social Development, 2007). South Africa has not lagged behind in its efforts to combat youth unemployment. The interventions implemented in South Africa are numerous, and include both policy- and practice-oriented efforts. These include the Youth Employment Service (YES) initiated by President Cyril Ramaphosa, The White Paper for Social Development, the National Youth Policy, and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE), to name a few. The YES, launched in 2018, aims to promote intersectoral collaboration between the state, the private sector, and civil society, with the goal of increasing employment rates for youth in South Africa. Building on the existing policy and practice frameworks, YES incentivises corporates to employ youth, while enabling youth to gain access to employment and to build their experience (Youth Employment Service, 2018).

The National Youth Policy 2020 seeks to create an environment that enables the development of youth through various interventions in an effort ultimately to help transform the economy and society (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). The White Paper for Social Development and the National Youth Policy also acknowledge the extent of youth unemployment and the need for inter-sectoral collaboration aimed at youth development, which in turn enhances social and economic development (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act of 2003 is an example of an economic policy developed, attempting to respond to high unemployment rates in South Africa. The BBBEE strategy sought to "promote the meaningful participation of Black people in the economy by increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training", as stated in the objectives of the BBBEE Act (Republic of South Africa, 2014). The implementation of the Act, in addition to the economic activities promoted therein, resulted in the creation of jobs – but not enough to have a significant impact on unemployment rates

(Brynard, 2011). These policy-based responses to the high rates of unemployment further highlight the gravity of the issue, which requires practical and academic intervention.

While extensive research on unemployment has been conducted internationally and in South Africa, and a significant body of literature exists on the issue of youth unemployment, there is still a gap in the literature about the subjective experiences, processes, and perceptions of youth regarding unemployment. Moreover, while various social and economic policies have articulated the gravity of youth unemployment and its adverse effects on society, unemployment rates continue to rise, suggesting the need further to explore interventions and policies aimed at addressing youth unemployment, which this study, in part, seeks to pursue.

1.3. Motivation for the study and the research question

While similar to general unemployment, youth unemployment has unique dimensions that have implications on the youth and, consequently, the country's future socio-economic sustainability. As a result, the unemployment of youth needs to be understood; and developmental responses developed in light of the uniqueness of youth unemployment (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). 'Youth' refers to the younger cohort of the population and, by extension, it is that work force which is often associated with little, if any, market-related experience (Grimshaw, 2014). Research suggests that factors such as age and the lack of work experience affect the job-seeking experience (Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser & Arends, 2016). Consequently, employers often view youth as risky investments, as most youth do not have the required experience and are thus expensive sources of labour, which is evident through the low labour absorption rate for youth aged 18-24 (19%), compared to that of the general population which is at (40%) (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The youth is thus the most vulnerable to unemployment, as they are the first to be retrenched and the last to be absorbed into the labour market, even though they accounted for 55% of the labour force in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2015a, p. 3).

Second, as alluded to above, the interrelatedness of poverty and unemployment predisposes unemployed youth to poverty. Poverty serves as a pervasive barrier to accessing employment (Patel, 2015). The relatively high financial cost of job-seeking, which includes costs associated with transport, phone calls, researching available jobs, certifying and posting the necessary documentation, and attending the interview, often serves as a barrier to job-seeking youths, and this maintains poverty in this category (Graham et al., 2017). And unemployment and income poverty arguably contribute to, and perpetuate, the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). Furthermore, income poverty is often the direct result of unemployment, or of vulnerable forms of

employment, contributing further to unemployment (Liebbrandt, Woolard, Finn & Argent, 2010). In this way, the relationship between unemployment and poverty is possibly cyclical, with the latter contributing to, and perpetuating, the former, and vice versa.

Third, high rates of youth unemployment have negative consequences for the national economy. As alluded to above, South Africa has a predominantly young population as 62% of the population are aged 15-59 (Statistics South Africa, 2017b, p. 18). The issues affecting youth thus have broader implications for the nation. Youth unemployment is associated with decreased Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the result of a loss in economic activity, rooted in the absence of youth from the labour market (Aliber, 2003; Bhorat, 2009; Weir-Smith, 2014).

Fourth, the literature on youth unemployment in South Africa is vast, covering a range of areas in the field; from the historical context and factors (Aliber, 2003; Bhorat, 2009; Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Liebbrandt, Finn & Woolard, 2012; van Aardt, 2012), policy and practice responses to youth unemployment (Graham et al., 2017; Hewitt, 2011; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015), to the personal and micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level factors contributing to, and perpetuating, youth unemployment (Acemeglu, 2012; Aliber, 2003; Grimshaw, 2014; Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Putnam, 1993; Seekings, Liebbrandt & Nattrass, 2004). Nevertheless, fewer studies, particularly in the South African context, have been able to suggest the specific skills, knowledge, and training needed to improve the job-seeking experiences of marginalised youth (Graham et al., 2017). This study therefore aims to contribute to the field of youth development by exploring the job-seeking experiences of currently unemployed youth from townships in the south of Johannesburg, with the hope of identifying ways to improve programmes targeting youth job-seekers. More importantly, empirical narratives of the job-seeking youths are vital in the fight against youth unemployment.

Considering the various consequences of the high youth unemployment rates, which include the extent to which youth unemployment affects the lived experience of individuals, households, and communities, and the negative implications for the economy and the nation, it is pivotal that the nature of youth unemployment be explored so as to develop apt micro- and macro-interventions. It is for these reasons that this study seeks to answer the question "What are the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth enrolled in youth development programmes". Moreover, this study aims to achieve the following aim and objectives.

1.4.   Aim and objectives

The aim of the study was to explore the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth who are enrolled in a youth development programme located in the south of Johannesburg. The research objectives are to:

i.   Describe the job-seeking activities undertaken by unemployed youth

ii.   Explore the job-seeking challenges experienced by unemployed youth

iii.   Describe the positive experiences of job-seeking on the part of unemployed youth

iv.   Develop recommendations for youth development workers who work with unemployed youth.

1.5.   Overview of research methodology

1.5.1.   Research design

This study made use of a qualitative approach and an exploratory research design. Qualitative research facilitates and exploration of perspectives, experiences, and understanding processes of those who have a lived experience of the phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). In this was qualitative research allows for an insider's perspective on the challenge of unemployment. An exploratory research design facilitates a process of exploring a phenomenon or area of research that is new or has not been explored fully. Exploratory research is also used to study persistent phenomena, as is the case with youth unemployment (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Moreover, exploratory research allows for in-depth insights (Maxwell, 2013).

1.5.2.   Study population and sample

The study population included persons aged 18-24 who are not enrolled in employment, education, or training (NEET), but who are participants in a youth development programme located in the south of Johannesburg. In light of the success of the youth development programme, not all participants were strictly NEET; some were enrolled in training and education, some employed, and some owning businesses. A sample of 12 participants was selected using non-probability purposive sampling and a set of criteria developed by the student that would enable the selection of participants who would be best suited to respond to the research objectives. The participants were recruited by requesting assistance from the programme managers of four youth development programmes located in the south of Johannesburg. Of the 12 youth recruited to participate in the study, six participants were

interviewed individually, using face-to-face interviews. The remaining six formed part of a focus group.

1.5.3. Data collection

The data was collected using face-to-face interviews and a focus group discussion, which were guided by semi-structured interview schedules (Whittaker, 2012) which were made up of three sections: (i) biographical information and background, (ii) a discussion of the positive experiences and the challenges, expectations, and barriers experienced in the job-seeking process; and (iii) recommendations youth may have for the youth development programme. A pilot interview was conducted to ensure the validity of the data collection tool and to orientate the student to the field of study (Greeff, 2011). Based on the pilot study, the semi-structured interview schedule was adjusted. Similarly, the focus group session also made use of a focus group discussion guide, beginning with introductions and demographic information, followed by discussions that attempted to expand on the subjective experiences and activities collected in the individual interviews. Both the individual interviews and the focus group were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of reporting (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

1.6. Limitations of the study

The study faced several limitations. However, efforts were made to address these limitations. First, the age category of the participants neglects a cohort of youth according to the definition of youth used in South Africa. Legislation and policy refers to youth as persons aged 15-34; these categories are often divided into those aged 15-24 and those aged 25-34. The participants in this study were aged 18-25, thus providing no data for youth aged 15-17 who are NEET youth. Moreover, participants were recruited from a programme that focuses on post-matric youth. This further excludes youth aged 15-17 and those who had not finished secondary schooling. In this way, the study failed to capture the experiences of the 15-18 age cohort effectively.

Second, the participants were recruited from a pilot programme, which limited the size of the population from which a sample could be taken. The combination of youth dropping out of the programme and the success of the programme in helping youth find work or enter education and training further reduced the number or youth who met the NEET criterion. To mitigate this, the student asked youth to reflect retrospectively on their unemployment experiences, and also included participants who met the NEET criterion during the data collection period. In this way the student could obtain retrospective and present narratives that enabled the collection of rich, varied data.

Third, the study sample was small (12), limiting the generalisability of the findings. However, in light of the qualitative nature of the study, the study sought to explore subjective experiences in depth, rather than to identify broad generalisable data (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, given the aim of exploratory research, the study sought to an aspect of youth unemployment which few prior studies have explored in the South African context. This strengthens the use of a small sample, and justifies the inability to generalize the findings.

Fourth, the study focused on youth from a youth development programme. This neglects ostracised youth who have not had the support of a programme or intervention. Moreover, some participants had participated in previous youth development programmes. It is unclear what impact prior exposure may have had on the youth and their process of seeking employment. Nevertheless, the study focused on the experiences of youth seeking employment, rather than the impact of youth development programmes, thus limiting the influence these factors had on the overall aims of the study.

Lastly, the student's limited skills in research interviewing limited the quality of richness in two of the six interviews. However, the design of the study, particularly the inclusion of a focus group – aided in providing additional rich data. Triangulation used in the study helped to ensure that the data collected is credible. Similarly, the student's failure to account for the demography of the participants also impeded on the quality of data collected. The participants predominantly spoke Setswana, which the student understands but cannot speak, impacting on the communication in the interviews and the interpretation of the data during the analysis. To address this, the student used an external translator to obtain accurate, representative translations of the data during data analysis.

1.7. Data analysis and discussion

The data was analysed using a combination of ATLAS.ti software and Tesch's (1990) model of thematic analysis, which organises and reduces the transcription into codes, themes, and categories to create a logical flow in the categories to develop a schema. The findings and discussion are presented in Chapter 4.

1.8. Definition of key terms

1.8.1. Youth

According to the International Labour Organization and the United Nations, 'youth' is defined as persons aged 15-24; however, both organisations acknowledge variations within states (ILO, 2016; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). By contrast, the African Youth

Charter (2006) and the National Youth Policy 2020 define 'youth' as persons between the ages of 14 and 35. However, South African labour policy and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Republic of South Africa, 1997, p.25) indicate 15 as the age for youth formally to enter the labour market (Hewitt, 2011).

1.8.2. Unemployment

Barker (1999, p.165) defines an unemployed person as one who "is without work, is currently available for work, or is seeking work or wanting work".

1.8.3.1. Broad/expanded definition of unemployment

A broad definition of unemployment includes all persons who report a desire to find employment, irrespective of whether they are engaged in activities to help them attain it. Kingdon and Knight (2005) refer to a broad definition of unemployment as one that includes those who have not engaged in job-seeking activities in the four-week period prior to data collection, but nonetheless report being available and willing to accept suitable work.

1.8.3.2. Narrow/strict definition of unemployment

A narrow or strict definition of unemployment refers to persons who seek employment and have engaged in search activities in the recent past, determined by means of a job-search test (Kingdon & Knight, 2001).

1.8.4. Youth unemployment

'Youth unemployment' refers to the unemployment of persons aged 15-24 who are able to work, seek work, but have been unable to secure employment (Barker, 2007).

1.8.5. Job-seeking

'Job-seeking' broadly refers to the activities, behaviours, and processes in which individuals engage in the pursuit of finding employment. 'Job-seeking' also refers to a six-stage process: (1) exploring, (2) researching, (3) applying, (4) interviewing, (5) following up, and (6) negotiating (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2017).

1.8.6. Discouraged work-seeker

Some persons who are presently unemployed report not searching for jobs. These individuals are recorded for statistical purposes; however, they are not included in the official definition and reporting of unemployment (Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2013). Similarly, Statistics South Africa defines the discouraged work-seeker as "a person who was not employed during the reference period, wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks, provided that the main reason given for not seeking work was any of the following: no jobs available in the area; unable to find work requiring his/her skills; lost hope of finding any kind of work" (Statistics South Africa, 2017a).

1.8.6.1. Underemployment

Statistics South Africa refers to persons in underemployment as those who are currently employed, are available to work additional hours, but reported working only for a maximum of 35 hours per week (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

1.8.6.2. Underutilised

"Underutilised labour comprises three groups that are defined as follows: persons who are underemployed, persons who are unemployed, and persons who are discouraged" (Statistics South Africa, 2017a, p. xxiv).

1.8.7. Youth development programmes

Youth development programmes are those that seek to promote and enhance the capabilities and abilities of youth by: increasing their exposure to supportive and empowering environments, engaging them in activities that aid in creating opportunities, and helping them to access skills- and knowledge-building experiences (Ruth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

1.9. Structure of the dissertation

1.9.1. Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the background and context of the research, orientating the reader to the research report. The chapter highlights the motivation and rationale for the study, the existing literature relevant to the topic, and the research question, aim, and objectives that are pertinent to the study. This chapter also provides an overview of the methodology used in this study, and the limitations and definition of terms.

1.9.2. Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the key literature that relates to unemployment, job-seeking, and youth unemployment. A combination of international and local literature is used to provide definitions, highlight critical debates in the area of discussion, and contextualise youth unemployment and job-seeking in contemporary times. A brief overview of existing policies, responses, and interventions is also given.

1.9.3. Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study. A qualitative exploratory case study research design is used, drawing on multiple sources of information. The study aimed to describe and explore the nature and experience of job-seeking as expressed by unemployed youth from the south of Johannesburg. The study made use of a non-probability and purposive sampling design, and data was collected through face-to-face interviews and a focus group. This chapter also provides an overview of the ethical considerations.

1.9.4. Chapter 4: Results and discussion

The results and discussion chapter discusses and interprets the results obtained through the data collection process. This chapter also seeks to make meaning in light of the findings from previous research studies, as well as the theoretical lens selected. Additionally, the categories and themes emerging from the thematic analysis are explored.

1.9.5. Chapter 5: Summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusions

This chapter seeks to provide a summary of the research and its findings while discussing potential recommendations that emerge from the study that may be applicable to social service workers and social service professionals who seek to help youth job-seekers. Additionally, recommendations are made to organisations that work in the field of youth unemployment.

1.10. Conclusion

Youth unemployment affects more than half of South Africans aged 15-24, and is associated with negative outcomes for individuals and households, particularly in terms of poverty, inequality, poor emotional wellbeing, and poor health outcomes, to name a few. Furthermore, with about one-fifth of South Africans being between the ages of 15-24, the exploration of the issue of youth unemployment

is certainly more than an academic endeavour or political exercise. The continuing rise in the youth unemployment rate calls for an increased focus on the status and experiences of South Africa's youth.

This chapter has contextualised youth unemployment globally as well as in the South African context. Moreover, the problematic nature of youth unemployment has been discussed through the presentation of a problem statement and the student's motivation for the study. This chapter has also outlined the research aim and objectives, while providing a list of the limitations of this study and previewing the content of the chapters that follow.

The next chapter discusses the literature on the issue of unemployment by drawing on various policies, interventions, and statistics, both internationally and within the South African context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In order to understand the experiences of unemployed youth, the study explored related international and local literature as well as policies and interventions. This chapter provides an outline of some of the key developments in the literature on unemployment, including some significant conceptualisations and debates on the definition of unemployment and the notion of youth unemployment. This chapter further highlights a few of the policy and practice interventions that have emerged in response to youth unemployment. Lastly, to contextualise youth unemployment in South Africa, social development as a theoretical lens is discussed in light of its theoretical underpinnings and implications for unemployment.

2.1.1. Overview

While unemployment is a global social problem, significantly higher rates of youth unemployment persist in Sub-Saharan Africa (van Aardt, 2012). Extensive research on unemployment and youth unemployment has been done internationally and in the South African context. The literature can thus be categorised into broad categories. While the first category focuses on the definition of unemployment and the factors that perpetuate the phenomenon in South Africa, the second broad category centres on responses to youth unemployment. As such, it is evident that research on unemployment is by no means narrow (Lombard, 2008).

As alluded to above, a key part of the literature on unemployment centres on the definitions and measures of unemployment (Barker, 2007; Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2015). Some authors such as Barker (2007) have discussed unemployment with reference to individuals' intention and desire to work juxtaposed with the inability to find or secure employment. On the other hand, other texts highlight categories of unemployment (Liebbrandt, 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2015) all of which aim to provide definitions and effective measures to curb this challenge.

Given the economically driven-nature of unemployment, some authors refer to the supply and demand components of unemployment. The supply-side focuses on job-seekers and the institutions and systems involved in preparing youth for the labour market, whereas the demand-side refers to the labour market and the world of work (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Kingdon & Knight, 2000; Liebbrandt et al., 2010; Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2014). In the supply-side literature, the education system is said to contribute significantly towards unemployment, as it does not adequately prepare the youth

to compete in the labour market (Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2014). The high cost of tertiary education is also noted as a significant barrier to accessing employment opportunities, as the youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to meet the cost of fees (DiMaggio, 1982; Lam et al., 2008). Furthermore, this body of work explores the role of structural barriers and the historical legacy inherited from apartheid for previously disadvantaged groups (Rotich et al., 2015). Unemployment in most developing countries, especially in South Africa, is a relic of colonialism and apartheid, in respect of the racial and spatial inequalities they promoted (Bhorat, 2009; Weir-Smith, 2014).

Furthermore, on a global scale, the 2008 global recession is also recognised as having significantly contributed to unemployment (Weir-Smith, 2014). The recession is noted to have affected consumer spending and thus negatively impacted on the ability for businesses and the fiscus to earn revenue (Duleba, Gonda, Rihmer & Dome, 2012). Invariably, reduced revenue led to the retrenchment of employees and to a decrease in the number of job vacancies, further contributing to unemployment. Unemployment also exacerbates recession, as the increase in unemployment further reduces consumer spending, creating a vicious cycle (Rathmann et al., 2016).

Several South African studies focus on the extent of youth unemployment, its effects, and its causes (du Toit, 2003; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002; Moller, 1992). With regard to the effects of unemployment, the literature cites the psychological impact that it has on affected youth (Klasen & Woolard, 2008; Moller, 1992). These studies have further helped to strengthen the motives and efforts of policies and organisations that seek to reduce youth unemployment.

Moreover, in South Africa an extensive body of literature outlining and analysing various policy and practice responses to unemployment is evident. In these, research has been conducted on the strengths and limitations of employment strategies, such as the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), in creating meaningful skills development initiatives and long-term employment (Brynard, 2011; Bernstein, 2014; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Hemson, 2008).

A key gap is the dearth of literature on the subjective experiences of unemployed youth, especially given the rise in unemployment rates. By focusing on unemployed youth from a previously disadvantaged community, this study provides an in-depth understanding of their experiences of unemployment and the process of job-seeking. Within the broad conceptualization of youth unemployment, is the category of youth not enrolled in education or training (NEET).

2.1.1.1. Youth Not Enrolled in Education or Training (NEET)

The notion of youth not enrolled in education or training (NEET) is a fairly new indicator in the literature on youth and employment. Its growing popularity in part emerges from the synergy between

NEET and the employment-focused Sustainable Development Goal, which speaks of promoting "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, including young people, persons with disabilities…" (Elder, 2015; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015). As with the numerous definitions of unemployment, the NEET indicator is used to interpret the state of youth unemployment in numerous ways, however with varying degrees of accuracy. While seemingly self-explanatory, NEET is a complex term that acknowledges a range of cultural, social, and political conditions that impinge on the process of finding work. This includes distinguishing between discouraged work seekers and NEETs, as the former make up part of the NEET cohort, in addition to other forms of unemployed youth. This overlap in categories complexifies the classification and evaluation of youth unemployment. Moreover, the NEET concept does not distinguish between types of labour, e.g. full-time versus part-time versus casual labour, to allow for contextual disparities in the notion of work (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016).

In the context of South Africa, the highest NEET rates were found among persons without matric certificates, followed by those with the matric qualification (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). Moreover, NEET rates were found to be higher for women than for men, likely due to the archetypal division of labour found in many communities. The existing gender and race disparities amplify the need for social development strategies to deal with the feminisation of unemployment and the legacy of colonialism, which closed opportunities for the majority black people. Moreover, statistics in South Africa indicate that the top three categories of unemployment among 15-24 year old NEETS are new entrants, discouraged job-seekers, and home-makers (Statistics South Africa, 2018b). As evidenced in Table 1 below, 31.4% of NEET youth were new entrants into the labour market, predominantly comprised of school leavers. This suggests a slow pace in the absorption of youth into the labour market and training/education sector. Additionally, 20.6% of NEET youth were discouraged work seekers, and only 1.1% of these youth were previously employed and have returned to being unemployed.

Table 1: NEETs by reason, 15-24, 2016, Q (Stats SA, QLFS Q2: 2016)

Reason/Category	Number (Thousands)
Job losers	254
New entrants	1010
Re-entrants	54
Other unemployed	56
Home-makers	486

Too young/old/ retired	126
Discouraged job-seekers	662
Other not economically active	518
Total	**3217**

Integral to understanding unemployment is the significance and role of employment or work. While references have been made to the macro-level functions and implications of employment, the next section highlights the micro- and mezzo-levels and their impact on the individual.

2.1.2.   The value of work

Traditional career development perspectives postulate that work serves various functions beyond just the elementary function of sustaining life. Du Toit (2003) argues that work or employment serves three main functions: 1) an economic function, 2) a social function, and a 3) psychological function. The economic function of work refers to accessing income and enhancing livelihood in order to meet the basic needs that include food and shelter. The social function centres on the role or position that employment accords individuals in society, and the social groups to which people gain access because of their jobs. The third aspect, psychological function, refers to the ways in which work gives value, promotes self-esteem and wellbeing, and contributes to the overall quality of life (du Toit, 2003). These ideas can be seen in the works of Karl Marx, who suggests that labour and productivity is a commodity that enhances a value exchange (Burawoy, 1981; Renault, 2014). Moreover, Marx highlights a relationship between labour or work and social relationships, and argues that labour is a key distinguishing factor between humans and other animals, and is thus intrinsic to human nature and identity (Renault, 2014). In this way, Marx adds a philosophical nuance to the notion of work and employment, highlighting the multiple ways in which work shapes the lived experiences of individuals. These dimensions of work and its roles have been researched and supported by other authors (Dunn, Wewiorski & Rogers, 2008; Mouster, Daly & Delaney, 2018; Super & Sveko, 1995; Zunker, 1994).

Beyond the individual, employment or work has positive outcomes for the economic, social, and political wellbeing of societies (Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2014). In light of the value that work adds to livelihood, holistic wellbeing, and social status, it stands to reason that unemployment gives rise to the inverse outcomes – i.e., poverty, poor quality of life, and impaired social relationships. This is closely linked to the core ideas of social development theory and policy, which are underpinned by a

focus on maximising human potential and tapping into the assets and capabilities people possess (Midgley, 1995; Moller, 1992; Patel, 2015). This understanding of employment sets the context for understanding unemployment.

2.1.3. The challenge of definition

It should be noted that the term 'unemployment' is broad and highly contested due to its use across multiple disciplines. Various authors have proposed several definitions, many of which attempt to measure unemployment in quantitative terms. Barker (2007) defines unemployment as the status in which persons who are available and able to work seek employment but are presently not employed. Barker (2007) also proposes that unemployment be measured in terms of the percentage of unemployed individuals in the total economically active population (EAP). In contrast, other authors propose that unemployed persons be categorised (Kingdon & Knight, 2000; Statistics South Africa, 2011) as "discouraged work-seeker", "under-employed", and "under-utilized labour" (Statistics South Africa, 2011, p. 18). Implicit in the 'discouraged work-seeker' status is evidence of the psychological responses to challenges that individuals face in finding employment, especially discouragement. This discouragement is associated with, and arguably leads to, long-term unemployment. 'Under-employed' refers to persons whose time availability for labour is not fully used, whereas 'under-utilised labour' includes all unemployed, under-employed, and discouraged persons. These sub-categories in part speak to and emerge from a failure to acknowledge and effectively make use of the available labour potential.

Additionally, the unemployment discourse refers to broad and narrow definitions of this phenomenon, which have statistical implications with regard to how it is measured. These hamper the extent to which unemployment is considered a crisis, particularly in South Africa. The broad definition of unemployment includes all persons who report a desire to find employment, irrespective of whether they are engaged in activities to help them attain employment. In contrast, the narrow definition of unemployment (or, by extension, unemployed) refers to persons who seek employment and have engaged in search activities in the recent past (Kingdon & Knight, 2001). Linked to the broad and narrow definitions of unemployment, Kingdon and Knight (2000; 2001; 2005) introduce the concepts of 'searching' and 'non-searching' by the unemployed, which highlight the criterion of engaging in search activities in attempts to find and secure employment. In essence, the broad definition of unemployment includes all persons, whether searching or non-searching, who are currently without employment, while the narrow definition includes only those who are actively searching (Kingdon & Knight, 2000). Thus, the choice of definition has implications for the recorded statistics on unemployment, and consequently the urgency and seriousness with which unemployment is regarded.

Moore (2015, p. 195) proposes the notion of "vulnerable employment", which refers to persons who are self-employed and to those who are unpaid but who work to contribute to family income-generating methods, such as a family business, or engaging in farming. These forms of 'employment' are often informal, and thus insecure in terms of income. Furthermore, those who are engaged in these types of employment do not have access to social protection benefits, thus exposing them to the high risks not only of unemployment, but also of poverty.

The nuanced differences between the definitions of unemployment have significant repercussions for the understanding of unemployment, and for the development of strategies to address this challenge. Understanding individuals' agency and active involvement in attempts to escape unemployment, as well as the different rates of unemployment for searching versus non-searching unemployed persons, aids in identifying the barriers to accessing employment and where interventions should be directed. These nuanced differences also create an opportunity for responsibility and blame to be placed on the individuals regarding their unemployment status. Moreover, they allow for unemployment rates to be modulated, as research highlights significant differences in the rates of unemployment depending on which definition is used (Kingdon & Knight, 2000; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). This raises the question as to whether defining 'unemployment' is an academic and political exercise centred on statistics and numerical deliberations, or whether consideration is given to the grassroots level implications – i.e., the relationship between poverty and unemployment. As alluded to above, the lived reality of unemployed persons and of those with vulnerable forms of employment is informed by the way unemployment is conceptualised, thus emphasising the significance of developing and responding to these definitions.

Regardless of the qualitative and quantitative parameters used to contextualise unemployment, it remains a critical social, political, and economic issue with negative outcomes for individuals, communities, and society. This further reiterates the importance of aptly interpreting theoretical terms to remain cognisant of the policy and practice implications that are subsequently developed. For the purpose of this study, the broad definition of unemployment will be used.

Furthermore, much like the definitional challenges associated with unemployment, earlier interpretations of social development under-emphasised the social and cultural implications of development. In light of this interpretation, related policy that was developed over-emphasised the economic dimensions of development, resulting in many developing countries experiencing an increase in inequality, widespread unemployment, and a concomitant surge in rural to urban migration (Midgley, 1995).

The foregoing considerations are important, since there is a nexus of issues that contribute to unemployment and of various responses to this challenge. The crisis of unemployment in the South African context is shaped by a complex interplay of factors that range from deeply engrained systemic inequalities with race, gender, and spatial dimensions, to individual perceptual factors based on access to opportunities (Graham et al., 2017; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). While unemployment is a global phenomenon, the characteristics of unemployment discussed above are in many ways unique, and create opportunities for more developmental responses to this phenomenon. Moreover, with the significant unemployment rates in the youth cohort in post-apartheid South Africa, it is worth refocusing on the unique nature of youth unemployment in the country.

2.1.4. Conceptualising unemployment among young people

'Youth unemployment' refers to the unemployment – and the lack of employment opportunities – specifically for young people. While global organisations such as the United Nations and the ILO define youth as persons aged 15-24, South African policies and legislation refer to persons aged 15-35 (van Aardt, 2012; National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the former definition has been used.

Globally, 2009-2012 marked a shift in the area of youth unemployment in most regions of the world. Unemployment rates surged, most likely as a result of the global economic recession (Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Rathmann et al., 2016). Moreover, nuanced changes in the nature of youth employment were evident globally. In South Africa, unemployment rates increased while the GDP decreased as an result of the recession, both in the country and internationally (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). More specifically, South Africa recorded an unemployment rate of 15% or higher (ILO, as cited in Weir-Smith, 2013). It is worth noting that, even before the recession, unemployment rates in South Africa remained high despite some GDP growth. For example, GDP improved by 2.3% while no meaningful improvement in employment rates was evident. This highlights a unique dynamic in the relationship between GDP and employment rates in the South African context. These nuances resonate with the goal of social development, which emphasises that economic growth needs to result in improved access to social investments such as employment opportunities (Midgely, 1995; Noyoo & Sobantu, 2019; Sobantu, Maphosa, & Zulu, 2019). In fact, in South Africa, an estimated 800 000 jobs were lost during the same period, giving birth to the notion of "jobless growth" (Aliber, 2003, p. 476). So while unemployment is – and continues to be – a global phenomenon, nuanced differences are evident in the case of youth unemployment.

2.1.5. Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment as a subset of unemployment has shown unique facets that differ from the broader characteristics of unemployment.
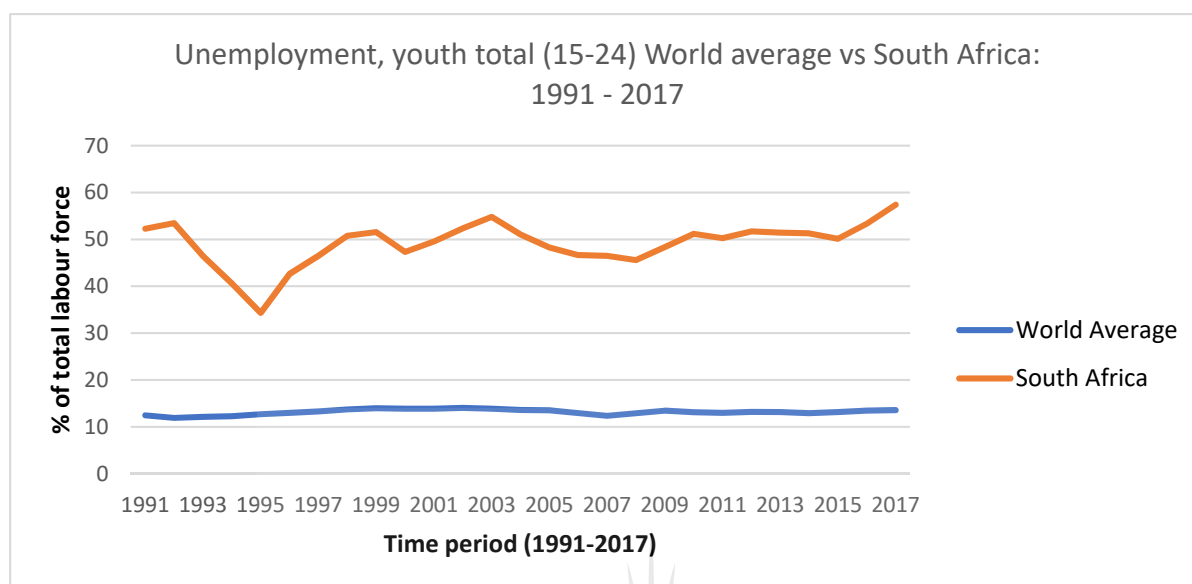
Figure 2: World average vs South Africa – unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (ILO, 2017)

As reflected in the above statistics, youth unemployment figures are notably higher than those for adults, with even more significantly disconcerting figures evident in developing countries (Graham et al., 2017; van Aardt, 2012). The youth unemployment statistics for South Africa have consistently remained higher than those of other countries, as evident in Figure 2 above. While youth unemployment figures differ from country to country, two main features indicate similarities across contexts. First, in most developing countries the unemployment rate for youth is higher than that of adults. Second, a strong correlation is found between youth unemployment and adult unemployment (Aliber, 2003; du Toit, 2003; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). This is significant in the South African context, as authors note that lengthy periods of unemployment are often experienced by jobseekers.

Research by Knight and Kingdon (2000) found that, in 1997, 37% of the population had been unemployed for more than three years; this was later supported by the findings of the Labour Force Survey (2005), which indicated that 40% of the South African population had been unemployed for more than three years. More recent findings highlight that the highest rate of unemployment is among those who have been unemployed for less than one year – likely comprising youth who have recently exited high school (Statistics South Africa, 2018a). The second highest group was that of persons unemployed for more than five years (Statistics South Africa, 2018b). Figure 3 below depicts the figures for unemployment for various durations. This suggests that, in addition to high unemployment rates, South Africa is faced with the challenge of people experiencing long periods of unemployment,

which has implications for their livelihood, wellbeing, and quality of life (Patel, 2015; van Aardt, 2012). With the high number of youth presently without employment, it is likely that they will remain unemployed, given the nature of unemployment and job-seeking in South Africa. Needless to say, unemployment has adverse developmental repercussions for the individuals, families, societies, and the economy (Midgley, 1995; 2014; Patel, 2005; 2015).
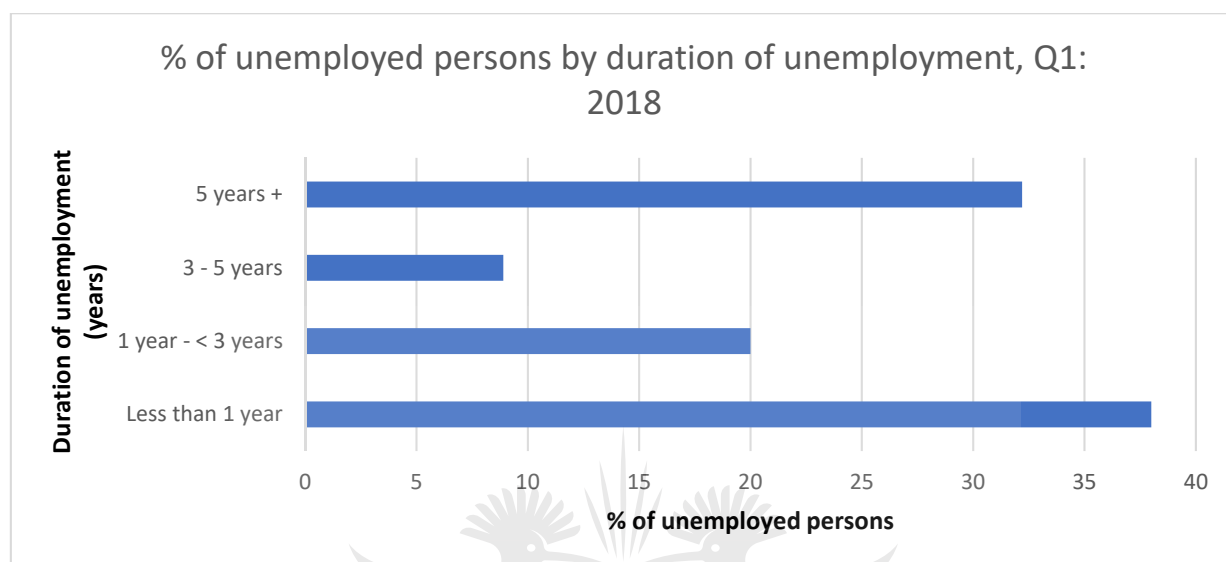
Figure 3: Unemployed persons by duration of unemployment, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1: 2018

Nevertheless, youth unemployment in South Africa is by no means a new phenomenon. Thus, one cannot engage youth unemployment in South Africa without outlining the historical backdrop to its origins.

2.1.5.1. The racialisation of unemployment

A unique characteristic of unemployment in South Africa is its racialisation. A substantial body of literature examines the historical factors contributing to youth unemployment, such as race, the legacy of apartheid, and the failures of the education system (Bhorat, 2009; Barker, 2007; Rotich et al., 2015). High unemployment rates in South Africa date back to the late 1960s, increased sharply in the early 1970s, and have persisted with minimal decreases (Lam, Leibbrandt, & Mlatsheni, 2008). As previously mentioned, unemployment in South Africa is therefore not a new social phenomenon. Nevertheless, the consistently racialised high rates of unemployment are cause for concern.

During apartheid, South African society was largely developed along racial profiles – arbitrary social constructs solely based on skin colour, which had no logical relevance to political or economic outcomes (Rotich, Ilieva, & Walunywa, 2015). Thus high unemployment rates were found among non-Whites, and persist today, as shown in Figure 4 below.

NEET rates for youth aged 15–24 years by population group, Q1: 2018

Population Group	Black/African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
Q1:2018 Male	30,3	33	27,1	14,7
Q1:2018 Female	36,9	32,4	31,2	17,3

% NEET youth 15-24
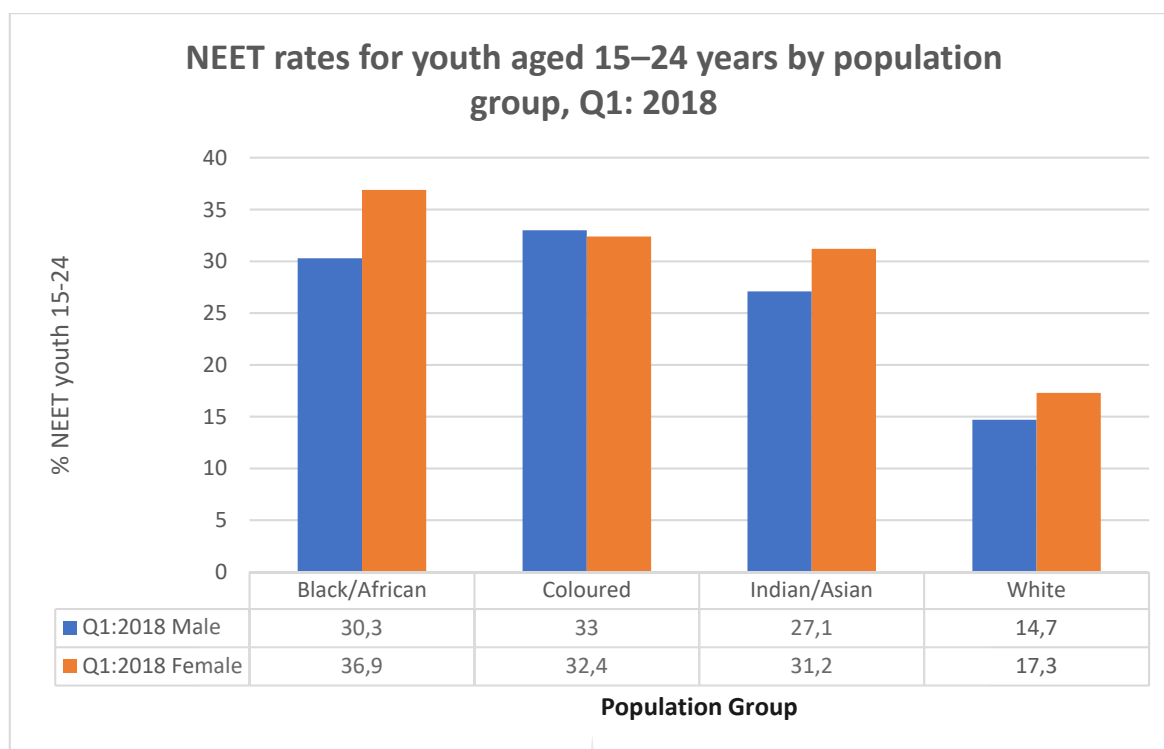
Figure 4: NEET rates for youth aged 15-24 by population group, Quarter 1: 2018

The highest rates of unemployment for 15-24-year-old youth in South Africa are those for African females, at 36,9% in 2018 and 36,2% in 2017, emphasising the racialisation of unemployment in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2018b, p. 7). The issue of high figures of unemployment for females was raised by Ngcobo and Raniga (2014), who stressed the need for developmental employment strategies that prioritise opportunities for women.

Colonial and apartheid policies perpetuated the feminisation of unemployment and poverty. For example, the promulgation of the Group Areas Act (1950), The Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950, and the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act (National States Citizenship Act) No 26 of 1970 further legitimated the racialisation of society and positioned Whites in places of dominance, with non-Whites as subordinate in the economy and labour market. Burawoy (1981, p. 133) highlights the mining system as a classic example of the "colonial labour system" in which groups of Black miners were subjected to inhumane working conditions under the supervision of White employers. Moreover, Black miners were confined to a limited number of poorly paid, unpredictable jobs, in part due to the Bantu Education Act, which legislated inferior education for Black people (Rotich et al., 2015). In contrast, apartheid legislation positioned Whites in control of various means of production that sustained their political and economic power and that subsequently facilitated opportunities for strategic investments and ultimately maintained White economic dominance. Linked to the racial dimensions of unemployment is the geographic layout of unemployment in South Africa.

2.1.5.2.   The urban-rural divide

In addition to the hegemonic imbalance facilitated by the Bantu Education Act, legislation such as the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950, and the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act (National States Citizenship Act), effected the establishment of Bantustans and restricted the mobility of Black labour by dictating what employment opportunities would be available in urban centres, and creating places of residence for Blacks in underdeveloped rural areas. Moreover, the development of homelands and townships further enabled the monitoring of movement and access to the White hubs of production and labour (Brown & Neku, 2005; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Rotich et al., 2015; South African History Online, 2015; 2018). This uneven spatial distribution of employment opportunities created and continues to create disparities between employment opportunities in rural areas as opposed to urban areas. As a result, geographic location continues to be a crucial factor in youth accessing employment.

The literature highlights that those living in urban areas are more likely to find employment than their rural counterparts. This is likely due to the greater availability of employment opportunities in urban settings (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Graham et al., 2017). Authors argue that those located further away from urban hubs experience higher costs associated with job-seeking, such as transportation. Furthermore, should young people secure these jobs, it is estimated that more than a third of their income would be spent on travelling expenses, thus illustrating the prohibitive and largely problematic nature of the geographic layout of employment opportunities in South Africa.

However, the statistical data does not conclusively support this argument about higher employment rates for those living in urban settings, particularly when conducting a comparison within provinces. For instance, in Gauteng, the unemployment rate for Ekhuruleni was higher than that of the City of Johannesburg for quarter 1, 2018 at 30,9% and 28,8% respectively. This would support the view that employment opportunities are greater within the highly productivist City of Johannesburg. However, for the Western Cape, the unemployment rate for the non-metropolitan areas was lower than that of the City of Cape Town at 14,6% and 22,4% respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2018b). This is evident in Figure 5 below, which depicts the unemployment rates across South African provinces between quarter 1 of 2017 and 2018 respectively. This would imply that the high rate of unemployment is the result of multiple factors.
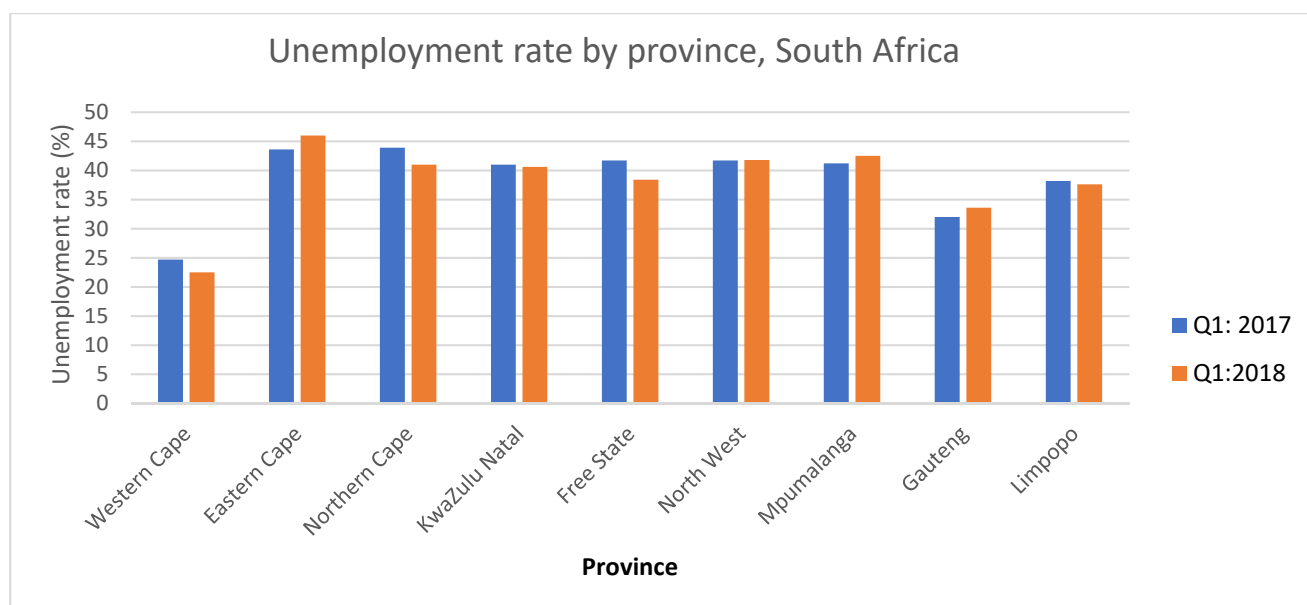
Figure 5: Unemployment rate by province, Expanded Unemployment Rate, QLFS

While arguments about the cost of job-seeking in light of the urban/rural divide have merit, the evidence is inconclusive. This highlights the role of other factors that aid individuals' transition into the labour force.

While the race, gender, and spatial dimensions of unemployment and youth unemployment are rooted in the past, they are perpetuated in present-day society in a range of nuanced ways. It can thus be argued that the unequal economic and political power relations between Whites and non-Whites established during apartheid were deepened and legitimised through policies and legislation. In post-apartheid South Africa, they are being maintained through the continued focus on urban development over rural development, as well as the reliance on historic infrastructural development and policy, which largely resembles facets of the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunity.

2.1.5.3. The implications of youth unemployment

The implications of youth unemployment are manifold, and impact on the broader society as much as they do the individual. Unemployment affects the economy, has implications for poverty, and is detrimental to the holistic wellbeing of individuals. Thus it can be argued that unemployment is as much a political issue as it is a personal problem.

From a social development perspective, unemployment can never be reduced to an individual phenomenon, but is a macro-economic element that demands holistic economic and political responses (Gray, Mazibuko & O'Brien, 1996; Noyoo, 2015; Sobantu et al., 2019). Unemployment and underemployment limit youths' ability to contribute to the local and national economy. This is in part due to the limited resources that youth possess as a result of the absence of income. As such, this

limits their ability to contribute economically as consumers and investors – and, by extension, affects their inclusion in the local and national economy (Barker, 2007; Reddy et al., 2016). Inclusion and participation, as articulated in the Bill of Rights and the country's Constitution, are key tenets of the social development framework (Midgley, 1995; Sobantu et al., 2019), and as such unemployment limits youth participation and active citizenship. Furthermore, unemployment negatively affects the youth's ability to exercise their rights as citizens, often leaving them feeling disenfranchised and voiceless (World Bank Group, 2017; Yu, 2013). This is supported by various authors who argue that unemployment – and, by extension, income poverty – impedes individuals' ability to participate actively in the development of households and communities (Bhorat, 2009; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Weir-Smith, 2014).

High youth unemployment rates also negatively affect the economy by limiting the efficient use of labour capital that is available in a country; and with the youth bulge evident in many developing countries, youth unemployment is a serious cause for concern (Lam, 2014). Moreover, the absence of youth in the labour market decreases economic productivity and in turn affects GDP (Aliber, 2003). A weak economy is often associated with job losses and a decrease in the availability of job opportunities; and this may affect youth in various ways, including an increased difficulty in entering the labour market (Brynard, 2011; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; van Aardt, 2012). Thus youth unemployment gives rise to various socio-economic problems.

One such example is that of poverty. First, it is argued that poverty and unemployment are interrelated (Nattrass & Seekings, 2001; Ozler, 2007). Poverty is highlighted as a pervasive barrier to accessing employment (Patel, 2015), and arguably occurs in part as a result of unemployment. Income poverty also emerges in part as a result of unemployment (Leibbrandt, Finn, & Woolard, 2012). Moreover, unemployment is identified as a contributing factor in perpetuating intergenerational poverty (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Ozler, 2007). This is as the result of families having limited resources available to facilitate access to opportunities that would aid in overcoming poverty, such as education, and inheriting barriers such as the lack of housing (Hohmann, 2013). Furthermore, in light of holistic perspectives on human development, youth unemployment gives rise to and perpetuates non-economic forms of poverty such as the lack of social inclusion and participation, highlighting the micro-level dimensions that emerge from the unemployment crisis.

Similarly, other micro-level issues surface as a detrimental by-product of unemployment. A significant body of literature supports the largely negative impact that unemployment has on general health and wellbeing. Research indicates a correlation between youth unemployment and high-risk behaviours (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Due to income poverty, youth are likely to engage in

behaviours such as transactional sex as a means to attain income. Moreover, other health risk-related behaviours associated with unemployment were identified, including smoking, risky drinking, and poor dietary choices (Caban-Martinez et al., 2012). Youth unemployment is also associated with low self-esteem, poor mental health, and discouragement, partly due to lengthy job-seeking, paired with minimal responses from prospective employers (Graham et al., 2017). The international literature suggests that unemployed persons were likely to meet diagnostic criteria for a mental health diagnosis, further highlighting the negative impact of unemployment on mental health (Thern, de Munter, Hemmingsson, & Rasmussen, 2017). Unemployment is also associated with tension within families due to the financial burden unemployed youth place on them, which may further impact health outcomes. And the stress associated with youth unemployment is identified as exposing young people to physiological health conditions such as hypertension (Cygan-Rehm, Kuehnle, & Oberfichtner, 2017; Hammarström, 1994; Paul & Moser, 2009).

It is therefore evident that youth unemployment has a myriad of macro-, mezzo-, and micro-level implications that then culminate in a national crisis. Because of its relationship with poverty, race, and access to socio-economic rights, and its rootedness in colonialism and apartheid, unemployment remains inseparable from the discourse of human rights and social development (Sobantu et al., 2019). For these reasons, it is imperative that interventions and policies aimed at mitigating youth unemployment be implemented in a social development manner, and be monitored and evaluated.

2.2. Policy response and practice interventions

South Africa has not lagged behind in efforts to combat youth unemployment. The existing literature highlights a range of responses and interventions, which can be divided into three broad categories: economic policies, education-focused policies, and labour market policies. These speak to the concurrent supply and demand-focused challenge of unemployment.

2.3.1. Policy Responses and Practice Implications

Since 1994, a range of policies and strategies have been developed in the effort to address the high unemployment and youth unemployment rates in South Africa. These include legislation and policies such as the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, the National Youth Development Act, the Youth Employment Accord, the Employment Incentive Bill, the Integrated Youth Development Strategy, the Youth Employment Subsidy, and the National Youth Policy 2020. However, many of these policies were inspired by policies in the global arena, as well as the trends in unemployment in South Africa. Two of these policies are discussed below: the Sustainable Development Goals, and the National Youth Policy 2020.

2.3.1.1. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Prior to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were developed as a list of common goals for the global community to work towards in the effort to reduce poverty and promote development. The eight MDGs were proposed in 2001 with the hope of achieving them by 2015. Table 2 below shows the MDGs and the SDGs.

Table 2: The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals

Millennium Development Goals	Sustainable Development Goals	
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	No poverty	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Achieve universal primary education	Zero hunger	Reduced inequality
Promote gender equality and empower women	Good health and well-being	Sustainable cities and communities
Reduce child mortality	Quality education	Responsible consumption and production
Improve maternal health	Gender equality	Climate action
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Clean water and sanitation	Life below water
Ensure environmental sustainability	Affordable and clean energy	Life on land
Develop a global partnership for development	Decent work and economic growth	

Note: (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.)

While several successes were achieved through the MDGs, such as a marked decrease in children under five mortality rates, increased school enrolment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, and improved access to drinking water, the MDGs are not without their critics (Fehling, 2013; Kumar, Kumar, & Vivekadhish, 2016).

The MDGs are criticised for proposing overly simplistic, broad, and unattainable goals that largely ignore national contexts. Moreover, the MDGs failed to identify the parties responsible for working towards the actualisation of the goals, which had implications for accountability. The MDGs are also

critiqued for perpetuating uneven progress among countries and regions. For example, two-thirds of Sub-Saharan Africa remains in extreme poverty, while global figures indicate that only one-sixth of the global population lived in poverty, highlighting the skewed progress (Fehling, 2013; World Bank, 2016). Nevertheless, some progress was achieved through the MDGs.

Building on the foundation of the MDGs, and emerging from a series of consultations with various stakeholders including citizens, civil society organisations, the private sector, academics, and scientists, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced. The 17 goals in many ways continue the legacy of the MDGs, while introducing the sustainability agenda (Kumar, S., Kumar, N., & Vivekadhish, 2016). The SDGs include no poverty, quality education, decent work, economic growth, and reduced inequality (United Nations, n.d.). A key development from the MDGs to the SDGs is the separation of two critical social issues, poverty and hunger, which were previously grouped together in MDG 1. Their separation enables governments to target them independently with focused strategies and interventions (Sengupta, 2018).

The SDGs are hailed for their development of a range of measures, processes, and instruments aimed at monitoring and evaluating the progress they seek to promote. Moreover, issues of inclusion and sustainability are more evident; for example, deliberate thoughts about minority groups such as persons living with disabilities, women, children, and youth recur throughout. The consultative and discursive environment in which the goals were developed also echoes notions of inclusivity and participation. And while it may be too early to evaluate their progress, authors have already begun critiquing the SDGs (Winkler & Williams, 2017; Winkler, 2018; World Bank, 2016). The SDGs, much like their predecessors, are critiqued for their ambiguity and limited accountability. Some authors argue that the SDGs are blemished by the significant amount of politically correct language, which results in a list of vague goals (Oestreich, 2018; Winkler, 2018; Sengupta, 2018). Moreover, as in the case of many multi-sectoral collaborative efforts, the issue of coordination poses a threat to effective and efficient implementation. Winkler and Williams (2017) argue that the SDGs are not a priority for many developed nations, while the risks associated with not meeting the goals are more pronounced for developing countries, thus maintaining inequality. And the absence of indicators to measure progress impedes the effective monitoring and evaluation of progress (Sengupta, 2018).

Nevertheless, the SDGs are integral to the issue of youth unemployment. Goal 8 of the SDGS speaks to "Promot(ing) sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", supported by 12 targets that work to promote the achievement of these goals. The South African government has committed itself to work on achieving these goals, as is evident in the synergies between the SDGs and various national and local policies such as the

National Development Plan, the Youth Development Policy, and local integrated development plans (IDPs). The intention to promote human development through a combination of social and economic development is echoed in the SDGs, and aligns with the ethos of the social development framework for overarching policy in South Africa. Key barriers to the reality of achieving goal 8 are centred on the slow-growing economy that is evident in Southern and South Africa, the persistence of high levels of income inequality (for instance, in South Africa and Namibia), and the low use of energy and other natural resources (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015; Kumar, S., Kumar, N., & Vivekadhish, 2016). These structural inequalities prevent the realisation of human potential. Nevertheless, the SDGs set a critical international standard for the development of local policies and frameworks to effect change in the area of youth unemployment in South Africa. In theory, the SDGs align with the ethos of social development, in that they promote intersectoral collaboration to achieve holistic development. By acknowledging the overt and nuanced convergences between poverty, inequality, poor health, and unemployment, and seeking to promote social and human development, the SDGs are a fundamental stepping stone to addressing social ills on a global scale.

2.3.1.2.   National Youth Policy 2020

The National Youth Policy (NYP) 2020 was launched in 2015 as the successor to the National Youth Policy 2009-2014. The NYP 2020 aims to transform the South African economy and society through its multiple interventions that are centred on youth development (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). Drawing on the 1997 White Paper for Social Development as an overarching framework, the National Youth Policy also acknowledges the high rates of youth unemployment in South Africa, and calls for inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in order to achieve youth development and so improve the social and economic dimensions of society (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). The National Youth Policy 2020 aims to fill in the gaps of its predecessor (NYP 2009-2014) through promoting social cohesion and striving for youth empowerment.

In support of the NYP are several other policies and strategies such as the National Youth Service Policy Framework, the Integrated Youth Development Strategy, and the National Youth Economic Empowerment Strategy (NYEES) and Implementation Plan. The National Youth Service Policy Framework speaks to the inclusion of youth in development efforts, with a focus on volunteerism. The Integrated Youth Development Strategy, on the other hand, is a governmental attempt to streamline efforts toward youth economic development. The NYEES, however, is the commitment of local institutions to promote the economic empowerment of South African youth. This includes institutions such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and their partners, who are pivotal to improving youth employment rates.

The NYP is commended for having a clear sense of the unique dimensions and perpetuating factors relating to youth unemployment in South Africa. For instance, it acknowledges the absence of a clear framework for youth employment, paired with poor coordination between stakeholders at various levels of government. Moreover, the policy outlines the shortcomings of the South African education system in adequately preparing the youth to enter the labour market (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). In recognition of the failures of its predecessor, the National Youth Policy 2009-2014, the NYP 2020 emphasises entrepreneurship and self-employment as a way of increasing employment. Thus, the NYP 2020 attempts to create clearer collaborative pathways with its supporting strategies and frameworks.

Despite these numerous policies and strategies, the NYP does not escape criticism. Some authors argue that the burden of the youth unemployment crisis is a direct result of the failure of both the apartheid government and the democratic government to plan for the youth of the future (Aliber, 2003; Brynard, 2011; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; National Treasury, 2011). Moreover, both the previous NYP and the current one do not clearly articulate the role of stakeholders in order to facilitate a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to addressing youth unemployment. The NYP also does not emphasise the plight of rural youth in South Africa. The discourse of entrepreneurship to some extent places the responsibility of economic empowerment on youth, rather than working to address the structural barriers that maintain high youth unemployment rates (Bhorat, 2009; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Kingdon & Knight, 2001).

Despite the various issues inherent in the youth employment policy landscape of South Africa, the array of policies and strategies communicate an effort from government to address youth unemployment and its intention to promote the youth economic empowerment agenda. These policy and strategic efforts also set the scene for the various agencies and organisations that work with youth at the grassroots level.

2.3.2. Economic and Labour Market Interventions

Since 1994, the South African government has implemented a range of economic and labour market interventions and policies in an effort to reduce the high unemployment rates. These include the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and, more recently, the Youth Employment Service, to name a few.

2.3.2.1. The Youth Employment Service (YES)

The Youth Employment Service (YES) was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in March 2018, in line with the Youth Employment Accord signed in 2014. Its aim is to reduce youth unemployment through intersectoral and interdepartmental collaboration between the state, the private sector, and social partners (Youth Employment Service, 2018). The initiative draws on existing policy and labour initiatives such as the national minimum wage, the BBBEE scorecard, and the Youth Employment Incentive to encourage corporates and small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises (SMME) to employ youth in the form of fulltime employment and internships, while facilitating access to employment for youth. While the initiative highlights its success cases, and boasts more than 5,000 youth placements since its launch, further research is needed to evaluate it (Youth Employment Service, 2018).

The YES programme embodies critical components of social development theory by promoting and encouraging partnerships (Youth Employment Service, 2018). 'Welfare pluralism', as a pillar of social development, refers to how the provision of social welfare is structured, and to the various roles and responsibilities undertaken by stakeholders to ensure that sustainable development is achieved (Patel, 2015). Similarly, 'collective action' refers to the active involvement and participation of departments and institutions to work cooperatively for service delivery (Lombard, 2007; Noyoo, 2015; Noyoo & Sobantu, 2019; Sobantu et al., 2019). YES brings together government and the commercial and informal sectors in an effort to reduce unemployment and to promote social and economic growth.

YES builds on existing policy, thus reducing the cost and time associated with researching and implementing new policies and structures to address unemployment. These incentivise corporates, support SMMEs, and benefit youth, with limited additional resources added to the existing labour market structure. On the other hand, the concerns and barriers associated with some of these policies present challenges for the YES service. For instance, the critiques of the youth wage subsidy and the youth employment incentive highlight the potential for corporates to use existing staff who meet the criteria to qualify for the incentives, rather than hire new youth, thus having no impact on youth unemployment (Bernstein, 2014; Development Bank of South Africa, 2011). The approach is also critiqued for failing to address the structural barriers that perpetuate youth unemployment, thus dealing with a symptom rather than with the root causes of unemployment.

2.3.2.2. The Expanded Public Works Programme

The predecessor of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the National Public Works programme, was developed as an approach to employment creation, and was closely linked to the Construction Industry Development Programme of the mid-1990s and the Community Based Public Works Programme (Altman et al., 2004; McCord, 2003).

The EPWP was launched in 2002 as a multi-sectoral government initiative aimed at facilitating labour absorption and income transfers to impoverished households in South Africa (Hemson, 2008). The EPWP also aims to produce high volumes of job opportunities in the short term (Altman et al., 2004). Specifically, the EPWP set a target of creating one million job opportunities over a five-year period.

The first phase of the EPWP recently concluded and, arguably, it has succeeded in three areas. First, the policy and programme is commended for providing close to one million employment opportunities, albeit in a narrow scope of employment sectors. Second, the allocation of resources to realise the policy was acknowledged and adhered to by relevant stakeholders. Third, the policy target for job creation for women and youth was met; however, the target for unemployed persons was not (Hemson, 2008). In addition, the Extended Public Works Programme facilitated the formalisation of community-based and kinship care, providing income to the predominantly female members of society who previously cared for the elderly and children without state support (Patel, Kaseke, & Midgley, 2012).

The EPWP is criticised for failing to provide meaningful skills development for unemployed persons, thus only serving as a short-term response to unemployment (Brynard, 2011). Moreover, the EPWP failed to achieve the minimum standards for the length of a job (Hemson, 2008). While a large number of employment opportunities have been achieved, the reality is that many are not guaranteed full-time and long-term employment; and this has negative implications for income, poverty, and wellbeing.

The Public Works Programmes (PWPs) are critiqued for failing to address the structural factors underlying unemployment and poverty. Nevertheless, they are a step in the right direction in addressing the high rates of unemployment among South African youth.

2.3.2.3. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act

The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 is an example of an economic policy developed in an attempt to respond to high unemployment rates in South Africa. The BBBEE strategy, which was later developed into the Act, sought to "promote the meaningful participation of Black people in the economy by increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills

training", as stated in the objectives of the Act (Republic of South Africa, 2014). The implementation of the Act, in addition to the economic activities it promoted, resulted in the creation of jobs, but not enough to have a significant impact on unemployment rates (Brynard, 2011). BBBEE is also criticised for mainly achieving share transfers that have predominantly landed in the pockets of prominent Black individuals with access to political networks (Tangri & Southall, 2008); and the Act is said to fall short of empowering the Black South Africans it initially set out to empower (Brynard, 2011). Nevertheless, the Act does make attempts at redress in a context with a history of significant racial inequality in conjunction with a population that is majority Black – i.e., historically disadvantaged – all of which presents a myriad of challenges for developing effective policy responses to unemployment.

BBEEE serves as an example of policy attempts to address unemployment in South Africa as well as its implications for job creation endeavours in a context with unique social, economic, and political conditions. It is important to realise that policies and laws are not enough, especially when they locate and explain unemployment as rooted in a single cause – as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act does, which is driven by and focuses on the economy (and vested political interests), while social dimensions are an afterthought. Consequently, greater interaction and coordination is required between stakeholders such as Statistics South Africa, policy makers, and independent researchers, as well as various branches of government (Brynard, 2011).

An over-emphasis on economic theories undermines the lived experience of persons affected by poverty and inequality, thus prioritising the economy over the individual. This clearly contradicts the social development tenet of simultaneous social and economic development. Moreover, economic theories rely on macro-level interventions that are underpinned by a top-down approach, which does not always bring positive improvements for citizens, as in the case of 'jobless growth' in South Africa, where a 2.3% growth in GDP occurred, but 800 000 jobs were lost in the same period (Aliber, 2003, p. 476). This top-down approach aligns with the work of Freire (2012), in that macro-economic policies maintain power in the hands of policy-makers and economists who develop policies and interventions for 'the poor' and the disenfranchised, who are regarded as passive recipients. In line with social development, Freire argued for cooperation and collaboration to promote equality and economic freedom – an aspect that economic policy neglects (Freire, Ramos, & Macedo, 2000). This illustrates the potentially negative outcomes of economic theories of poverty for the lived experience of people.

Macro-economic policies often centre on reducing public expenditure and promoting economic growth, while human development remains an after-thought. But poverty cannot be effectively

addressed without economy-driven interventions, as income remains a significant mediator of poverty. However, economic approaches in isolation are not enough: they simply undermine the social dimensions of development, which education-oriented interventions begin to address.

2.3.3. Education, Skills-development, and Training interventions

A critical area that is argued partly to perpetuate high youth unemployment rates is that of education and training. The notion of NEET youth further emphasises the links between education and training on the one hand, and youth unemployment on the other. Various challenges are found in the basic, further, and higher education sectors of South Africa. Moreover, the vocational training arena faces its own share of challenges, which centre on the poor quality of education and a mismatch in the skills taught by the education system versus those required by the South African labour market.

2.3.3.1. Basic education and higher education in South Africa

The link between education and employment is well-documented both internationally and in the context of South Africa. Pre-1994, the youth of South Africa played a significant role in the fight for liberation; but that struggle had negative implications for their personal educational prospects. Their active role in politics and social action, particularly for the vast majority who remained in South Africa, resulted in a generation with deficiencies in training and education (Everatt & Sisulu, in Lam et al., 2008; Bhorat, 2009; Liebbrandt et al., 2010; Spaull, 2013). Similarly, in contemporary South Africa youth unemployment is attributed to inadequate education, which stems from both attaining low levels of education and the poor quality of that education (Graham et al., 2017; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Spaull, 2015). A fundamental contributor to the high youth unemployment rates in South Africa is the mismatch between the skills possessed by youth and the demands of the labour market (Brynard, 2011; Graham et al., 2017; Lam, 2014; Spaull, 2013).

Some authors argue that lower levels of education act as a barrier to securing employment. This is largely due to the labour market's demand for educated, skilled, and experienced youth (Kingdon & Knight, 2000; van Aardt, 2012; Yu, 2013).
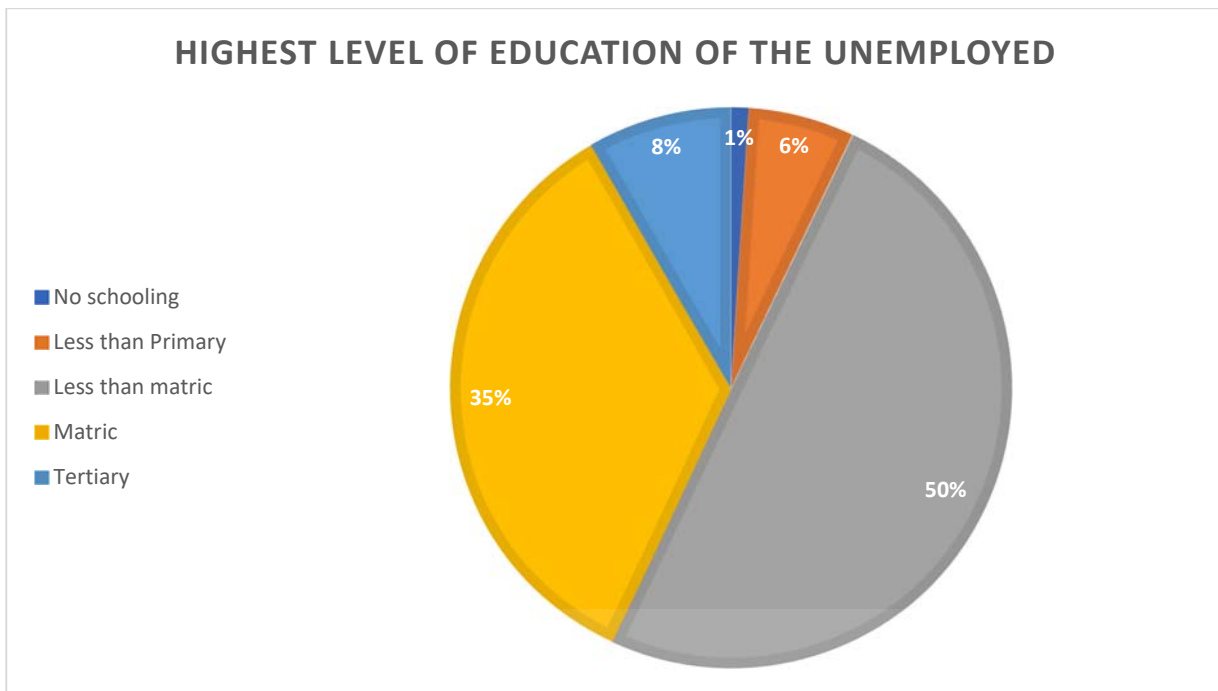
Figure 6: Highest level of education of the unemployed, Quarter 1: 2018 (Own analysis)

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 1 (2018), 50% of unemployed persons in South Africa do not possess a matric qualification, reiterating the link between levels of education and employability (Statistics South Africa, 2018). However, statistics also highlight high levels of unemployment for those who do have a matric, at 35% (Statistics South Africa, 2018, p. 42). This is shown in Figure 6 above. This raises the argument about the value of the matric certification in a skills- and experience-driven economy. Employers are said to have little faith in graduates of the matric system, creating an access barrier to unemployed youth (Bhorat, 2012; Graham et al., 2017). Arguments about the standardisation of education also emerge: for many youth who have completed their basic education and acquired post-matric qualifications, these qualifications were obtained at institutions that employers did not recognise, creating further barriers to employment (Graham et al., 2017; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Kraak, 2004).

Research highlights that, despite the increased expenditure on education since the end of apartheid, unemployment rates remain high. However, the current youth cohort have higher levels of education than many adults in the labour market, including those who are unemployed (Liebbrandt et al., 2010; Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008). In light of this, it can be said that the unemployed in South Africa today are more educated than in any other period in South African history.

In light of the link between low levels of education and high unemployment rates, it is worth reflecting on the reasons behind the high attrition rates. According to the 2005 Labour Force Survey, about 42% of African youth left school early in order to find employment (Statistics SA, 2005, p. x). However, the reasons behind their exit from schooling differ. According to the World Bank (2006), youth

discontinue their studies because many cannot afford to continue, while some of those who are able to secure funding for schooling choose to enter the labour market in an attempt to supplement family income. This is supported by the findings of Hall and Wright (2010, as cited in Altman, Mokomane, & Wright, 2014, p. 348) that in 2008, 55% of children lived in households with no adults working in formal employment. Moreover, research suggests that financial reasons were identified as the main reason for youth dropping out of school and university (Letseka, Cosser, Breier & Visser, 2010). As such, a limited number of young people have access to and are able to complete tertiary education (Graham et al., 2017; South African Labour & Development Research Unit, 2016; Weir-Smith, 2014).

With the high levels of unemployment among youth, and their poor prospects of securing employment, one could assume that education and training ought to be the more logical approach to addressing the challenge. However, Lam et al. (2008) argue that the youth question the value of their skills and training and the timing of their qualification in relation to the demands of the labour market. Moreover, youth believe that the time frame between identifying the gap in the market versus the time that youth graduate is uncoordinated, thus decreasing their employability. Thus youth opt to leave school early. These high drop-out rates perpetuate the high number of under-skilled young people competing in a labour market that values both education and work experience.

The second barrier to employment in the area of education is related to the poor quality of the education available in the basic education system of South Africa (Development Bank of South Africa, 2011; Liebbrandt, Finn & Woolard, 2012; Spaull, 2015). Despite curriculum reform over the past 24 years of democracy, the changes have largely been underpinned by attempts at redress, social justice, and transformation rather than improving the quality and content of the system (Reddy, Juan & Meyiwa, 2013). Research points to low learner performance in national assessments such as the Systemic Evaluation and Annual National Assessment (ANA), which focus on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, suggesting a poor overall performance by the South African education system. This is due in part to the shortages in skilled educators, thus compromising the quality of teaching provided in South African schools (Graham et al., 2017; Reddy, Juan & Meyiwa, 2013; Spaull, 2013, 2015). The high number of functionally illiterate pupils in the education system thus negatively impacts their employability.

Numerous authors place a significant emphasis on strengthening the education, skills, and training available to South African youth as a crucial component in improving unemployment rates (Allais, 2012; Hemson, 2008; Letseka, Cosser, Breier & Visser, 2010). Other recommendations include continued professional teacher development, restructuring of the education system, curriculum

transformation tailored to the South African context, increased focus on the indigenisation of education, and a continued focus on the development of educational infrastructure.

2.3.3.2. Vocational Education and Training

In the South African Development Community (SADC) region, a number of countries – including South Africa, Malawi, Botswana and Namibia – have developed technical and vocational educational and training (TVET) policy frameworks. These are reflected through a range of national development plans, poverty alleviation strategies, and employment strategies (Southern African Development Community, 2011).

Post-1994, the South African government attempted to transform the skills arena by establishing Industry Training Boards, and dividing the field of training and education between the Ministries of Labour and Education (Spaull, 2013). The first National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was introduced, and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established (Allais, 2012; Kraak, 2004). More recently, international organisations such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the African Union (AU), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) published reports that sought to promote the skills development and vocational training agenda. These included the Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), and the Strategic Framework and Programme of Action for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Southern African Region (2011). This renewed interest in TVET has been spurred in part by the link between vocational training and development (McGrath, 2012).

Some of the objectives of the SETAs are to solicit and source funding through the National Skills Fund to ensure that training is available in National Youth Service projects, and to ensure the availability of training and accreditation and of accreditors (National Youth Commission, n.d). While the SETAs and their guiding framework are said to be contributing generally to skills development and training, they are criticised for undertaking an overly ambitious mandate, failing to prioritise objectives (which in turn comprises the quality of skills and training provided), and needing to improve accountability (Marock, Harrison-Train, Soobrayan & Gunthorpe, 2008).

Statistically speaking, it would appear that the approach to skills development, vocational training, and the establishment of learning opportunities has had limited impact on unemployment rates. This aligns with a body of literature developed between the mid-1960s and the 1980s that suggested that vocation education and training was ineffective, largely inefficient, and had little effect on development (Foster, 1965; Heyneman, 1985; McGrath, 2012; Psacharopoulos, 1985). The figures

for the years 2011/12 to 2012/13 suggest that three of the four programmes have a higher number of participants who have obtained certification but remain unemployed. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of employment created across four SETA programmes.

	Learnerships	Bursaries	Skills Programmes	Internships
■ Employed	24006	2272	139590	0
■ Unemployed	42283	2918	34428	3073
■ Total	66289	5190	174018	3073

Categories of SETA programmes

■ Employed   ■ Unemployed   ■ Total
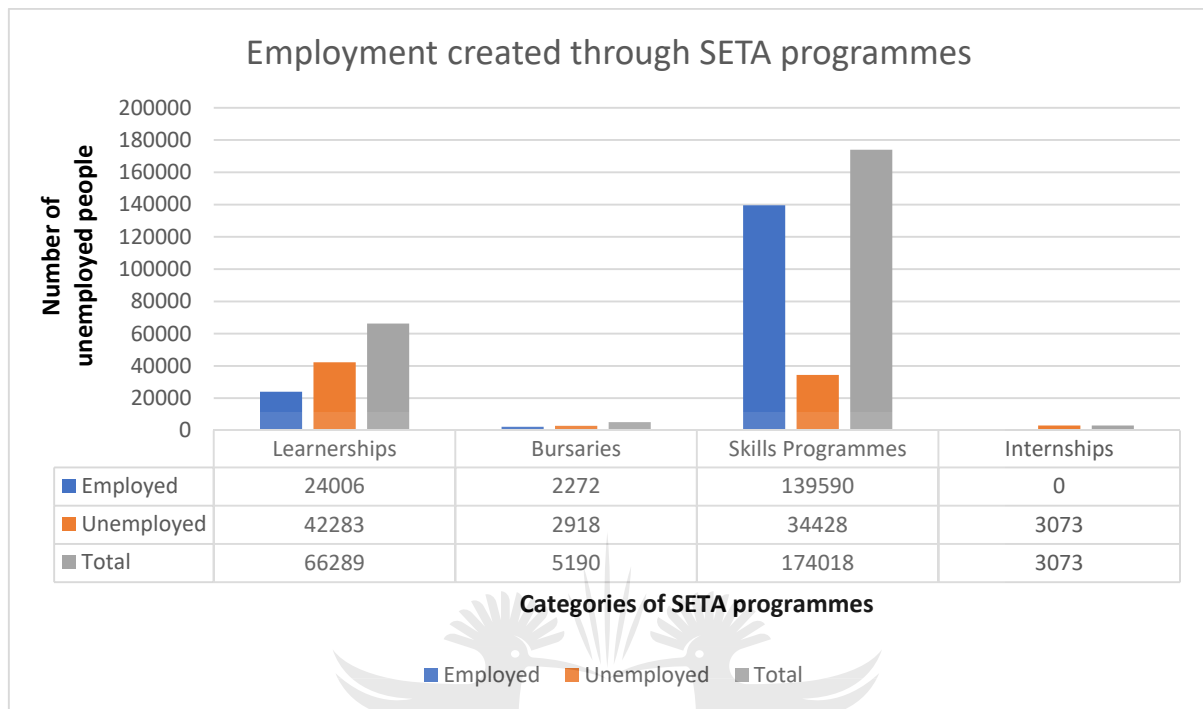
Figure 7 SETA Skills Development Programmes 2011/12-2012/13

On the other hand, other authors argue that the link between TVET and development is largely misunderstood due to the outdated understanding of development that is used, which centres on productivist assumptions. Such assumptions establish a linear relationship between training, skills, productivity, and employment (McGrath, 2012). This is linked to the largely economic understanding of development, which negates factors such as the human and social dimensions of development (Midgley, 1995; Noyoo, 2015; Sen, 1999; Patel, 2015). Moreover, these authors argue that, in this perspective, work and employment are understood in an essentialist sense, and it over-emphasises skills training and education as a commodity that is developed to respond to labour market demand (Allais, 2012; Iverson & Stephens, 2008; McGrath, 2012).

This view of work is criticised as being too output-focused, having a short-term orientation, and placing significant emphasis on the formal learning provided by educational institutions. Some overlap is evident in these two views. Some authors, while supportive of the notion of technical and vocational training, remain concerned with the content of these programmes. Thus they argue that, ultimately, TVET should stimulate human development by promoting knowledge generation and innovation and increasing the fulfilment of students while aligning with the needs of the labour market (Iverson & Stephens, 2008; Marock, 2011). This resonates with the values of social development and

the work of Sen (1999), which argue in favour of the freedom to explore, build on capabilities, and pursue opportunities. However, the current structure of the TVET system, and of the education system in general, stifles capability and limits opportunities. Sen argues that economic growth and access to goods and services are necessary for human development (Clark, 2005). As with the basic education system, greater attention needs to be paid to strengthening the structure and content of the TVET system in order to improve synergy between the training arena and the labour market.

Overall, the quality of the education system is inferior, as it does not prepare South African youth for the labour market. The high enrolment rates, paired with significant attrition rates and poor quality education for many who are fortunate enough to matriculate, are critical challenges that contribute to high unemployment rates. The TVET system is also largely output-focused in orientation, and lacks the social consciousness that is integral to human, social, and economic development.

2.2.4. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has emerged as an alternative approach to addressing the growing rate of youth unemployment in South Africa. It remains critical in South Africa, given the number of youth in a job scarce economy (Gwija, Eke & Iwu, 2014; Khumalo & Mutobola, 2014). Over the past decade, several economic policies have emerged to promote this route further, while research has endeavoured to explore avenues for promoting the inclusion of entrepreneurship in basic education. However, the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development is still an area of contestation (Kew, 2016). While the number of SMMEs decreased during 2017, they still account for 55-65% of economy-wide employment (SEDA, 2018). Another key finding is the increase in the number of survivalist businesses, which nonetheless highlight the significant role of SMMEs in establishing an inclusive economy remains crucial.

It is evident that government has placed a significant emphasis on entrepreneurship, as seen in the numerous organisations and strategies that have emerged over the past decade. These include the National Empowerment Fund, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa, the Small Enterprise Finance Agency, the Youth Development Agency, the National Development Policy, and more recently the Department of Small Business Development. These organisations, among other reasons, seek to improve funding, because it is suggested that a fundamental barrier to entrepreneurial activity is the lack of access to financial support (Khumalo & Mutobola, 2014). However, other findings indicate that youth feel that a lack of skills, inadequate business acumen, and insufficient support are barriers to entrepreneurial aspirations (Herrington, Kew & Kew, 2015; FNB, 2010; Kew, 2016). In light of this, the aforementioned strategies and organisations work to

address these barriers through various policies and activities that seek to provide access to financial resources, skills and training, and mentorship, among others.

An area of tension in the early literature about entrepreneurship in South Africa relates to the negative impact of entrepreneurship on both the economy and individuals. One body of literature argues that overinvestment by entrepreneurs who later fail to sustain their businesses has negative implications for local and national economies, particularly if they are part of vulnerable populations such as youth and women (Gwija, Eke & Iwu, 2014). This is due to the detrimental effects of the loss, given their low asset base, limited access to capital, and pre-existing vulnerability (De Meza & Webb, 1987; FNB, 2010). On the other hand, proponents of entrepreneurship argue that small business can create job opportunities, drive innovation, promote competition, and stimulate economic growth (Kew, 2016; Herrington, Kew & Kew, 2015; Kantor, 2017). While both arguments have merit, a pivotal determinant remains the views of youth about entrepreneurship.

A subset of the literature argues that youth desire a degree of self-sustenance, but lack the necessary training and education (Sowole, Hogue & Adeyeye, 2018). This is supported by findings that indicate that, while 65% of young people were interested in entrepreneurship, less than 10% were planning to pursue their business aspirations actively in 2010 (Kew, 2016). Numerous factors influence the decision to start a business. As highlighted repeatedly, the lack of relevant skills and knowledge, in addition to limited access to financial support, is critical. Moreover, statistical evidence suggests that a significant number of small business owners in South Africa lack adequate training and education (FNB, 2010; Gwija, Eke & Iwu, 2014; Hewitt, 2011; Khumalo & Mutobola, 2014). In terms of SMME owners by group, persons who have not completed high school account for 60% (Bureau for Economic Research, 2016, p. 24). Moreover, the number of SMMEs owned by persons with no schooling shows the greatest amount of growth between 2016 and 2017. This gap in education, in terms of both basic education and business-related skills and training, is arguably linked to the significant number of SMMEs with little to no growth potential (Ligthelm, 2008).

Critiques of the entrepreneurship discourse relate to its failure to address structural barriers to employment and economic growth. Moreover, the entrepreneurship discourse places the burden of economic development on individuals and their agency, which in turn undermines the role of the state and the private sector in facilitating a strong economy and increasing avenues for sustainable livelihoods (Berner & Phillips, 2005; Holscher, 2008). Nevertheless, entrepreneurship and small business development remain a primary strategy in the fight to reduce unemployment and youth unemployment in South Africa.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: Social Development

'Social development' refers to a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral approach promoted by the United Nations and centred on enhancing capabilities and assets while facilitating empowerment and strengths-based approaches. According to Midgley (1995, p. 25) social development is defined as "a process of planned change designed to promote people's welfare in conjunction with a comprehensive process of economic development". As such, social development seeks to actualise the social and economic rights of citizens through services and processes of empowerment (Lombard, 2008). Social development argues for the enhancement of human capacity and the opportunities available to people, drawing on person-centred, rights-based, and empowerment approaches (Midgley, 2014; Noyoo, 2015). Moreover, social development regards unemployment as a socio-economic and political status or condition that prevents human potential from being maximised and realised. The approach also calls for coordinated efforts from various facets of society (Midgley, 1995; Patel, 2015; Payne, 2005). Unemployment relates to various aspects of social and economic life, and is arguably affected by, and has implications for, various branches of society, such as policy and legislation, the economy, and family life. A social development framework also allows for the acknowledgement of micro-level aspects such as the psychological processes linked to unemployment. As highlighted in the definitions of unemployment, the 'non-searching unemployment' status implies a loss of hope, suggesting the negative implications that unemployment has on wellbeing. This contrasts significantly with economic perspectives, which emphasise and are concerned with increased profits, lowered costs to the national economy, and strengthening the GDP.

South Africa is commended globally for being one of very few countries to have embraced the social development approach and incorporated it into policy. This is most evident in the White Paper for Social Welfare, which documents the ideological shift towards a developmental welfare approach (Weyers, 2011; Patel, 2005). The success of the social development approach in addressing poverty through social security is worth noting. Issues of poverty, hunger, access to infrastructure, and schooling have all been improved as a result of access to social security such as the child support grant and the disability grant. However, inequality and levels of poverty have not been addressed (Lombard, 2008). The adoption of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 highlighted social and economic development as its primary focus, which connoted the government's acknowledgement of the realities created as a result of apartheid in terms of housing, unemployment, education, and healthcare. However, the shift to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) framework in 1996 communicated the realisation of the economic and political legacy of apartheid and its impact on the availability of state resources in order to address the aforementioned pressing

social needs of South African citizens (Lombard, 2008). Nevertheless, despite fiscal constraints, progress is evident.

Social development has also succeeded to some extent in the area of income generation. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 was developed in an attempt to address the high unemployment of Black persons in particular, predominantly stemming from systemic barriers to accessing employment that had been designed by the apartheid state. The BBBEE strategy, which seeks to "promote the meaningful participation of Black people in the economy by increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training", as stated in the objectives of the Act (Republic of South Africa, 2014), is underpinned by the social development principles of empowerment and capacity-building. The Act, and by extension, the economic activities it seeks to promote, resulted in the creation of jobs for Black South Africans. However, these were not enough to decrease the unemployment statistics significantly (Brynard, 2011). The Act is also critiqued for its failure to empower the minority group it claimed to support. Instead it only succeeded in facilitating share transfers that landed in the pockets of prominent Black individuals with access to political networks (Tangri & Southall, 2008). Nevertheless, BBBEE was a step towards redress in the corporate and private sectors, creating some employment and facilitating the process of empowerment.

While its impact at grassroots level is limited, the shift towards a social development approach and its marrying together of social welfare and economic policies has yielded some positive results for the economy. Notable GDP growth occurred between 2000 and 2008 (Patel, 2015). The apartheid state left a legacy of poverty, unemployment, racism, and oppressive structures that impact on and intertwine with a plethora of other social issues. The adoption of social development in South Africa's newly established democracy – despite the fiscal constraints and the fragmented social and political climate – was a brave and ambitious undertaking. As critiqued above, social development fails critically to engage structures and unequal sources of power, but instead works within these systems. While social development provides a vehicle for the economic and social development of citizens despite the economic challenges, these systems do need to be engaged in order for social development goals truly to be realised. The high levels of inequality in South Africa reflect the extent of structural oppression and discrimination, which inherently limit the maximisation of potential and true empowerment. And while the outcomes of these efforts are by no means negligible, given the real-life impact they have on the lived experience of individuals and communities, these outcomes still fall short in the greater scheme of work to be done.

Social development perspectives acknowledge the need for simultaneous social and economic development, as social development assumes a stable and strong economy to be effectively implemented (Holscher, 2008). However, this is not the case for South Africa, which questions the goodness of fit of the social development perspective. Moreover, social development is critiqued as being an expensive approach due to its need for material and human resources. Therefore, in the South African context, a social development approach is said to be theoretical, as various policies claiming to be developmental are in reality driven by capitalism and free markets (Gray, 2010). Social development practice in South Africa is also said to disempower individuals and communities due to the use of top-down approaches and interventions such as BBBEE and NPWP (Holscher, 2008). In addition, social development speaks to the enlargement of human capabilities; yet many employment-focused interventions provide limited and meaningless training opportunities in the form of income-generating projects, self-help projects, and entrepreneurship projects. These interventions, while rooted in social development, do little in terms of creating meaningful employment, as they simply shift individuals from 'unemployment' status into 'vulnerable employment' status – a theoretical difference with little impact on the lived reality of people.

While the activities of social development are largely agreed upon, no consensus has been reached on a definition of social development, which gives rise to one of the critiques of the approach. It is argued that the lack of a clear theoretical base, and the lack of clarity and coherence within social development theory and practice, undermine the goals the approach seeks to achieve, and result in sometimes uncoordinated efforts that stem from conflicting understandings of how the approach ought to be implemented (Midgley, 2006). Due its multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral nature, the lack of shared meaning within the approach creates room for mismatched prioritisation, especially in contexts where sectors compete for resources, such as in the case of South Africa.

Moreover, the applicability of social development across levels of society has been the subject of critique. The approach fails to prescribe models of action, which arguably impedes the actualisation of social development objectives: depending on the understanding of the approach, action is often centred on a single level of society – e.g., the level of policy or of the community – as opposed to simultaneous multi-level interventions (Patel, 2015). This in part links to a further criticism of the approach, particularly in the South African context, that the discourse is contradictory. On the one hand, the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) emphasises the pertinent role of the state – in partnership with non-governmental organisations – in achieving social development, and the need for the investment of resources, indicating an acknowledgement of the structural barriers faced by individuals, households, and communities. On the other hand, however, significant emphasis is placed on individuals and communities using their own agency, developing resilience to structural

barriers, and ultimately taking responsibility for their social realities (Gray, 2010). This ignores the effects of the apartheid legacy and its impact on the poverty, unemployment, and structural oppression that inhibits millions of citizens from actualising their potential and accessing the resources needed to lead fulfilling and dignified lives. This contradiction within the policy confuses the role that the state claims in promoting social development, as evident through the juxtaposition of language about 'state responsibility' with the emphasis on self-reliance, responsibility, and internal resources.

Social development is also challenged for its failure to engage critically with the structures of society. Social development simply conforms to the structures of society, with little regard for changing the power dynamics that give rise to the social and economic challenges it seeks to address (Payne, 2005). The aforementioned self-reliance discourse that is prevalent within the social development literature and policy in South Africa, as well as the heavy reliance on self-upliftment approaches to poverty and inequality, favour the interests of the elite, maintaining their status and essentially shifting the blame on to the poor for their unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy (Holscher, 2008). As opposed to engaging with these power dynamics, social development practitioners 'empower' these unemployed, poor, and uneducated masses, drawing on their already scarce household and community resources.

The notion of disempowered individuals and communities having endless potential and the ability to escape poverty, provided that they participate and pool resources to engage in activities that help them unleash creative solutions to their social problems, is valuable, and truly embraces the strengths-based approach. However, it simultaneously ignores the severity of the inequalities stemming from the historical legacy of apartheid, as well as the power of social class in maintaining issues such as poverty (Berner & Phillips, 2005). Moreover, the focus on microfinance and self-help initiatives in the absence of a critical engagement with social, political, and economic macrostructures is futile. While these activities enhance capabilities and provide opportunities, their impact is microscopic in the greater scheme of the power and inequality agenda. This interplay significantly mirrors the residual approach, which raises the question: Is social development the cosmetically enhanced version of the residual approach?

2.4. Conclusion

The area of unemployment and youth unemployment is well-documented in the literature. However, with the growing youth unemployment rates in South Africa, and the gaps that exist in the literature, the area of youth unemployment remains a critical research area. Employment plays a critical role in the lives of individuals, beyond the economic gain that individuals experience. While there are various definitions of unemployment, at the core of the unemployment phenomenon is the detrimental

impact it has on individuals, communities, and society. The literature has documented various factors that have contributed to the issue of youth unemployment, such as the global recession in 2008, the unique historical legacy of South Africa, and shortcomings in the education system. This has resulted in the complex socio-economic and political issues that are evident in South African society today.

Various stakeholders have made an effort to identify and respond to the perpetuators of youth unemployment. Policy has helped to emphasise the severity of youth unemployment, and the urgency with which it ought to be regarded, as is evident in the Sustainable Development Goals and The National Development Plan. Furthermore, interventions centred on the economic and labour market dimensions of the youth unemployment issue have sought to facilitate access to the labour market. This is evident through the Expanded Public Works Programme, entrepreneurship skills and training, and the efforts of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment policy. Similarly, the impact of the education system, past and present, is acknowledged as a perpetuating factor that leaves great room for improvement so as to improve the employability of youth. Overall, while some progress is noted as a result of these policies and strategies, these interventions are critiqued for falling short in effecting sustainable, widespread, and meaningful employment for youth.

Overarching all policy and practice in South Africa is social development, which seeks to maximise human potential while emphasising both social and economic development as mutual components of human development. Consequently, through the lens of social development, the detrimental nature of youth unemployment for the social, personal, economic, and developmental dimensions of society is recognised. At the same time, social development does not escape criticism. Its suitability for the South African context is questioned, given that the framework is inefficient and fails to challenge the systemic and structural perpetuators of youth unemployment.

It is evident that youth unemployment is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that has plagued South Africa since colonial rule. Various stakeholders have attempted to address dimensions of youth unemployment with limited success. Nevertheless, efforts continue to emerge in the forms of policy and practice. As highlighted, the limited literature on the subjective experiences of youth seeking employment forms the basis for this study. The next chapter outlines the methodology used to gain insight into the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the use of a qualitative and exploratory research design, the study population and sampling method, the data collection approach (interviews and a focus group), and the data collection instrument (a semi-structured interview schedule). This chapter will also detail the data analysis methods used. Lastly, this chapter will review the ethical considerations and limitations of this research study.

3.2. Research Goal and Objectives

Youth unemployment has been researched extensively in South Africa; but not much has been written about the experiences of youth with relation to job-seeking, or about the role of youth development organisations in preparing and supporting youth. Therefore, this study explored the following research question: ***What are the experiences of youth aged 15-24 who are unemployed, have enrolled in a programme at a youth development agency, and have engaged in the process of seeking employment?*** The student assumed that unemployed youth who are enrolled in a youth development programme have a more positive experience of job-seeking due to the guidance, support, and preparation they may have received from the programme.

As a result, the goal of this study was to explore the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth who are participants in a youth development programme in Johannesburg. In attempting to answer this research question, the following research objectives were established:

a.   To describe the job-seeking activities undertaken by unemployed youth.

b.   To explore the job-seeking challenges experienced by unemployed youth.

c.   To describe the positive experiences of job-seeking on the part of unemployed youth.

d.   To develop recommendations for the youth development programme.

3.3.   Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach and an exploratory design. A qualitative research approach is defined as one that is concerned with describing and understanding complex phenomena, drawing on inductive reasoning (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research seeks to emphasise the perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making processes of those who are considered insiders to the phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). In this way, the element of subjectivity is integral to qualitative research. This study endeavoured to explore the subjective experiences of job-seeking of the youth who are enrolled in a youth development programme. These experiences were best captured through a qualitative research approach, to highlight the uniqueness and subjectivity of participants' experiences (Greeff, 2011).

This study also draws on an exploratory research design. Exploratory designs are used for exploring research problems in which there are few prior studies (Fouche & Schurink, 2013), as well as research questions that are related to emerging phenomena. Exploratory research also facilitates a process in which the field of study can be taken in a new direction (Schutt, 2012). With regard to the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth, an extensive literature has been written on unemployment and youth unemployment in the context of South Africa. Similarly, research has been conducted on job-seeking, although to a lesser extent. However, the role of youth development programmes in the job-seeking experiences of youth is a somewhat under-researched area in unemployment research in South Africa. Thus an exploratory research design facilitates an inquiry into the subjective job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth in light of their exposure to a youth development programme.

3.4.   Study Population and Sampling Strategy

3.4.1.   Population

The study population for this study is persons aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) and are enrolled in one or more programmes offered by a youth development organisation. Catalyst is a pilot programme run by a non-profit youth development programme located in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. It is a six-month programme that targets youth aged 18-35, and provides training in enterprise development and personal development to promote youth who are entering employment, training, or education, or establishing enterprises. The programme is structured as a one-week block camp at the beginning, followed by monthly workshop days over the remaining five months of the programme. In the South African context, the highest rates of unemployment in the youth category

are found in the 15-24 year-old cohort (Statistics South Africa, 2015) – hence the use of participants in that age group. Gauteng Province has the highest number of NEET individuals across age groups, including about 660 000 individuals aged 15-24 in 2016 (DHET, 2017). In addition, the rate of NEET youth in the 15-24 age cohort for 2016 reflects more females than males, at 40.4% percent for males with matric and 44.1% for females with matric (DHET, 2017). Thus, it was anticipated that the majority of the recruited participants would be female. Furthermore, the literature indicates that the NEET rate increases for persons whose education level is below matric (Statistics South Africa, 2016). However, the participants were recruited from a programme that only permits the enrolment of persons who have a matric certificate.

3.4.2.   Sampling method and sample

Of these youth, a sample of twelve participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. 'Sampling' refers to the process of selecting research respondents or other data sources that will be involved in the research (Whittaker, 2009). 'Non-probability sampling' refers to a sampling method in which the population size is unknown, and so the odds of selecting a particular individual or element of the population are unknown and unequal (Strydom & Delport, 2013). Non-probability sampling is considered less structured, and relies on the discretion of the researcher in relation to the field of study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Non-probability sampling is relevant and useful to qualitative research, in that it allows for the deliberate selection of a sample in which the specific process being explored is most likely to be found; probability sampling does not facilitate this. Nevertheless, while non-probability sampling is not concerned with representativeness, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.370) argue that "to study the particular is to study the universal". This suggests that, to some extent, the intentional selection of a sample allows for the reader to generalise subjectively. Non-probability sampling was useful in this study because the study population, as described by Strydom and Delport (2013), has distinctive characteristics that are unique to the research question and that are unevenly distributed across the general population. For example: age, employment status, and enrolment in a youth development programme are unique to a specific sub-group in the NEET population, thus requiring the use of non-probability sampling.

Similarly, purposive sampling was used, which also drew on the criteria developed in order to select the participants. Purposive sampling is defined as a method that selects participants according to criteria developed by the researcher with reference to characteristics that serve the purpose of the study best (Strydom & Delport, 2013). Purposive sampling is useful in qualitative research, in that the sites of inquiry and the sample can purposefully facilitate understanding of the research problem. The criteria used in this study were that participants were:

- Aged 18-25

- Enrolled in the Catalyst programme within the previous six months

- Not enrolled in training or education (defined as a public or private university or college)

- Unemployed

- Willing to participate

The employment criterion ruled out the majority of the recruited participants, as they were all engaged in some form of income-generating activity, either in formal or informal jobs or in entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the programme from which the youth were recruited was a pilot study, which limited the study population further. Thus, this criterion was removed. With regard to the 'enrolment in training and education' criterion, some of the participants were enrolled in TVET programmes at the time of the interview, but were not in education at the time they were engaged in the Catalyst programme. Given the limited number of participants available, the student opted to include these participants.

The use of purposive sampling was thought to be relevant to and appropriate for this research study, as the research focused on the experiences of a very specific sub-group in the NEET population, allowing this sub-group to be purposefully selected.

As highlighted above with regard to the non-probability sample, a key strength of purposive sampling is that it tends to be representative of the larger population (Babbie & Mouton, 2010) – in this case, 15-24-year-old NEET youth in Gauteng. On the other hand, a criticism of purposive sampling is that a slight variation in a population may cause a deviation in the research results (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). For instance, if a sample of unemployed youth who have not participated in a youth development programme were to be used, the results might differ. Nevertheless, given the nature of qualitative research and its emphasis on the subjective perspective, there is a concern about ensuring the generalisability of the findings.

As alluded to above, the total population of 12 youth who were not employed, in education, or in training and were enrolled in the Catalyst programme were selected for this study. The selection of twelve participants was to allow for diversity and richness in the data. The literature highlights that, in qualitative research, the sample size is determined by the nature and purpose of the inquiry, the credibility of the site and the sample, and the resources and time available (Patton, 2002). Moreover, Sarantakos (as cited in De Vos et al., 2011) argues that qualitative research centres on collecting saturated and rich data in a resource-efficient manner. In order to gain access to the participants, the student approached the director of the youth development programme to select 12 unemployed youth, based on criteria such as their willingness to participate, self-reported evidence of job-seeking activities (e.g., internet/media searches and details of handing in curriculum vitae (CVs) at prospective places of

employment), and confirmed participation in the programme. Criteria such as evidence of job-seeking are inherent bi-products of the programme, which seeks to equip youth with job-seeking skills and tools, thus adding legitimacy to the participants' claims about their experience in seeking employment. The six-month enrolment criterion was included, based on the assumption that the participant would have had sufficient time to learn about and engage in some form of structured job-seeking activity; and the Catalyst programme is six months long. The twelve participants were divided into two groups and allocated to participate in either a focus group or a face-to-face interview. The allocation into these two groups was random. The student arranged the participants' names in alphabetical order, and selected the first six participants for interviews and the remaining six for the focus group.

3.5. Data Collection Method and Tool

3.5.1. Data Collection Method

The data in this study was collected in two phases: the interview phase, and the focus group phase. The first phase comprised six 60-minute, in-depth face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted prior to the focus group to gain preliminary information and to establish an understanding of the experiences of youth, which were then triangulated and expanded upon in the focus group discussions. An interview is defined as a social interaction created with the intention of facilitating an exchange of information, influenced by the interviewer's skill and ability to manage the process (Greeff, 2011). "[S]emi-structured interviews allow researchers to develop in depth accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals" (Cousin, 2009, p. 79). Interviews often elicit a range of perspectives, both contrasting and similar in nature, allowing the researcher and the participant to collaborate in the process of making meaning (DePoy & Gilson, as cited in Greeff, 2011). In this way, the research interview can be understood as a conversation that facilitates the researcher's understanding of the world from the perspective of the participant. A shortcoming of the interview method is its reliance on the researcher as pivotal (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Cousin, 2009). Interviews rely on the skill and abilities of the interviewer to create an interview situation that effectively elicits in-depth information from the participant (Greeff, 2011). Nevertheless, the interview method allows the researcher and the participant to collaborate in creating knowledge and making meaning of a lived reality. Interviews also allow the researcher to engage with the field of study and with the participant as an expert of their lived reality (Cozby, 2009). In light of this, the student chose interviews to collect and generate the data.

The second phase of the data collection comprised a focus group discussion. The six remaining participants took part in a 120-minute-long focus group facilitated by the student. 'Focus group' refers to the data collection technique in which data is collected through a group interaction in an environment perceived as safe to share, on a topic selected by the researcher (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups are defined as discussions between individuals with common characteristics that facilitate the exploration of perspectives and understandings (Greeff, 2011). While focus groups can be costly, and are similar to one-on-one interviews, they rely extensively on the skills and ability of the facilitator. Nevertheless, focus groups allow for the researcher to engage the emotional processes that individual interviews can sometimes overlook. Moreover, focus groups allow the researcher and participants to draw comparisons and highlight similarities in perspectives and experiences (Cozby, 2009).

The focus group was intended to add further diversity and richness to the data. It was recorded using both a cell phone and a portable computer. The discussion guide used in the focus group made use of some of the same questions from the individual face-to-face interviews conducted in the first phase, with additional questions to explore further the responses that emerged from the interviews, which were converted into broader questions so as to facilitate discussion. The focus group served to triangulate the data and to avoid purely idiosyncratic responses from the individual interviews with the youth (Morgan, 1997).

As outlined above, the student made use of a recorder to capture the participants' responses during the interviews and the focus group. The recorder allowed for a verbatim capturing of the participants' experiences, and provided the student with the opportunity later to analyse exactly what the respondents had said, as well as other nuances that might contribute to the analyses, such as their tone (Cousin, 2009). An advantage of recording the interview is that the researcher can focus on the procedures and processes of the interview, rather than trying to remember exactly what the participants have said. The student also made use of field notes to record observations of what the audio recordings cannot record, such as body language and the atmosphere of the interview (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). The literature notes that it is essential for the researcher to make full and accurate notes of what goes on in an interview and focus group, as they can add depth to the data collected (Greeff, 2011). Field notes can also help the researcher to practise reflexivity, as each encounter with a participant brings the researcher into the subjective world of the participant; and this can raise issues of subjectivity and bias on the part of the researcher. The researcher made observation notes on what she heard, saw, experienced, and thought about during the interviews and the focus group, as well as some of the thoughts and emotions these encounters evoked (Patnaik, 2013).

3.5.2. Data Collection Tool

As alluded to above, the data was collected using a semi-structured interview schedule and a focus group discussion guide. The interview schedule comprised four components. An interview schedule can be understood as a collection of pre-determined questions used by the researcher to guide the researcher in the interview (Cousin, 2009). The interview schedule helps the researcher prepare for the range of themes the interview should explore. (The semi-structured interview schedule can be found in the appendix labelled appendix C.) The semi-structured interview schedule was then adapted to create a focus group discussion guide for the focus group to expand on some of the ideas that emerged in the interviews. (The focus group discussion guide can also be found in the appendix labelled appendix D.)

The recordings of the interviews and the focus group were then transcribed by the student with the help of an external transcription service provider. 'Transcription' in qualitative research refers to the verbatim representation and interpretation of the audible information that the researcher collects from research participants (Bailey, 2008). All interviews were conducted and transcribed in English as far as possible; however, the focus group was conducted in both English and Setswana. Thus, the student outsourced a translator to assist with translating and transcribing the data to ensure accuracy. The literature notes that translation can raise questions about accuracy in light of nuances in interpretation, particularly for translators who are not native speakers of the language being translated (Temple & Young, 2004).To mitigate this, the student made use of a mother-tongue Setswana-speaking translator to ensure accurate translation. The transcriptions were then analysed to generate further meaning.

3.6. Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small-scale pre-test used to evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of a research instrument (Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2014). The student elected to do a pilot interview in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the data collection tool. In order to do so, the student conducted an interview with a participant who met some of the criteria used to select the sample for the study. That is, s/he was unemployed, had made use of the services of or been enrolled in a youth development programme, and fell in the 18-25 age range. As with many of the selected participants, the participant in the pilot study had recently entered a training institution, and so had to respond to the questions retrospectively. This helped to prepare the researcher for this reality, by adapting the questions to leave room for retrospection. The student was also able to restructure the questions that were not understood as intended, and to reorder the questions to facilitate a better flow in the interview. Furthermore, the student adapted the interview schedule to help the discussion move in

line with the overall research objectives, which the pilot interview schedule failed to achieve. In this way, the pilot study was necessary to prepare the student adequately for the interviews in terms of the reality that the participants face, which deviates from the initial criteria established. It also facilitated thoughtful consideration about various aspects of the interview schedule that would not have been possible had the pilot not been done. The literature indicates that the use of a pilot interview enhances trustworthiness and rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Preliminary testing of the data collection tool also assists in determining the suitability of the research tool (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002).

3.7. Data Analysis

The data collected from both the interviews and the focus group transcriptions was analysed using thematic analysis – specifically, the model proposed by Tesch (1990). The sorting and organising of the data was conducted using Atlas.ti to ensure accuracy and the availability of an audit trail. The model proposed by Tesch (1990) involves the following seven steps:

1. Read through all the transcriptions to get a sense of the interviews and the details of their responses;
2. Read each interview individually in an attempt to understand what the respondent was saying in relation to the objectives of the research;
3. Make notes by writing down key concepts as part of the coding process;
4. Code the transcripts by assigning key words;
5. Generate main themes by converting the codes into categories; organise the schema by revising the themes so that they are mutually exclusive;
6. Analyse the data by following the logical flow of the categories placed on the schema; and
7. Re-code the data by improving the schema and providing changes where necessary.

Similar to the Tesch model, ATLAS.ti was used analyse the transcribed data by uploading the transcripts onto the software, highlighting sentences and phrases with similar ideas to develop codes and and grouping the codes into units that share a broader idea, which was then condensed into categories. The use of digital software aided in tracing the categorizes back to the raw data which ensures a data audit trail is traceable.
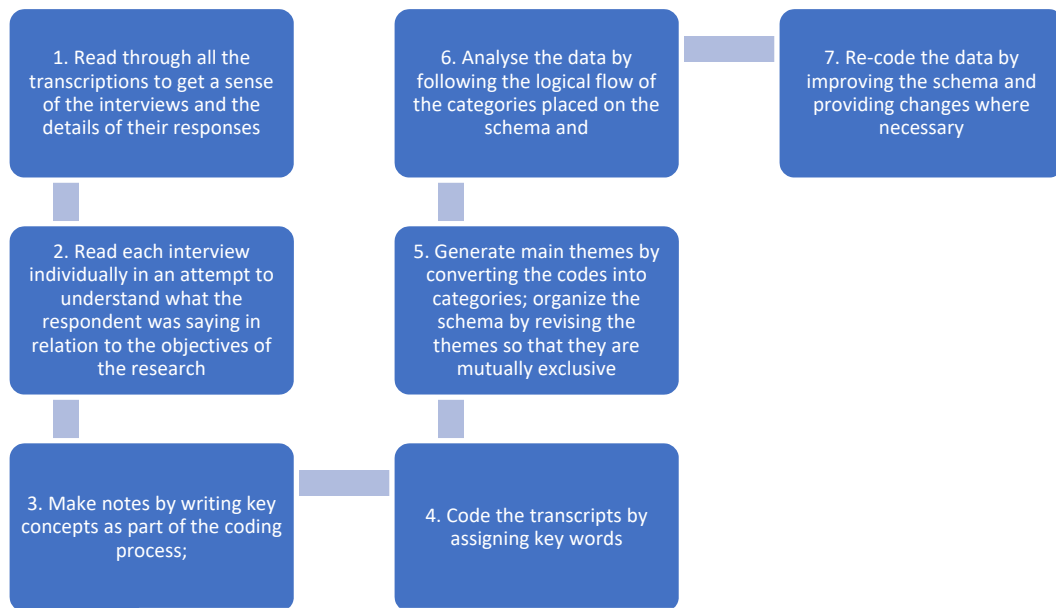
Figure 8 Thematic Analysis process by Renate Tesch (1990)

The generated themes will be reported on and discussed in Chapter 4.

3.8. Trustworthiness and Rigour

Issues of trustworthiness emerge in qualitative research, as aspects such as validity and reliability cannot be tested in the ways that quantitative research allows. Thus it is critical that the researcher make use of methods and techniques to achieve the trustworthiness of the research (Shenton, 2004). A key facet of trustworthiness is credibility. According to Merriam (as cited in Shenton, 2004), credibility concerns itself with how reflective the findings are of reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a range of strategies that are useful to promote the credibility of a study. These include the use of random sampling, the use of empirically supported research methods, triangulation, and member checking. The student made use of three techniques in this study: triangulation, peer review, and the use of thick descriptions.

'Triangulation' refers to the use of multiple methods in a study to ensure that credible data is collected. Each data collection method in isolation has both strengths and weaknesses. Thus the collaborative use of multiple methods allows for the limitations of each approach to be compensated for to some extent (Shenton, 2004). First, then, this study made use of a combination of face-to-face interviews and a focus group. In this way, some of the gaps in data that emerged from the interviews were addressed and expanded on during the focus group, allowing for greater detail and clarity, and so increasing the credibility of the study.

Second, the student made use of peer review to add further credibility to the study. Peer scrutiny, as referred to and encouraged by Shenton (2004), is the process by which researchers obtain feedback from colleagues and peers to provide a fresh perspective and help in identifying biases. The student consulted a range of academics throughout the research study. This included her research supervisor, research supervisors from other departments, and peers who were asked to review various aspects of the research. This created space for the student to receive different perspectives on the study, feedback, and critical engagement on some of the assumptions and gaps in the study, while encouraging deeper exploration and the strengthening of the arguments made.

Third, the student made use of thick descriptions when reporting on the findings further to aid in achieving credibility. The use of thick, detailed descriptions enables the reader to trace analyses and interpretations back to the original data while giving context, to facilitate further understanding of the arguments made (Shenton, 2004). In doing so, the reader is able to answer the question that credibility may raise.

The use of thick descriptions also assists in addressing issues of transferability. In the positivist paradigm, 'transferability' refers to the applicability of findings to other situations. However, given that qualitative research seeks to explore phenomena as they pertain to a unique context, transferability is arguably impossible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, the use of thick descriptions, and the manner in which it locates the findings in a context, allows the reader to evaluate the similarities and differences of a different population in order to determine whether the study and its findings are suitable for transfer. The student has reported on the recruitment criteria, the characteristics of the programme and its participants, and other unique descriptors that provide background for the study to be contextualised and allow for the boundaries of the study to be established.

Linked to this is the issue of confirmability, which hinges on evaluating the objectivity of the researcher in relation to the study (May, 2017). Confirmability seeks to ensure that the findings obtained are reflective of reality rather than of the researcher's preferences. The student has provided raw data in the form of the recordings and the transcriptions, as well as process notes, the data reduction, and the analysis products from the data analysis process, to aid the process of conducting an audit.

3.9. Reflexivity of the student

'Reflexivity' refers to the process and steps undertaken by the researcher to account for, reflect on, and discuss their subjectivity in the research. This can refer to their biases and perspective on aspects

of the research that become evident through their hypothesis, the questions they ask, their interpretation of the responses, and the write-up of the analysis (May, 2017). Greeff (2005; p. 363) describe 'reflexivity' as "the ability to formulate an integrated understanding of one's cognitive world, especially understanding one's influence or role in a set of human relations". It can be understood the process of self-critique in order to understand how one's own perceptions or experiences influence the process (Patnaik, 2013). Reflexivity requires the researcher to identify themselves in the research by critically examining how they view the world and acknowledging the ways in which these perspectives shape their research.

In many ways, this study has been an exploration of myself and my navigation of the world of work as a young South African. This study was an attempt to understand my experience from a scientific or relatively objective perspective. My biases can be seen as existing on multiple levels, from more macro-level issues such as structural and historical issues that influence job-seeking, to more micro-level issues relating to personality and ability. A key motivating factor in my selection of this topic is based on my personal experience with unemployment and job-seeking. After graduating from my undergraduate degree and relocating to Johannesburg, I began searching for employment. I was under the impression that, with my good academic record, my internship experience, and a good set of referees, I would not face any significant difficulty in finding employment. While I was pursuing employment opportunities, my two younger siblings who had recently matriculated were also seeking employment, but with no success. This made me want to explore the job-seeking experiences of youth. At the time, and to an extent still today, it seemed logical for them to face difficulties, considering their lack of education and training. This reveals my first assumption or bias in the study of youth unemployment. I assumed that educated youth have less difficulty finding employment.

In line with the findings of several authors (Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Graham et al., 2017; Grimshaw, 2014; Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008), post-secondary training and education is associated with increased employment prospects. Thus I sought to explore the experiences of youth who have successfully completed secondary education and potentially fit into a range of categories in the post-secondary spectrum – e.g., those with no training and education, those with work experience, and those with post-secondary training and education. I hoped to explore the similarities and differences these statuses create for youth in the job-seeking space. I also hoped to explore the intricacies of employment in South Africa that go beyond one's level of education in relation to employment. This bias was evident through the questions I asked about the participants' aspirations for further training and education, as well as their perspectives on what employers prefer in terms of experience versus training.

A second assumption and bias I hold is about the effect of one's socio-economic background on employability prospects. My assumption was that it would be more challenging for youth from low socio-economic backgrounds to navigate the job-seeking space and to secure employment, for reasons such as the limited networks to which they have access and that could support their job-search, and their presumed inadequacy or lack of basic skills such as fluency and eloquence in their command of the English language and basic computer literacy. This assumption is supported to an extent in the literature (Graham et al., 2017; Klasen & Woolard, 2008; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002), drawing on the structural barriers that youth face as a result of the apartheid legacy in South Africa. The irony, and the very evident flaw in my logic, lies in the fact that my siblings and I come from the same socio-economic background; however, as a result of experience and opportunity, we appear to come from different socio-economic backgrounds. I went to prestigious private schools in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, while they attended public and semi-private schools in the south of Johannesburg. As such, the exposure to networks, social capital, economic resources, and learning opportunities I have had differs significantly from theirs. Thus my study attempted to engage youth who come from diverse backgrounds to attempt to gain insight into whether factors such as SES, and the nuances that emerge from class, have an impact on job-seeking and employment prospects.

The final assumption I held prior to conducting the study – and to some extent during the study – is related to personal factors such as personality, confidence, and the outward expression of motivation or determination. While the literature on youth unemployment makes some reference to the role of motivation and effort in the job-seeking endeavour, evident in terms such as *discouraged work seeker* and *non-searching unemployed* (Kingdon & Knight, 2000; Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2013; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002), it is placed in the wider context of the barriers to employment that leave youth feeling discouraged and unmotivated. The research also disputes the notion of youth being "lazy" and lacking desperation or drive to find work (Graham et al., 2017). Nevertheless, I was under the impression that certain personality traits such as introversion and perceived passivity could be associated with increased difficulty in finding employment, due potentially to performing poorly in interviews and lacking perceived passion and vigour. Again, these were traits I could identify with in my siblings, and even in myself; and thus it seemed to be a plausible explanation of some of the challenges that young people face in pursuit of employment. My study endeavoured to engage both youth who displayed more traditional traits of introversion and those on the more extroverted end of the spectrum, to ascertain the validity of this assumption. I also sought to explore the intricacies of other personal factors, such as resilience and the emotional support available to youth, and the role they might play in their efforts to seek employment. This assumption was evident through questions about participants' perceptions of their performance in interviews, the

methods they used to stay motivated to find employment, and their responses to negative outcomes in their job-search experience. I also aimed to identify the kinds of jobs participants would or would not take, to gain insight into the complexity of their notions of self-worth, juxtaposed with real pressures to secure an income.

To navigate these various biases and assumptions and remain as objective as possible in the context of qualitative research, I made use of field notes and *journaling* to reflect on my personal experience and feelings after the interviews. I reflected on the participants' homes, family structure, and occupations of their parents, and how these supported or refuted my assumptions and biases about the relationship between socio-economic background and employment. I questioned my assumptions about participants' personalities and their eloquence in light of job-seeking and employability. In doing so, I had a space in which freely to reflect my assumptions, biases, and prejudices, and to identify how they may have shaped the encounter. It also enabled me to step away from the study and to regain perspective, so as to return later and attempt to write from a more academic and critical perspective, while acknowledging and accounting for the very real and subjective intricacies.

In addition to *journaling*, I made use of supervision and peer-debriefing to discuss and unpack the various thought processes and reflections I was formulating. To an extent, these interactions provided a platform for me to reality-test my thinking and remain grounded in my study by re-emphasising the aims and objectives of the study. Both the supervision and the peer-debriefing provided a soundboard for me to explore findings and revelations that were not directly part of my study, but were closely linked, as well as the ways in which these could be included either as key findings in the study or as ideas for future research. These interactions helped to identify blind-spots that I had overlooked or issues I had only superficially explored. In this way I was able to maintain some degree of objectivity, and approach my research with a balance of academic and personal inquiry.

3.10. Limitations and challenges of the study

The study encountered the following limitations and challenges:

3.10.1. Age parameters

First, the youth development programme recruited youth aged 18 to 25. While the intended sample for this study was individuals aged 15-25. The absence of youth aged 15 to 17 creates a gap, such that their experiences are unaccounted for. A potential explanation, however, is that they are probably enrolled in schooling. Research on youth unemployment and job-seeking highlights higher rates for NEET youth aged 15-24 than for those aged 15-34 between 2013 and 2016, and between the third quarters of 2017 and 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2018a). This

suggests nuances in the lower end of the age cohort that may be worth investigating, and that may yield findings that could further improve the outcomes for 15-24 NEETs. However, this study failed to explore the lower end of this age group.

3.10.2. YDP programme recruitment criteria

The programme strictly recruits youth who have a matric certificate, negating the experiences of those without a matric certificate. The literature highlights that youth with a matric certificate have better chances of employment than those without (DHET, 2017; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015; Klasen & Woolard, 2008; Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002); and the NEET rate is higher for youth aged 15-24 without a matric certificate than for those in possession of one. Thus this study failed to explore the experiences of this vulnerable sub-group.

3.10.3. Pilot programme

The programme from which the participants were recruited was a pilot programme recently launched by the organisation. This study was premised on the assumption that the programme would positively contribute to the job-seeking experience. However, being a pilot programme, the quality and impact of the programme have yet to be established; and this might have implications for the findings that have emerged. Also, given that the programme is a pilot, the number of youth recruited is small, thus limiting the number of available participants who meet the study criteria. Several participants were enrolled in some form of education or employed in formal or informal employment, which contradicts the NEET criteria initially established for recruitment.

3.10.4. Sample size

The study made use of a small sample size. The use of 12 participants can be considered a small sample, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the sample was obtained from a single organisation and programme, further limiting the generalisability. However, given that qualitative research prioritises depth and richness of data over generalisability, the use of twelve participants is arguably sufficient for the scope of this study, and the sampling was done in line with the literature relevant to non-probability and purposive sampling.

A significant challenge in the recruitment of participants is the issue of competing interests among the participants. Given that the intended participants are unemployed and in the process of seeking employment, scheduling time for the interviews and the focus group proved to be significantly difficult. Scheduled appointments were often cancelled as a result of an interview or vacancy emerging, as well as other opportunities for generating income and/or educational opportunities. Despite this, the student was able to recruit the intended number of participants.

3.10.5. Study sample criteria

The quality of the findings was impacted, arguably, by the change in employment status for some participants. As highlighted above, at the time of the interviews and focus groups, some participants had completed the Catalyst programme, and had moved on to employment or training. In light of this, the process of reflecting on their job-seeking experiences was retrospective, requiring participants to recall their memories. This might have impacted the accuracy of the details, depending on how long ago the participants were unemployed.

3.10.6. Interviewing skills

In light of the inexperience of the student in conducting research interviews, the quality of the data collected might be impacted. Greeff (2011) refers to the 'minimal verbal responses' technique, which distinguishes between the roles of a social work counsellor and a social work researcher. The student has had extensive experience conducting social work counselling interviews, but has had little exposure to research interviews. To mitigate this, the student used the pilot interview to identify focal areas on which to improve, and adapted the questions to elicit in the best way a rich, in-depth interview with each participant. Despite this, two of the interviews were of a poorer quality, with few elaborative responses from those participants. However, the remaining four interviews and the focus group yielded rich, discursive responses that provided invaluable data.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

Research that involves human participants raises a range of complex social, political, legal, and ethical issues. To ensure the protection of participants, ethical considerations must be explored and measures must be put in place to address any issues that may arise.

Risks and Benefits: It is imperative that the benefits of the study outweigh the risks (Whittaker, 2009). This study raised the risk of psychological harm and stress on the part of the participants. To mitigate and plan for this risk, the student arranged for referral letters for participants in the event that counselling or debriefing was required. In respect of the benefits, the study aimed to explore and report findings that could add to the field of youth and economic development in South Africa, and provide findings that could improve the services of youth development agencies in enhancing and supporting the job-seeking experience of youth.

Informed consent: All of the recruited participants were over the age of 18, and thus parental assent was not necessary. However, informed consent from the participants was sought. The consent form discussed and explained the purpose and process of the study to the participants in straightforward and simple language. It outlined the purpose of the study; the procedures used and the time involved;

and the risks and benefits of the study. It also clarified issues of compensation and confidentiality; explained the notions of voluntary participation and permission to withdraw; and, lastly, provided participants with contact information in case they had any questions (Cozby, 2009). The researcher collected signed copies from the participants, and provided them with copies to keep.

Anonymity and confidentiality: Given the sensitivity of unemployment and its relationship with poverty, it can be distressing to participants. Therefore it is vital that anonymity is achieved in order to protect the identities of participants. The participants were familiar with each other, making the use of real names during the interview somewhat unavoidable, thus impacting anonymity. However, no identifying particulars were used in the transcription of the individual interviews or of the focus group discussion. Participants were allocated pseudonyms, and their real names were not included in the presentation of the findings (Strydom, 2011). However, confidentiality could not be guaranteed in the focus group, as the participants were not bound to confidentiality (Cozby, 2009). The student informed the focus group participants, however, that their identifying particulars would be omitted when presenting the data collected from the focus group, to ensure anonymity.

Voluntary participation: Because the student approached the leadership of a youth development programme for their assistance in identifying potential participants, the student might have been viewed as having authority over the participants, and being able to influence the participants' relationships with the organisation. This in turn might have caused potential participants to feel that they were obliged to participate. However, no participants were coerced to participate in this study, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from participation at any point during the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The student also stressed that their individual contributions to the study would not be shared with the organisation, and therefore that their decision to withdraw, should they opt to do so, would not affect their relationship with the organisation.

Distress and emotional trauma: In-depth discussion and dialogue about unemployment, poverty, and job-seeking has the potential to be a distressing experience for participants. A referral letter to a local social worker was made available to the participants both before and after the interviews to address any problems or concerns that may have emerged.

The use of deception: Deception includes, but is not limited to, intentionally misleading participants about the research objectives and their role therein, giving false information about the researcher or the research purpose, and omitting information about the real purpose of the research (Baumrind, 1985). No deception was used in any way in this study. Respondents were informed of the aims and objectives of this research, and of its purpose – i.e., a Master's level university research project.

Feedback offered to participants: In order to avoid the exploitation of the participants, and to show gratitude to the organisation and participants, the study findings will be summarised and made available to them in the form of a short report using language that is easy to understand. The student will also conduct a feedback session to discuss and explain the findings of the research to the participants. Moreover, participants will be informed of the publication of research, and how to access it.

3.12. Conclusion

This chapter endeavoured to provide an in-depth discussion of the research method the student used in this study. A detailed description is provided of the study population and sample. A step-by-step outline was provided of the sampling method used, the data collection tool, the pilot study undertaken, the data analysis process used in light of Tesch's (1990) model, and the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of the study as guided by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Shenton (2004). The student collected the data in light of the research aims, goals, and objectives. This data will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a study conducted with twelve youth participants of a youth development programme called Catalyst, based in Johannesburg, Gauteng. First, the chapter provides an overview of the demographic information of the participants so as to establish the context of the study. The process of selecting the study's participants is then described with reference to the specific youth development programme and its composition. Together these set the context for the study and the data collected. Second, the chapter discusses the findings from the interviews and the focus group, which are presented in light of the main themes that emerged from the empirical data that was gathered. The findings discussed include the young people's perceptions of unemployment, the range of job-search activities they engaged in, the challenges they faced while seeking employment, the structures and factors that supported them as they sought employment, the complex role of family, and the negative impact that unemployment and job-seeking had on the mental health of the young people.

4.2. Demographic Information

A total of twelve participants were involved in this research study, selected through purposive sampling. The first six participants were interviewed individually, while the remaining six participants participated in a focus group discussion. All the participants were either previous or active participants of the Catalyst Programme. Moreover, all were Black Africans of South African nationality.

4.2.1. Age and gender

The participants were all aged between 18 and 25, with the youngest participant aged 18 and the oldest aged 25. The mean age of participants was 22. With regard to gender representation, both genders were equally represented, with six of the participants being male and six being female.

4.2.2. Geographic location

All participants were from the south-west and west of Johannesburg – specifically, from Soweto and the wider Kagiso area. The research initially aimed to interview participants from the south of Johannesburg; however, this was not possible due to the available pool of participants. As a result. the student selected participants from a similar community on the basis of racial representation, socio-demographic background, and proximity to economic hubs. Both Soweto and Kagiso are relatively

similar in this regard. Soweto forms part of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Area, and is estimated to have a youth unemployment rate of 31.5% (Municipalities of South Africa, 2019). Kagiso forms part of Mogale City, and is considered to comprise "predominantly disadvantaged settlements with more limited access to service and facilities" (Municipalities of South Africa, 2019). Mogale City is reported to have a 32.3% youth unemployment rate.

4.2.3.   Socio-economic Background

All twelve participants came from low- to middle-income households, with only one breadwinner identified in the majority of the participants' households. While class strata such as low- and middle-income lack clear, widely accepted definitions, and depend significantly on perception and self-identification, they do help to create an estimated range for household income, albeit inaccurate (Willis, 1978). Moreover, in line with Max Weber's perspective, class can be understood as a "multidimensional status hierarchy", which may be better understood in light of socio-economic status (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 300). The socio-economic status of participants and the high cost of job-seeking can thus be said to potentially limit the financial resources unemployed youth have access to. Furthermore, findings from the NIDS demonstrate the ways in which household income, particularly in the year a young person is in matric significantly influences their ability to access postsecondary education and training (Branson & Khan, 2016). In line with the socio-economic status of participants is the notion of social capital. Social capital speaks to the networks individuals have access to which have implications for the resources and opportunities individuals available to them.. Youth from low SES communities often have limited social capital, thus shaping the employment opportunities available to them (Graham et al., 2017).

4.2.4.   Employment status

Six of the participants were employed: five in the entry-level retail and call centre sectors and one in an early childhood development centre funded through a government tender. Two were self-employed; two were unemployed during the time of the research data collection; and the remaining two were completing vocational training. Figure 9 depicts the employment statuses of the 12 participants.

Figure 9: Participant employment status during research study, 2017
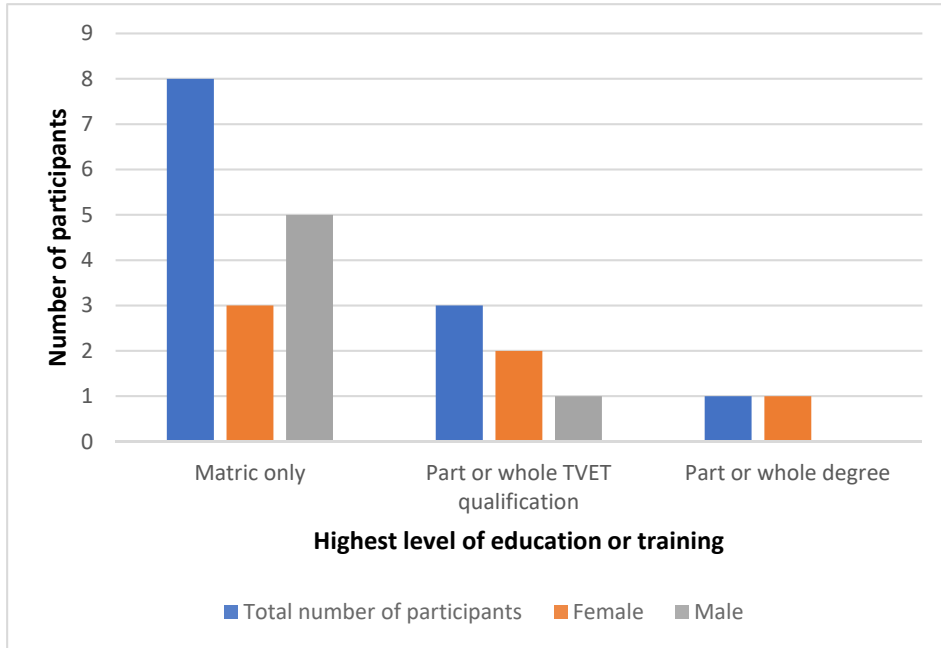
4.2.5. Highest level of qualification

All of the participants had completed matric. However, it is worth noting that four participants had re-written matric in order to improve their grades, suggesting they initially obtained poor matric grades. The chart below shows the participants' highest levels of education.

Figure 10: Participants' highest level of education and training, by gender composition
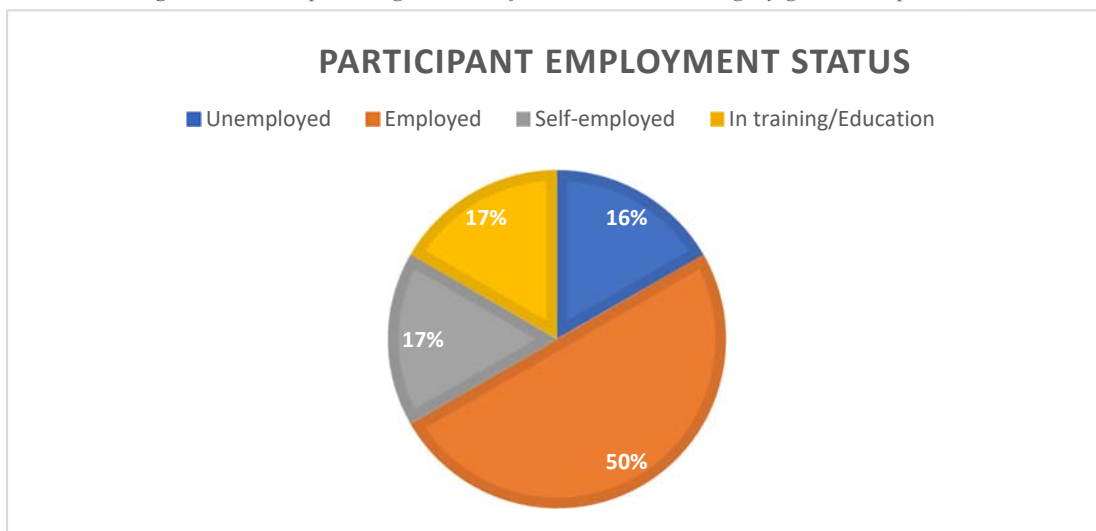
Of the 12 participants, eight had only a matric certificate, with no higher education or post-matric training. Three participants were enrolled in or had been enrolled in a TVET training programme, but had not yet completed it. Only one participant had been enrolled in a university degree programme, but had not completed it. To some extent, these statistics reflect the findings on the highest level of education for unemployed persons in South Africa: 35% of unemployed persons possess only a matric certificate, compared with 50% for those without a matric certificate (Statistics South Africa, 2018b, p. 42). This suggests that, while possessing a matric certificate decreases the probability of unemployment, it does not guarantee employment.

4.2.6. Approximate unemployment and job-search duration

The interview participants were asked about the duration of their engaging in job-search activities and how long they had been unemployed. Participants were unemployed for a range of periods, with the shortest unemployment period being two weeks and the longest being three years. With regard to seeking employment, participants had engaged in job-search activities for as little as two weeks, while others had sought work for more than two years. Given the dynamic nature of seeking employment and the unpredictable availability of short-term employment, participants gave estimates of their job-search duration and unemployment periods. Some participants searched intermittently, while others stopped searching due to taking on casual or part-time work, and returned later to searching. The figures below are approximations.

Figure 11: Graph depicting interviewed participants' job-search and unemployment duration periods
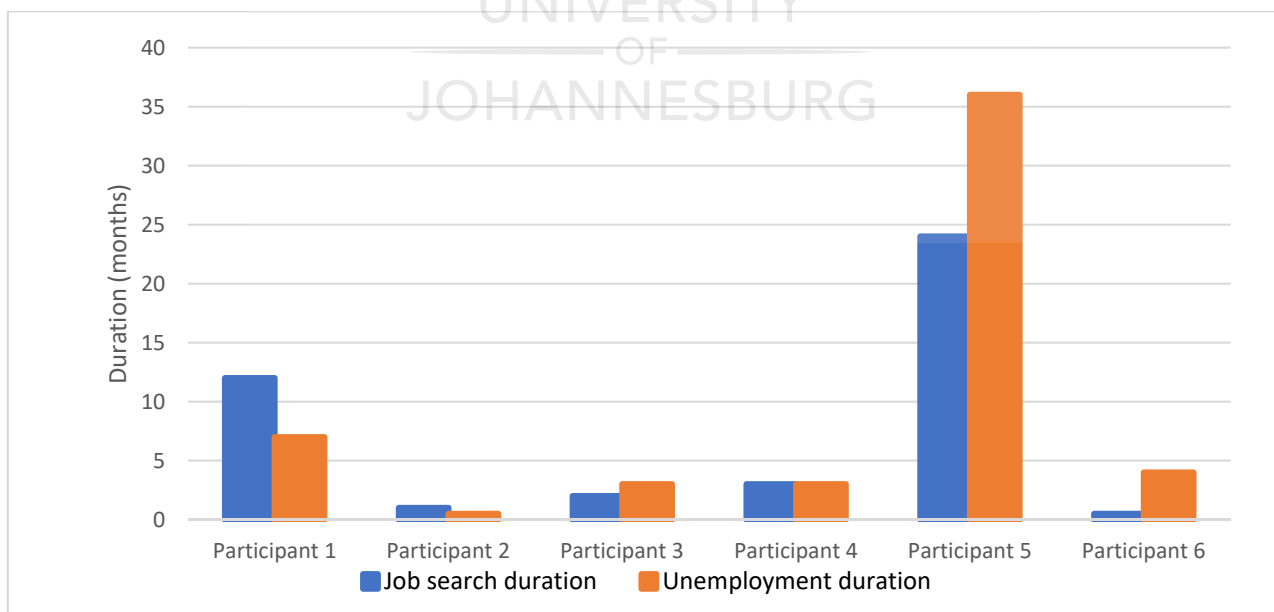
Five of the six participants were unemployed for less than 12 months. This correlates with the data on unemployment duration, which indicated the highest rates of unemployment for persons unemployed for less than 12 months (Statistics South Africa, 2018b).

4.3. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis

Seven main themes and several sub-themes emerged from the data. The first theme centres on describing the participants' perceptions of unemployment, opportunities, and education and training. The second theme focuses on the job-search process with regard to the search activities in which the youth engaged, the search strategy they employed, and the criteria they used to select jobs to pursue. Themes three and four relate to participants' experiences of the job-search process: the challenges they encountered, and the resources that aided their search. Theme five reflects on the impact of unemployment and seeking employment on youth, with an emphasis on their emotional wellbeing. Theme six centres on the role and types of social support that was central to the experience of unemployed youth, while theme seven describes the effects of job-seeking with particular focus on health and wellbeing.

In the discussion of the findings, pseudonyms are used instead of the participants' real names in order to protect their identity in light of the candid and sensitive information they shared (Strydom, 2011). Verbatim responses are used to reflect the participants' perceptions and experiences of job-seeking (Berg, 2001). The literature on youth unemployment is integrated in this discussion.

The table below provides a summary of the themes and subthemes, as well as quotes from participants to support the themes and subthemes.

Table 3: Summary of research objectives, themes/subthemes and evidence to support these

Research Objective	Themes/Sub-themes	Evidence to support theme
N/A	**Theme:** Perceptions of youth about employment and unemployment 1.1. The national unemployment problem 1.2. Youth and the comfort of opportunity 1.3. The role of education, training, and industry	-*"That's actually quite heart breaking and you actually see the gravity of the situation in our country like actually this whole unemployment issue is very serious"* Kate -*"I think we are lazy and want everything to come in a silver platter and I think freedom was never really explained to us, in terms of what freedom means. Is freedom getting everything for free or is freedom working hard to show that it is really freedom. It's just the system of having what you want in an easier way, it's what we're taught"* (Kat). -*"You need to somehow balance the two, you do have the experience so you get the*

		qualification, if you do have the qualification get the experience not when you go look for a job you say I don't have the qualification, the employer is gonna be like there's so many people who have that, there are those with qualifications who can just get credits and give them jobs" Bree
Research Objective 1 The job-seeking activities undertaken by unemployed youth	**Theme:** Participants' job-search process 2.1. Job-seeking strategy 2.2. Job-seeking activities 2.3. Participants' criteria for prospective jobs	*"In a day, me I plan my day, if I say that I am going to two places I'm actually going to two places I will not add the 3rd one just because I have time, I don't add the 3rd one but I will come back and look at what I rejection I got there."* Thabo -*"Yes, most of the times we were going to internet, you know you can apply through internet. We were trying that..."* Macy
Research Objective 2 The job-seeking challenges experienced by unemployed youth	**Themes:** The issue of access; the barriers to employment 3.1. Geography and spatial mismatch 3.2. Gatekeepers 3.3. Access to assets and resources 3.4. Education, training and experience 3.5. The cost of seeking employment	-*"It's impossible to look for a job right here because some of the places are not in Soweto but are allocated outside Soweto so you have to go to them, they can't come to you, you have to go them"* (Thabo). -*"I think like, I'll just like maybe go there... by myself then after, someone...people who I give...the person I give my CV, I'll just ask like is there any vacancy that available. If yes, then I'll ask, will they able to call me or just keep quiet, or throw it in the dustbin"* (George). -*"Yes, they are very difficult to find, I think most of them qualifications, they want good qualification. So, if you don't have like... Learnerships for Eskom they very difficult to find because they want matric and what-what, so if you don't have that they don't take you"* (Martha).

| Research Objective 3 The positive experiences of job-seeking | Theme: The resources and aids that assist youth in seeking employment

4.1. Spirituality and optimism
4.2. Community-based and non-profit organisations
4.3. Social Support | -*"I think church also is… They support everybody who is there, if you're a student, if you're employed or if you're employed… they actually have everything for everyone, they cater to everyone"* (Thabo).

-*"This organisation that's local they offer free internet services so I actually cash in on that with the online applications and with the door to door me I'm a fitness person so I always walk"* (Thabo).

-*"My friends because most of my friends we are supporting each other. Because we finished schooling then none of us got the opportunity to go further their education, so we're looking for a job together then we're encouraging ourselves, we will get it no matter what"* (Martha). |
| NA | **Theme:** The effects of the job-search process

5.1. The emotional pain | -*"You're doing the same thing over and over again but there were days where I'd just stops I feel like screw this I'm not looking for anything I'm not doing anything because my head has had it"* (Thandi).

- *"And I'm like okay fine I'm gonna change in matric and I took Maths Literacy and it was fine for me, but then now it's like we told you, look at so-so is now at UJ, she did pure maths. She's working for herself and will be able to drive a car and you'll be doing laundry, stuff like that. So that breaks me, it pulls me down and make me feel like I should have continued with pure maths and maybe my marks were going to be okay…"* Bree |

4.3.1. **Youth's perceptions of unemployment**

A dominant theme in the findings centres on the various perceptions that youth have of facets of unemployment. This includes perceptions of the macro-level scale of unemployment in South Africa, the negative perceptions youth hold of themselves, and the ways in which the education system impacts unemployment.

4.3.1.1. The national unemployment problem

The participants all discussed unemployment in light of the macro-factors and micro-factors at play. This is to say that participants were cognisant of the fact that both the reasons for their unemployment and the outcome of their job-search were the result of an interplay between external factors and their own agency. Moreover, participants were aware of the effect of their unemployment on family dynamics. A majority of the participants interpreted this with an emphasis on the relationship between job-searching and the impact on family. However, in terms of the causes of unemployment, few took into account or saw the relevance of contextual factors such as the high unemployment rate in South Africa. Only one participant referred to this.

> "*It's quite disheartening actually because for me it was like sho, you went through all those years, of so much hard work and like getting a job, like you should actually stand a better chance of being employed but that is not the case you know. That's actually quite heart breaking and you actually see the gravity of the situation in our country like actually this whole unemployment issue is very serious*" (Kate).

On the one hand, the acknowledgement of the high unemployment rates in South Africa gives young people an insight into the extent to which unemployment affects society. On the other hand, a failure to acknowledge this places significant and possibly unrealistic expectations on youth to find jobs in a context of significantly high unemployment rates. This correlates with the findings by Graham et al. (2017) suggesting the optimism of school leavers entering the labour market and the

Also, the historical relationships between South Africa and other African countries has resulted in complex migration policies and practices that have an impact on the employment dynamics in South Africa. One participant refers to this:

> "*The system will take people from outside and bring them here. When these people come here they have no responsibility in a way. I'm 21, I have a big sister, and a small sister, I have mother, I have father so I have to take care of the whole family*" (Kat)

This alludes to the competition in the job-seekers' pool while simultaneously commenting on the notion of pre-existing family dynamics and their nuanced impact on employment and job-searching.

This reiterates the complex web of macro-factors at play that affect employment opportunities for youth, but are outside their control. This sense of a lack of control, and the pressure it places on young people, may in part begin to reveal the contributing factors that lead them from actively seeking employment to the status of discouraged work-seekers.

4.3.1.2. Youth and the comfort of opportunity

Participants discussed various perceptions of youth in relation to employment and the world of work, which sees youth in a largely negative light and echoes prejudices about young people being lazy, entitled, and not making use of the available opportunities.

> *"There's a lot. I'm lazy and that's one of the big reasons I want to become an entrepreneur, so that I can enjoy my laziness. When I think of having to wake up because of the discipline, I have to wake up every day at 6 o'clock and bath. I had a job where I had to wake up at 3am I have to bath by 4am the transport is ready to pick me up. At 6am I start working and knock off at 6pm. So, I have felt the pain, I have felt the pain in every way but I hear them say they want to be entrepreneurs when they haven't done anything, I have worked in different places. I think we are lazy and want everything to come in a silver platter and I think freedom was never really explained to us, in terms of what freedom means. Is freedom getting everything for free or is freedom working hard to show that it is really freedom. It's just the system of having what you want in an easier way, it's what we're taught"* (Kat).

Participants argued that youth are lazy and that the freedom gained at the end of apartheid in 1994 is one that the youth do not fully understand, and so take for granted, and that this is evident in the arena of employment. Similarly, in training programmes – a route intended to pave the way for employment opportunities – participants perceived themselves as being lazy.

> *"So, the reason why we're lazy is because we're comfortable we don't have the kind of struggle that gave us a wakeup call. A person can drop out of school, now we can afford to drop out of school because we our parents are comfortable but if your parents are not comfortable you are willing to work, you can even see children from the rural areas. There's places you can see that it is tough. Even high schools in Limpopo, when I was in matric learners who passed 100% for their matric class with 90s in Limpopo, it's that high school that is in the rural place. When you compare it with Mosupatsela, which is local, you can get books, you can get everything. To be honest we are lazy because we are comfortable and we don't know the struggle, even myself I don't know the struggle"* (Kat).

The study further revealed that another reason that participants believe that youth are lazy is the comfort they experience compared with other South African youth in rural and underdeveloped parts of the country, whom they perceived as having access to fewer resources. This also resonates with the perception that the youth are entitled. While participants acknowledged not being wealthy, the financial circumstances of their families were not dire. Thus participants do not feel compelled to desperately cling to the prospects of financial freedom and the improved lifestyle associated with education; hence the high drop-out rates. This contradicts the existing literature, which argues that the high drop-out rates in education and training programmes are a result of youth being forced to leave school in order to find employment due to limited finances (Statistics SA, 2005; World Bank, 2013). Moreover, the complex interplay of the social, economic and systemic barriers to employment for youth in South Africa, further leads youth to becoming discouraged work-seekers, which can be viewed as lazy or unambitious .

When asked about reasons for the high attrition rate for the ENKE programme, Thabo responded:

> *"Yes, that's youth in general and some will be there for the fun part of it. But when the going gets tough some people will be like leaving. So, everybody just wants a nice time but they cannot work for the nice time"* (Thabo).

This further highlights that youth perceived themselves as lacking the endurance and resilience that training, education, and employment requires, and that participants believed that this is a contributing factor to the high unemployment rates, particularly among youth.

Nevertheless, amidst the largely negative perceptions of youth, some participants shared more positive perceptions of young people. For instance, one participant expressed a more optimistic view of youth, describing them as energetic and ambitious, challenging the view that youth are lazy and entitled.

> *"Because I also think that like no young person wants to live in a state of hopelessness. Like young people are one of the most vibrant people you know, we are very ambitious, we have all these big, gigantic dreams for ourselves but then circumstances get to us. You know we're living in poverty, and it's just like what happens you know, and we will pull out all these exceptional cases where like someone grew up in poverty and now they are this massive big people doing these amazing things and it's like but it's an exception, it is not the standard. Until that is the standard then you can start complaining that young people are lazy and entitled sort of"* (Kate).

The participant argued that the 'rags to riches' stories and anecdotes that used to infer that, with hard work, anyone can be successful are by no means the standard. Instead, they are anomalies, and should

thus be treated as such, as they create unrealistic expectations about young people finding work in the competitive context of the jobless South African labour market. This participant also argued that youth have dreams and ambitions that are tainted by the reality in which they find themselves, such as the high unemployment rates.

Reiterating the ambitious nature of young people, a majority of the participants had aspirations to pursue tertiary education after secondary school. For example:

"My plan was to go to University but unfortunately the problem was money and then my results were not that higher so that I can go to the University. So, my Uncle said whatever that I think to do it's okay, then I started to say I prefer to start my own business" (Macy).

Despite participants perceiving themselves as predominantly lazy and entitled, their desire to pursue education, employment, and business reflects a degree of ambition and a will to lead meaningful productive lives.

4.3.1.3. The role of education, training, and industry

Participants made repeated reference to the role of education, particularly tertiary education, as a critical success factor in pursuing employment. However, the role and nature of secondary education was also referred to. First, participants expressed the view that the system used by some schools to determine the subjects students ought to choose in grade ten, based on the grades attained in grades 8 and 9, overemphasises grades and academic performance. The subjects that young people choose to some extent influence the career paths youth could follow, thus disadvantaging them by failing to tap into their natural talents, abilities, and interests.

"And the system according to my experience affected me when I was in high school in grade 9. The system in Mosupatsela High School, if you pass EMS more than Physics then you do commerce. If you pass Social Science more than other subjects then you [do] History, same with Natural Science you do Physics" (Kat).

This approach assumes ability on the basis of grades as an indicator of passion and interest, which limits the options available to young people. In addition, participants felt that secondary education was ineffective in several ways in preparing them for life after schooling, particularly for finding employment.

"You know like you're literally given one path, it's like okay, you're going to leave high school, you're going to go to varsity and I never knew about FETs and all those things, so I'm like, oh there are alternatives you know kind of thing because high schools literally prioritise university because there was literally Wits, UJ, UP that came to our schools and gave us talks about okay, these are the degrees

and stuff but we don't really go in depth into like the degree programmes, what are other you know programmes that are offered at other institutions so ja, and the things I would do in high school like they add no value to university or the real world of work and that is huge disservice to us as young people because I feel like in order for one to succeed, you need to have access to information" (Kate).

Participants felt that the use of grades and scores as a measure of potential, which was embedded in the way the education system evaluates intelligence and academic potential, left young people, particularly those from previously disadvantaged communities, feeling hopeless.

"It brings me back to what I was telling you… I also want to and you said I can still do it, why not and I told you I went and applied to social development but my APS score was short by 1 point so, it brings me back to that, like I'm thinking I have this but I can't meet their demands. So, it brings my hopes down, like so let me rather give up" (Bree).

Participants shared that the grading system overemphasised academic performance and reduced the vast number of future career paths young people might pursue. Despite these issues in the basic education system, some participants indicated that some aspects of the revised basic education curriculum did attempt to help prepare youth for life after school.

"I was actually helping someone with LO recently this week, I've actually seen how evolved it has been because now they have added a lot of vital things which now you would actually be able to apply. But back then when I was in High School none of the things existed. But back then no" (Thabo).

Furthermore, participant responses revealed perceptions of the dynamics between tertiary education and the world of work. The findings suggest that participants perceive that graduates of traditional and longstanding universities and technical universities were given greater preference over those of colleges, technical and vocational education training (TVET) colleges and private universities with regard to employment opportunities.

"I think it's also favouritism of Universities, like for instance she's from UJ and I'm from Wescol they will be like let's take her and not me. So, I think it's discouraging because a lot of people are from Westcol but they don't feel like they can get there" (Naomi).

This in part reveals why TVET colleges are rarely a primary option for young people who are considering tertiary education options. This is also supported by the literature, which acknowledges the challenges that the TVET institutions face. Their ability to offer quality tertiary education that will make graduates competitive in the market is questionable (Jacobs & de Wet, 2017; Marock, 2011). Moreover, three of the 12 participants expressed the belief that employers prefer a candidate

with education or qualifications over one with experience. However, nine of the 12 felt that experience was of greater significance when seeking employment, as expressed below:

> "*I think it's experience, I have a cousin in similar situation but she went to school but she didn't complete her degree she got another job in a retail store and she had that on her CV when I compared myself to her and when we were looking for the same thing she was most likely to be called for interview than I would because she has that little thing on her CV that I've been exposed to a certain world of work so I think it's experience*" (Thandi).

However, one participant was of the view that, regardless of higher education and qualifications, the challenges still exist. As shown in her response below, the extent of unemployment in South Africa is a huge challenge:

> "*So I had one of my best friends, she was studying at Wits and doing her, what was she doing? Oh ja, she was doing, she was finishing honours ja and no, she went to… okay she went to Wits and then she went to Rhodes doing her honours and she came back the same year that I also came back from Cape Town and like hey, let's look for jobs because she was also not, she wanted to continue with her masters but not yet, like okay, let's just you know look for jobs. Okay, she was also my other support system and like we'd go together like hey, let's do this and both of us just got the same outcomes, it's like nothing is literally happening so – [interrupted]*" (Kate).

This is consistent with the phenomenon of jobless graduates in South Africa. In quarter 1 of 2018, Statistics South Africa revealed that the unemployment figures were high regardless of the level of education. The graduate unemployment rate was at 33,5% for persons aged between 15–24, which was close to that of the national unemployment rate at the time, at 38,2% (Statistics South Africa, 2018d).

A third opinion that emerged was that job-seekers have to find a way to balance adequate training and education while gaining some experience in order to navigate the world of work successfully. This was perceived as the ideal combination; however, participants did highlight that differences exist, depending on the sector and industry.

> "*You need to somehow balance the two, you do have the experience so you get the qualification, if you do have the qualification get the experience not when you go look for a job you say I don't have the qualification, the employer is gonna be like there's so many people who have that, there are those with qualifications who can just get credits and give them jobs*" (Naomi).

Furthermore, some participants were of the view that a certain degree of financial stability and comfort can be achieved by securing employment in certain industries or fields, such as medicine and

government jobs. Participants supported pursuing education and training in these fields, as reflected by Kate in the excerpt below:

> *"Medicine, it's a done deal. It's like literally guaranteed. There is no hospital that's, they're in need of a doctor so I think for me also another reason why I wanted to actually go into medicine it's because of that job security you know, in law I like helping people generally but it was just like, medicine is a very comfortable ja."*

Overall, participants continued searching for employment with the resolve that, despite the challenges, they could find employment.

4.3.2. Participants' Job-search Process

Job-seeking can be broadly understood as the range of activities, behaviours, and processes in which individuals engage in pursuit of finding employment. One model proposes a six-stage process: (1) exploring, (2) researching, (3) applying, (4) interviewing, (5) following up, and (6) negotiating (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2017).

The participants make use of varied approaches to seeking employment. These can be broadly categorised into structured or unstructured approaches. The study found that participants engage in specific activities in order to find work, including searching online and personally inquiring at prospective places of employment.

4.3.2.1. Job-seeking strategy

As noted above, the participants' responses can be broadly categorised as either structured or unstructured. The participants made reference to either having a planned approach to job-seeking or having no real plan or structure. The study found that those participants with a more structured approach made an effort to plan their job search activities in terms of time allocated for searching on the internet (for example), or days set aside for travelling to prospective employers. Only one of the 12 participants indicated making use of a structured approach.

> *"In a day, me I plan my day, if I say that I am going to two places I'm actually going to two places I will not add the 3ʳᵈ one just because I have time, I don't add the 3ʳᵈ one but I will come back and look at what rejection I got there. Maybe it's an interview, look at how I'm going to introspect myself, how I spoke to the interviewer just like I have that monologue to myself like what went wrong"* (Thabo).

On the other hand, those with a non-structured approach adopted a more opportunity-driven approach. Largely, they responded to opportunities as they emerged or as they felt inspired or motivated to search. For example:

> *"I made like… you know an email job-seeking?... If maybe there's any vacancy looking for people, they just send me an email, and after I just send my CV via email"* (George).

Participants who employed a more structured approach were able to estimate the cost of searching for employment, the amount of time they spent searching for employment, and the specific tools and platforms that they would mostly use to secure employment. Whichever approach might be used, participants did not see a clear relationship between the outcome and the approach. Thus participants did not change their approach to yield better results.

4.3.2.2. Job-seeking activities

All of the participants were selected on the basis that they were currently or had previously been unemployed, and had engaged in some form of job-search process. In light of this experience, the study endeavoured to explore the activities and methods that young people used to search for employment.

From the findings of the study, participants predominantly used four main job-search activities: (i) internet- or web-based searching, (ii) inquiring in person at prospective employment sites, (iii) social media networks, and (iv) social networks in the form of peers, family, and acquaintances.

The top three methods used by participants were:

1. Web-based searches, and;
2. In-person/Direct inquiring at prospective places of employment
3. Referrals and recommendations from peers and family

Six participants made use of three main methods of searching for work: (i) online or web-based search methods, (ii) inquiring directly at prospective places of employment, and (iii) drawing on social networks such as peers and extended family members. With all three approaches, the study found that participants were applying for advertised opportunities with a large pool of applicants, rather than for deliberate, focused opportunities that matched their skills and interests. This probably reduced the likelihood of a successful application that would result in a job.

4.3.2.2.1. Web-based searches

With regard to internet or web-based searches, findings from the study revealed that participants made use of a range of platforms, from specific job-search platforms and websites to searching broadly via the Google search engine. All of the participants indicated that they used online or digital application methods. The main reason that participants engaged in this search method was its relative convenience and accessibility, as shown below:

> *"Yes, most of the times we were going to internet, you know you can apply through internet. We were trying that, we were doing that with my sister and also her she wasn't working at that moment"* (Macy).

The findings also indicate that a majority of the participants made use of personal devices – their cellular phones and personal computers – to conduct searches and apply for opportunities. Some shared that they had also made use of internet cafés on at least one occasion, as reflected in the response below:

> *"My first CV that I wrote I went to an internet café. I did it there then I had a copied it on my phone, that's how I just send it in"* (Thandi).

However, 2 of the 12 participants described some of the challenges of using online searching without adequate or capable devices. For example, the use of cellular phones with limited capabilities in some ways affected the search process, as Martha shared:

> *"[I prefer] Going to the shops because the phone I was using was giving me little information then if I want to apply online it didn't".*

Thandi also shared that she had experienced challenges with her cellular phone device:

> *They called me, I remember I was having problems with my phone I was so nervous. I got to a point where you know when you feel like something good is about to happen it gets messed up."*

Nevertheless, the financial cost of searching the web on a personal device was seen to be lower than the cost associated with other methods, such as in-person inquiries at malls and other prospective employment sites. This was expressed by one participant, who stated:

> *"I started looking on the internet, anything that I could see that had potential I just applied. I think it was best looking for work on the internet because I had my phone unlike having to go to an internet café or calling in which cost money I didn't have at that moment so my best option was just going through the Net"* (Thandi).

It also appears that the degree of control and intentionality with which participants can search for opportunities on digital platforms is perceived as being higher than that of in-person applications. Alternative methods, such as in-person inquiries, only produce information about the specific company or business or, in some instances, other branches of the organisation. Web-based searches, on the other hand, provide an expansive list of possibilities, giving the searcher the freedom to create parameters in terms of location, level of experience, and field or industry, among other refinement criteria. In this way applicants apply with intentionality and with an awareness of their suitability for the role. One participant shared how the web facilitated her job search process:

"So I have a Linkedin account, so based on your skills, so Linkedin tells you like okay, there's this job application or a job opening with this and this then I did that and there was also another one. I think it's Jobfind, yeah Jobfind so I saw it through Twitter and I was like okay, there are some interesting posts, although a lot of them I didn't qualify for them because no degree and number of years of experience and I was just like, ah guys really, why?" (Kate).

Participants also made use of various job-search platforms including, but not limited to, Lulaway, JobFind, and Junkmail, with a few using more sophisticated options such as creating email alerts for specific job titles and roles to manage better the online search and the wide array of opportunities that emerged. Inherent to this method is the ability to use the internet and/or a computer, suggesting that a majority of the participants have basic internet/computer skills.

While searching online for potential jobs appeared to be the most preferred method, it is not without challenges and shortcomings. Participants alluded to the frustration and hopelessness associated with applying online and not receiving any response from recruiters and prospective employers. For example, Kate shared that:

"I think it was just like for the first month and then after that you just got tired, it's like no, this thing is tiring actually. You know especially when you're not getting any calls, like you're literally your phone is on its loudest volume, it's like okay, you know hmm."

Participants felt that the lack of responses from prospective employers leaves young jobseekers with no way of gauging their progress, and little opportunity to learn skills to improve in future job-seeking efforts. In this way, participants have no way of knowing the quality of the application that is required or the direction for future applications.

Furthermore, participants perceive a high cost but a low guarantee of securing employment with web-based searching. They also note that family tends not to understand or see digital searching as active job-seeking, as shared by Thandi in the excerpt below:

"Days were not the same especially my grandmother, sometimes she would understand she's very tech savvy so she would know places where to look. She'd tell me look there's a link I found check this this out send your CV and there would be days were she's just a typical mother and she would be like no [you're wasting time] you should be having something by now of I understood where she was coming from because it was such a long time."

Participants thus sought multiple and concurrent ways of seeking employment, such as making both web-based and direct inquiry applications.

4.3.2.2.2. **Direct inquiry at prospective employment sites**

The second most-used method of searching is that of directly inquiring at prospective places of employment. Participants described compiling the necessary documents and visiting various companies to apply for any available vacancies. The findings revealed that some of those who engage in this method may not necessarily have information about the role for which they apply, facts about the company and its profile, or the need for a role-specific covering letter. In this way, the participants leave some aspects of the job-search to chance, and underemphasise the role of adequately preparing for interviews.

From the data, a frequent reason for opting to inquire directly at potential places of employment is the perceived notion of a better chance of getting a job than through web-based methods. Thabo had used this method, and shared the following:

"I take my CV and all my recommendation letters, and all the certificates that I have, 50 something. I didn't take all of them but at least the highest ones and then compile with it then just go there and have a chat with one of the directors or someone who's in the management sector".

The findings also show that participants stand better chances of success when engaging with management directly, which is possible when using in-person job-search methods, as reflected in the responses below from Martha and Kate:

"I was asking to speak to the manager then give them my CV as always they will tell you "we will call you… we will call you" till now (Martha).

*"Oh, so we would get there and ask for like the manager, like hey I would like to leave our CVs. I mean sometimes the manager's not there so you just leave it with one of the people who work there." (*Kate).

However, the high cost associated with inquiring in person restricts participants to using this approach to anything from once every few days to up to every three weeks.

"I'd say probably three weeks...Hmm, and then after that we just resorted to online applications or going through Linkedin, and all these job websites" (Kate).

A participant described the emotional and psychological effects that the process of direct inquiry searches has on jobseekers. This could explain, in part, the short duration of this method of searching, as indicated by Thabo:

"It's not a fun space to be. Let's take public transport for instance, normally I use Rea Vaya for going anywhere within the City and so I would actually be sitting there with student or someone who's going to work, and you are dressed looking like you're going to work when you are going to look for work and not knowing the very same person that you're sitting next to is the very same person you'll be handing your CV to (Thabo).

Participants also said that they initially believed that they possessed the skills and had the requisite documents and personal skills to conduct themselves effectively in interviews. However, after exposure to programmes such as the ENKE Catalyst programme, participants indicated that they were equipped with the knowledge and given the practical support needed to develop stronger, more competitive resumes and to improve their confidence and communication skills. For instance, George shared the benefits of attending the ENKE Catalyst programme.

"Errr.... Eventually, I was writing my CV. Just.... But now, I have an idea of how to write a CV... Errr..... the programme of ENKE, showed us how...how CV must look like, and how we must make our CV short and simple" (George).

This in part sheds light on the ways in which youth development programmes (YDPs) can improve the job-search skills of youth and help to advance their job-search process. While youth use direct-inquiry searches, they are more inclined to use web-based methods due to their perceived affordability and relative ease of access.

4.3.2.3. Participants' criteria for prospective jobs

Based on the findings of the study, participants have criteria when searching for employment opportunities. On one hand, the findings suggest that, to some extent, participants have a set of predetermined criteria and considerations in order to decide on jobs they could take. The study found that the considerations include the industry and the sector in which the vacancy occurs, the nature and demands of the job itself, the level of perceived income security, and whether the job aligns with the participants' interests.

A recurring finding is related to the participants' willingness and readiness to take a range of entry level jobs. This was underpinned by the degree of their desperation and willingness to adjust what they were looking for, as shown below.

> *"For me because Monday to Sunday I was wearing the same clothes, any job"* (Lee).

Similarly, another participant said:

> *"Any job. Any job, because I was desperate and I don't like to sit at home, I want to work"* (Macy).

With regard to the kinds of jobs, participants made reference to being open to applying for and working in retail stores such as PnP and PEP, entry level office jobs, and call centre work. For example, George shared: "*A receptionist… errr… what is it… a PA… Any assistant job….*".

Similarly, Thabo, Martha, and Macy said:

> "*Administration. Mostly it was administration, and porter in the clinic or hospital*" (Thabo).

> "*Mostly shops… we were going to the shops like Game, Mr Price, PEP*" (Martha).

> "*Most of the time I was looking for call centre. I was just saying that I want a call centre [job] until, until that's it*" (Macy).

This refutes the assumption that youth feel entitled and have unrealistic expectations and demands for entry-level work experience. Moreover, the findings reveal that youth like Thandi were cognisant of the demands of the labour market, and were willing to negotiate and lower their expectations in order to access employment.

> "*I was open to anything really because the other thing I considered was the fact that I don't have experience. It was a matter of anything that they take me… willing to teach me. I know I work hard into proving myself. I wasn't too picky whatever that comes and it's good then I'm going to take it*" (Thandi).

4.3.2.3.1.   Job security and income security

Two participants made reference to the notions of job security and income security as criteria they had when seeking employment. This was often linked to the perception that certain sectors provide opportunities that are long-term and facilitate a degree of income security.

> [*I'm looking for government jobs*] "*Because government job is permanent[ly], they don't just retrench people just like easy*" (George).

Another participant shared a similar sentiment:

"*Joe mo ha o spana wa e tebela [when you work here you'll fire yourself] serious, they actually preach that in JMPD, La uyazixosha [here you fire yourself] so that thing actually entered me to say la uyazixosha [here you fire yourself]*" (Thabo).

Another emerging perception expressed by youth is linked to certain fields offering stable jobs. Thandi commented:

"*…We would have those conversations about the logistics and everything, but when I needed just that one person to say even, I'm not giving it to you, I'm borrowing you because even the field that I'm getting into [medicine], it's secure. I know at a certain point, I'll start earning a salary and I'm good as long as it just keep working and what's even great about it is that I'm passionate about it so I don't think there was ever going to be a point where I'm going to slack off, you know*" (Thandi).

Some participants held the belief that certain careers remain in demand, and therefore give youth a sense of income stability and job security. Youth perceived government jobs as having a degree of permanence, and thus formed one of their criteria.

4.3.2.3.2. Meaningful employment

The study found that participants want meaningful work experience. Some participants, like Thabo, were against the concept of working purely for subsistence, but sought employment opportunities that would be fulfilling and enjoyable, with the prospects of personal growth.

"*It's not only about job security but also, I want a job whereby I can be excited in the morning and when I go to the office or when I go to facilitate I would actually excited about what I'm doing, not just do it to sign the register and getting salary at the end of the month, that doesn't actually suit the whole purpose of getting a job*" (Thabo).

The findings reflect sentiments of passion and fulfilment, suggesting that youth also need to find work that adds value to their lives.

"*As long as there's a balance, it's best to do something that you enjoy. With regards to my current job, I never thought I'd want to be a hostess in my life, but as long as it means I get to work with people and it's something that I want to do in the long run. So it kinda gets you there but you not there*" (Naomi).

Some youth were flexible about their criteria, placing greater value on the job aligning with their personal interests and passions as opposed to income or perceived status.

"*Last year it was more getting a job more to just pass time and ja, get some sort of income but now it's just like actually I don't just want to go a job because I need money or for the sake of survival, I want something that actually aligns with my passions and what I'm good at. It's like I can contribute to that*

self-development so ja, so right now I'm in a space where I'm literally and intentionally building on my skill set that I now already have and just growing in that so for me for now this year, it's more just looking for work that resonates with me and it doesn't matter how much it pays actually" (Kate).

Similarly, participants with business aspirations sought jobs that would give them the experience they thought they needed to make their entrepreneurial ambitions a reality.

"...So I thought why can't I start an organisation or I can say something that will relate to help people who really love art because I know how to tell you that you sing very well but why can't you do this or why can't you do that, I know that but I don't know any way to do it. So that's how I had to approach it because I love art more than anything and that's what I live for right now. If there's a job I could settle for that but I think if I can get a job I won't work for no more than 3 months" (Mandla).

In this way, participants expressed a degree of intentionality about the opportunities they sought, independent of income.

In light of their lack of work experience and the unpredictable nature of job-seeking, participants are willing to take any form of employment, but make no reference to considering whether it makes financial sense. However, one participant made reference to wanting an income of at least R8000.

"I would say R8000 upwards… My expenses, like my clothes. Because I don't have a kid, so, my kids are my parents. So, they are the ones I will be looking after with that money" (Martha).

Of the participants, 11 of the 12 participants made no reference to the income or minimum income they sought. The findings also suggest that the initial set of criteria or considerations that participants had in mind when seeking work became less significant the longer that they remained unemployed. In the excerpt below, Thandi shared:

"Another thing that I realised about it is I had the whole 'take whatever that comes' mentality but they went into retail then when I sat down and listened to their experiences, yes our experiences are not the same, but I just realised that I wouldn't have been happy if I were to be in that same environment as well so that's the only thing that encouraged me while I was looking that okay this is how it is maybe it happened for a reason that I didn't get it because either way I wasn't going to be happy."

Over time, participants move towards a willingness to take on learnerships and alternative forms of employment, training, or education.

"...Because at least when you doing learnerships you getting a stipend while they teach you. They teach you while they give stipend, so at least you earning while you learning" (Martha).

Various factors or criteria determined the jobs that young people consider and are willing to pursue. Job security, experience, and meaningful employment form part of these criteria.

4.3.3. The issue of access

The study found that participants have difficulty accessing employment opportunities as a result of the geographical location of youth versus the location of jobs. The presence of gatekeepers in employment establishments further limits access.

4.3.3.1. Geography and spatial mismatch

The findings suggest that a significant barrier to youth from the south and south-west of Johannesburg finding employment is the distance between these communities and the hubs of economic activity. The youth shared that there are no job opportunities within their communities, and believed that they have to commute out of their residential community in order to access opportunities.

> "*It's impossible to look for a job right here because some of the places are not in Soweto but are allocated outside Soweto so you have to go to them, they can't come to you, you have to go them*" (Thabo).

While youth are open to various job opportunities, factors such as distance and the associated costs of travel can at times prevent young people from accessing these opportunities. Research reiterates that the lack of access to opportunities and information further increases the cost of job-seeking, at a community level. The issue is exacerbated by a lack of access to information and employment services at the community level (Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986; Graham, et al., 2017).

> "*Hmm, definitely because there would be like some posts in like Sandton or Randburg and I was just like no, that was too far. You know because there's also you're considering transport costs you know like I literally rely on my mom for money and it's just like ag, all the money is not much so ja, I need to take that into consideration as well*" (Kate).

Another participant also highlighted the issue of the cost of travelling.

> "*I think fares because most malls or places I would like to go and look for a job is very far so I can't or then I have to take a taxi… so money*". (Martha)

Within this spatial mismatch between youth and the location of job opportunities are both the costs of travelling associated with seeking these jobs, and the cost implications should youth successfully secure these jobs. The spatial mismatch thesis speaks to the disparity between the location of individuals and the concentration of jobs, which in turn is reflected in levels of employment across a

city or state (Hellerstein, Neumark, & McInerney, 2008; Naude, 2008; Raphael, 1998). Supporting this proposition is the theory developed by Zenou (2000) that the concentration of jobs in the central business district often employs individuals who live in proximity to the city centre, thus reinforcing higher unemployment rates in the outskirts of the city (Zenou, 2000; Zenou, 2009; Zenou, 2013).

One female participant made reference to the issue of safety when seeking employment, as a result of having to leave her residential community. Travelling to often unfamiliar areas by public transport also raises safety concerns that create additional stress and pose a greater risk to young female jobseekers.

> *"Hmm actually, not having a car. Yeah, it's like everything would be so much easier if I had car because I literally hate public transport, hate it so much. I don't like being bothered by people when I want to do things at my own pace and also just that anxiety that comes with finding a new place and that time you walking and Jo'burg is not particularly safe, and you can't literally be like okay, google-mapping okay where's this like, you just have to find your way and for me that was frustrating and that was something that made me like reluctant to actually go out and look for work at places that I've never been to"* (Kate).

The findings suggest that the spatial mismatch places youth at a disadvantage and, to some extent, limits the opportunities to which young people have access. This highlights the effects of the legacy of apartheid, evidenced in the uneven spatial distribution of employment opportunities across urban and peri-urban communities. This supports the existing literature regarding the influence of geographic location on the experience of seeking employment (Aliber, 2003; Branson & Khan, 2016; Graham et al., 2017).

4.3.3.2. Gatekeepers

The study found that participants experienced gatekeeping by existing employees of the places where they sought employment. Participants were not certain that the CVs and application documents they submitted were being handled correctly and making their way to the relevant people for consideration, thus creating a barrier for them.

> *"With the last one that I had, the receptionist I think she saw my accreditations and she kept it to herself and then when I had a conversation with the director there he actually asked me what am I doing so I told him what I was doing and he was like why don't I have your CV. And I'm like I dropped about three copies right here, he's like no none of them reached me and I'm like let's go to the reception when we ran there three copies were just lying there on the desk"* (Thabo).

The participant believed that gatekeeping was a result of his CV being competitive and the person to whom he handed his documents feeling threatened, thus creating a barrier. Similarly, another participant reported asking about the process that would follow once he had applied, suggesting a mistrust of the employees and the process for receiving and reviewing applications.

> *"I think like, I'll just like maybe go there… by myself then after, someone…people who I give…the person I give my CV, I'll just ask like is there any vacancy that available. If yes, then I'll ask, will they able to call me or just keep quiet, or throw it in the dustbin"* (George).

While it is unclear about the motivation for gatekeeping, and whether it emerges as the result of individuals or subtle forms of company culture, it nevertheless serves as a barrier to youth finding employment.

4.3.3.3. Lack of training and experience

The study found that participants were of the view that their lack of qualifications and accreditation often excluded them from accessing employment opportunities (Bhorat, 2009; du Toit, 2003). This includes alternative forms of training such as learnerships and internships.

> *"Yes, they are very difficult to find, I think most of them qualifications, they want good qualification. So, if you don't have like… Learnerships for Eskom they very difficult to find because they want matric and what-what, so if you don't have that they don't take you"* (Martha).

On the other hand, some participants highlighted the ways in which their training and experience, albeit limited, improved their job-search experience. One participant who had completed three years of a four-year degree programme at a prestigious South African university was given preference for a short-term employment opportunity, in light of her partial training and education.

> *"I applied for that and they took me and they actually put me in a very high post and I was just like what, you know and then when I was talking to the guy who actually hired me, he was like no, I saw your qualifications, I'm like what qualifications? Like you went to **UCT** or something, and I was like oh, but he was like ja but actually I thought you were really impressive and I was like okay, cool and then I did that for like a month and a half, and then after that literally no work"* (Kate).

These biases held by employers serve as barriers to those without admission to prestigious education institutions, while benefitting those who do. Although the literature would argue the case of jobless graduates, the graduate unemployment rate at 6.4% for the third quarter of 2018 is minute when compared with that of unemployed persons with no higher education or training (Statistics South Africa, 2018a).

The study found that an additional barrier that participants encounter is that of experience. Participants like Kat felt that the experience requirement that is found in most job application criteria excludes youth, as they are unlikely to possess the kind of experience companies seek, and have difficulty entering the world of work in order to accumulate the experience.

> *"To me that's one of the things that are killing the youth. That's what discourages us from applying for something, and there's high unemployment. Why? I know I have experience, those with experience are around the age of 28, 29, 30. For example, maybe he worked and did IT while he was still at the University, worked and then resigned at work at age 26 and stayed at home. And then did IT at UJ and we both go for an interview. As you can see his age he's close to reaching the youth criteria and I'm 21 from University. Obviously when we get to the interview they will take one with the experience, but they won't see how they can invest in that 21-year-old"* (Kat).

As a result of the qualification and experience requirements, some participants ignored all employment opportunities that listed these requirements, further narrowing the pool of opportunities available to young job-seekers.

> *"I just didn't want to apply. I got to a point where… I'm a very spiritual person. I believe God literally makes a way where there isn't a way, so with my faith I'd be like let me just try it out but sometimes it just wouldn't work out. I got to a point where I even stopped applying for anything that's experience related so I'd play around call centres, retails or anything that just basic that wouldn't really need certain experience but just general knowledge just knowing how to do this…like admin I played around that"* (Thandi).

The role of education and experience in restricting access to employment opportunities is thus a considerable barrier to youth seeking employment. This is echoed in the recent decision by the government to remove the experience requirement from all entry-level government jobs to help youth access entry-level jobs (National Youth Development Agency, 2018). This state response suggests an acknowledgement of this barrier and an attempt to facilitate access to employment. However, the qualification barrier remains.

The study found that participants also attempt to improve their employability by seeking ways to become competitive. In light of the increased likelihood that people with work experience will gain employment, participants seek varied forms of experience. For example, Thandi sought volunteer work to help strengthen her resume:

> *"I started at the call centre and I saw that it doesn't work and then I joined this Justice in Peace Solidarity at church, we actually help people who don't have IDs, SASA, Grants and whatever. And I did that until I joined ENKE thing, so she was like to me at least it's better when you are doing something*

that sitting at home doing nothing. I was like right now I'm thinking let do things that are going to pile up my CV, it has to be something that has weight because I feel like call centres and stuff they don't really count" (Thandi).

Participants were open to and took on volunteering and short-term work as a means to gain experience, as they perceived that these would improve their chances of finding employment. However, the literature on the effects of volunteerism on employability is inconclusive. Some research suggests that employers do not consider volunteer work to be significant (Slootjes & Kampen, 2017). On the other hand, contradicting research findings suggest that, for persons with less than six years' work experience, volunteer work may strengthen their employability (Qvist & Munk, 2018).

In this way, the study found the requirements for education, training, and experience to be noteworthy barriers to youth entering the labour market.

4.3.3.4. Access to assets and resources

4.3.3.4.1. Computers, printers, and the internet

Participants highlighted that access to physical assets such as computers and printers made the process of seeking employment easier, as it reduced the cost of accessing the internet to search for and apply for jobs.

> *"Just the transport because I have what the computer and printer at home so that saved me quite a lot of it"* (Kate).

This was supported by three participants who referred to how having access to computers and printers drastically reduced the financial costs of searching. George commented:

> *"Yes. It will be harder, 'cause of… it will… spend much more money… creating CV, you go to the internet. And then after they send you email…you send email via internet…err….at internet café… obviously they will charge me more"* (George).

At times participants would make use of the office resources at relatives' places of employment, which would leave them only with the expense of travelling.

> *"…They'll tell you about the certain post that came out but they can't talk to someone in HR to hire you, you have to be there so when I say that I want to do my CV they will say I must go to the office and do it. They let you do your thing, then send your documents if there is a need"* (Naomi).

Participants who did not have access to these resources faced greater challenges in searching for employment. This was in part due to the financial implications of using the facilities at an internet café. Participants' limited ability to use computers and the internet effectively posed a further

challenge. The necessity for access to these resources is echoed by the efforts of various state and public organisations, such as the National Youth Development Agency, that have sought to make computers and the internet accessible to young people to search for employment at their local youth offices (LYOs) (van der Merwe, Ngalo & Red, 2018). However, according to the NYDA database, only 17 of the 34 LYOs in Gauteng are operational, raising questions about their accessibility to young job seekers (National Youth Development Agency, 2016).

4.3.3.4.2.   Driver's licence

The study found that none of the participants possessed a driver's licence, which forms part of many entry-level job requirements, thus excluding them from applying for these posts.

> *"Driver's licence is a barrier for me because it has closed many doors especially on the police side, because every time they'd be like "Eh Joe do you have a driver's licence?" It's like no I don't have it. So why don't you go get a driver's licence then after that you can come talk to us. And it's like I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna do it. So with nowadays driver's licence is so expensive now you can even try to do on the right route but you'll never succeed. I don't know how many times I wrote my learner's and then it expires and when I go for learners again…"* (Thabo).

While not forming a direct part of the job-search process, having a driver's licence and access to a vehicle would give participants an added advantage when navigating the job-search process. Other identified challenges in obtaining a driver's licence were the financial cost, access to a vehicle in which to practise, and perceptions about the attainability of the licence. Thus the need to have a driver's licence was seen as a barrier that limited access to employment opportunities.

4.3.4.   The challenges youth encounter during the job-search process

The study found that youth encounter a range of challenges and barriers to employment during their job search. Some of these include limited access to opportunities as a result of being located far away from the urban hubs, and the gatekeeping of employment opportunities. The education system, the way it ignores the assets that youth possess by emphasising grades, and its failure to provide youth with relevant skills further serve as a barrier to employment for young job-seekers. The responsibility that youth have towards family, and the financial and non-financial costs associated with searching, further exclude youth from employment.

4.3.4.1. Poor education, limited training, and no experience

Ignoring assets and capabilities

Youth felt that the education system failed them by not creating a space or platform for them to explore and direct their skills, passions, and talents. This finding alludes to the different focus areas of government schools, private schools, and former 'Model C' schools.

> *"That's another thing with the South African system when it comes to these local schools is that they focus on education and there is talent. When it comes to school it's education only but not talent. In primary school, I was a soccer player and I was one of the best players, when I came to Mosupatsela they had soccer in grade 9 but from grade 10 they refused and said we focus strictly on education, they did not focus on talent, they also dropped netball, everything"* (Kat).

The findings suggest that the public basic education system under-emphasises extra-curricular activities that tap into and give expression to the passions and abilities of young people, while overemphasising tradition formal education.

> *"I would have because if, I think also like high school does not encourage like that self-awareness and a thing go take psychometric tests but it's like okay, what is a psychometric test and so it's not something that you really taken to heart or you feel like it's fundamental because you're not really told what it does or what it's all about and I think that if we were taught to be self-aware and to actually engage in what we're good at and what our strengths and stuff like that, and also with the help of teachers because teachers spent time with us like ah, you're very good at this, you can actually go into this, and this and that, you know and I feel like medicine could have not been my only option"* (Kate).

The findings also suggest that the education system fails young people by not facilitating the process of their gaining self-awareness, which they feel is a necessary skill to navigate the job-seeking process. The use of processes such as psychometric testing is regarded as partial, as youth feel it is not in context, and they are not taught how to make use of the information that is offered. This coincides with the objectives of the Department of Basic Education, which focuses significantly on outputs such as "Improv[ing] the quality of mathematics, science and technology education in order to increase the number of matric mathematics and science passes" and "improv[ing] overall educational performance in the long term" as reflected in the national strategic objectives for 2014/15 (Department of Basic Education, n.d.). Moreover, the curriculum aims to equip learners with the skills and knowledge that should be meaningful in their lives. This reflects an inherent commitment in the education system to throughput and performance, as opposed to asset-based education that recognises the uniqueness of the individual.

Social development, the overarching framework in South Africa, is rooted in person-centred and asset-based thinking, which raises questions about whether the National Certificate Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) system is the best model for education in South Africa.

The barrier of poor grades

The findings suggest that youth perceive low grades as a significant barrier to accessing employment. Participants felt that the education system reduces their aptitude for numerical literacy, which determines their access to opportunities such as funding for tertiary education. As a result, the failure to access these opportunities often means that young people cannot access tertiary education, and this lowers their chances of finding work.

> *"From my point of view, I think it's the demand for bursaries. In most cases when it comes to students, they pass matric with average marks and the demand of the bursary requires the marks from 70% upwards, but for those who get 50s and 60s in most cases they don't get anywhere in terms of bursaries, so in most cases that discourages the youth"* (Kat).

The challenge of low grades and the need for youth to supplement these grades was also noted by another participant.

> *"And I matriculated in 2013 I passed but not with good symbols. I went back and wrote again I got a better symbol and tried to… I went to CJC after my first attempt of writing matric"* (Thandi).

Youth felt excluded from opportunities, primarily due to the challenge of accessing training and education in light of the poor results many South African youth obtain (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Heyneman, 1985; Spaull, 2015; Spaull, 2013).

> *"Yes, I went to UJ then my marks then they said I can't do paramedics because I don't qualify"* (Martha).

This echoes a challenge discussed in the literature that highlights the ways in which poor quality education in the primary and secondary schooling of South African youth blocks them from exploring the available training opportunities (Graham et al., 2017; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Spaull, 2013).

Lack of relevant skills

The findings also suggest that youth felt underprepared and under-skilled to navigate the world of work. Skills such as communication in the context of an interview and professional conduct are not integral components in the education system, thus requiring youth to develop these independently (Thern et al., 2017).

> *"Another thing is that you need sell yourself, when you get to the interview it counts how you sell yourself. In most interviews that I went to the question that I struggled with was 'what are you going to*

be bring to this company maybe in five years' time?'. I think the youth needs to prepare themselves for that" (Kat).

On the other hand, one participant made reference to the revisions that have taken place in the education system and that appear to be making strides towards narrowing the gap between basic education and life after matric.

> *"I was actually helping someone with LO recently this week, I've actually seen how evolved it has been because now they have added a lot of vital things which now you would actually be able to apply. But back then when I was in High School none of the things existed. But back then no"* (Thabo).

Nevertheless, the majority of the youth felt that the education system does not sufficiently prepare them for effectively navigating the world of work, thus negatively affecting their job-search prospects. This echoes the arguments within existing literature which emphasizes that quality of education in South Africa perpetuates the skills mismatch within the labour market as school leavers do not possess the skills and competencies needed, given that the South African economy is built significantly on higher levels of skills, thus particularly affecting the Despite having acquired significantly higher levels of education than their parents, young people today are not yet reaping the rewards in terms of access to the labour market (South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) 2016a).

4.3.4.2.   The cost of seeking employment

Over and above the various forms of support that youth require, and the impact of not having access to them, a recurring theme of the cost of seeking employment emerged. These costs were not limited to financial costs, but the financial implications of seeking work were dominant.

Financial cost of job-searching

All six interview participants made reference to the financial cost of seeking employment. This also emerged in the focus group discussion, with three participants referring to the financial cost of searching. Activities such as searching the web, using the computer facilities at local internet shops, printing and scanning CVs and personal documents, among other tasks, are all costly activities that need to be carried out repeatedly in response to the different job opportunities that emerge. The task of physically dropping off CVs and of attending interviews at different businesses or organisations, often located outside of the township or community where the participant resides, further added to the cost of seeking employment. This supports the findings of the Siyakha Report which found that young jobseekers spent on average R550 per month seeking employment, with variations between urban and rural youth (Graham et al., 2017). This reiterates the high cost of seeking employment.

"On average I would spend something like R200 a week…Maybe not in a week, maybe two weeks going to town, coming back and going to other places maybe there's Lenasia, there's local towns like Roodepoort. Only when I have to travel outside Soweto I would actually use cash" (Thabo).

As highlighted previously, the spatial mismatch between where youth are located and the potential of job opportunities required youth to leave the south and south-west of Johannesburg in pursuit of jobs. This inevitably had financial implications that, for many youth, presented a challenge.

"I was spending almost R150 because to catch a taxi it was expensive. It's almost R18 when I come back I spend almost R50. So, it was R150 for the copies, on top of that again I'm gonna catch a taxi maybe going to Melrose Arch so that I could look something, maybe at restaurants, retail or something" (Macy).

Several participants highlighted transport as the most significant cost associated with searching, with limited options available to reduce or remove this cost. Participants felt that the travel expense was not unique to searching for employment, but it became a challenge even when exploring other options such as youth development programmes and education and training opportunities.

"That's why I was really interested in this research because I went through the whole process [referring to ENKE] but I couldn't finish it because there were times I didn't have money but even me being there on certain days it did something it meant a lot to me" (Thandi).

Some emerging research has investigated the impact of providing youth with travel vouchers as a municipal-level intervention in response to the cost of travel for youth (Graham et al., 2017; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Nevertheless, the cost implication remains a significant barrier for youth seeking employment.

The financial cost of training and education

While finances were a direct challenge to youth seeking employment, finances also presented a barrier to youth entering education and training opportunities. While most participants highlighted achieving low grades, some did qualify for entrance to training opportunities. However, the issue of finances re-emerged as a barrier, hindering youth from pursuing this alternative route to employment.

"My plan was to go to University but unfortunately the problem was money and then my results were not that higher so that I can go to the University. So, my Uncle said whatever that I think to do it's okay, then I started to say I prefer to start my own business" (Macy).

Similarly, Thandi outlined having qualified for the training opportunity in terms of passing the pre-requisite evaluations, but the family could not afford to pay the required fees.

"My restrictions were money, in everything, because I went to Netcare I got there I go in there was a test that we wrote I made it and now money. There's a bridging course that we had to do which was R15 000 and that was oh my word" (Thandi).

These findings highlight the multiple ways in which finances pose challenges for young people seeking employment and education opportunities. However, access to non-financial resources also emerged as a barrier.

Time

With regard to non-financial costs, participants also made reference to the amount of time spent on job-search related activities. One participant highlighted restructuring her day in order to capitalise on internet data: she has to use her cellular phone, so she spends a large portion of the night surfing the internet for job opportunities.

"I had a structure but it got to me doing it towards the whole day. I'd wake up in the morning clean the house then I start looking but because I was constantly looking sometime during the day I would do it and then I started budgeting. There's this midnight data that they sell, I started walking up midnight surf through the internet and look for something and respond in the morning write them down do the same thing over and over again" (Thandi).

Similarly, Thabo equated it to a working day in terms of the amount of time it took, particularly on days spent conducting direct inquiry search activities.

"Because I have to go there in the morning, I normally have to wake up at 5am and maybe leave the house at half past 6 and then commute to destination and maybe it's gonna be the whole day, maybe I'm going to have my time around 3pm I'm gonna be back. So, it's like a nine hours it's like a full shift" (Thabo).

This is supported by the existing literature on the time that youth spend searching for employment opportunities. This is arguably supported by the findings of a study on South Africans' use of time, which indicated an average of 340 minutes spent on seeking employment and waiting to seek employment (Statistics South Africa, 2001, p. 108). More recent findings indicate an average of 213 minutes each day spent on active searching, excluding travel and waiting times (Statistics South Africa, 2010, p. 116). This illustrates the time-consuming nature of seeking employment.

4.3.5.   Resources and aids that assist in seeking employment

Participants also discussed the various structures, resources, and factors that aided their job-search process.

4.3.5.1. Spirituality and optimism

Linked to organisations, participants highlighted the role of church and spirituality in providing non-financial support to young job-seekers, although it is unclear what forms of support churches provided.

"I think church also is… They support everybody who is there, if you're a student, if you're employed or if you're employed… they actually have everything for everyone, they cater to everyone" (Thabo).

One participant highlighted that her faith assisted her to maintain perspective, and ultimately facilitated a positive outlook amidst a difficult and disheartening process.

"I think also praying it's just grounds you to look at things differently sometimes when they're just in your face you start approaching them… looking at them differently. Because I have friend you asked somebody who knows someone it actually worked out for her but when I had to ask her to put in a word for me it didn't work out. The handing in the CV I had another friend who handed in her CV and she got the job but it never worked out for me so I just concluded that sometimes certain things when it's not for you it's just not for you" (Thandi).

Participants' responses highlight that faith and spirituality may not provide the desired outcome; however, they help to strengthen and build resilience to deal with the challenges of seeking employment and attempting to secure income. This is echoed in the response below:

"They were very low. Very very low and my uncle was so disappointed. He didn't expect I was going get those results but I said to him whatever that I tried God helped me" (Macy).

Some literature supports the notion that faith and spirituality buffers the effects of stress (Belding, Howard, McGuire, Schwartz & Wilson, 2009). While some participants did not make explicit reference to faith or spirituality, a positive outlook appeared to have buffered them from the stress of job-seeking.

"No, the only thing that keep on pushing me is even if it's not happening now but eventually it will. Even if I don't get a job now but eventually I will get a job" (Martha).

The findings about faith as a resource or support structure for youth seeking employment suggest that faith-based organisations can play a role in supporting job-seekers in terms of both tangible and non-tangible support.

4.3.5.2. Community-based and non-profit organisations (NPOs)

The study's findings show that local community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-profit organisations (NPOs) played a role in providing social support for job-seeking youth. This was done through facilitating access to resources and information, as well as emotional support in the form of encouragement. One participant, Thabo, highlighted an NPO that offered internet access to local youth, and was located in the community, further aiding access and frequent use.

> *"This organisation that's local they offer free internet services so I actually cash in on that with the online applications and with the door to door me I'm a fitness person so I always walk"* (Thabo).

Participants also referred to the ways in which organisations outside of the community helped youth to access information and opportunities remotely by engaging them on social media platforms such as Facebook. Martha said:

> *"They [ENKE] sending us, there's a group on Facebook where they sending us jobs if you're interested you can apply and then like now I think you have been contacted by Athini telling you about us, so yes"* (Martha).

In this way, youth can use the financial resources they would otherwise have used to travel to purchase data to view opportunities remotely. These organisations also provided participants with the opportunity to inquire about and gain clarity on the vacancies prior to applying, as evident in George's answer:

> *"I think it's because of…like before applying… you can ask questions like what skills do they need and what experience do they need"* (George).

By providing support to job-seekers, CBOs bridge the access gap that youth face by bringing resources to the community, often at no cost to them. These organisations also help youth to access opportunities in one convenient location such as a social media page or website, making the search easier for job-seekers.

4.3.6.   Social Support

A key finding relates to the ways in which youth obtain social support to aid their job-search process. 'Social support' is defined as a sense of feeling supported or the perception that support is available (Kort-Butler, 2017). Alternatively, 'social support' refers to "the aid or assistance exchanged through social relationships and interpersonal transactions" (Fleury, Keller & Perez, 2009, p. 2). Social support has been divided into various forms or categories, with three main categories emerging in the literature: informational, instrumental, and emotional. The literature suggests that social support can act as a buffer to stressful life events, and thus increase resilience (Atkinson, Liem & Liem, 1986).

Informational support refers to advice, guidance, or information that addresses a need or alleviates a problem (Kort-Butler, 2017). Instrumental support refers to tangible aid in the form of money or shelter, while emotional support refers to support in the forms of sympathy, encouragement, or building self-esteem.

The study's findings highlight both sides of social support, that is how the lack of social support negatively impacted their job-search, and how accessing social support aided their job-search process. The findings revealed that participants received support from friends, family, and organisations, and that youth benefitted from obtaining all three forms of support (emotional, informational, and instrumental).

4.3.6.1.   Peers

Participants' responses indicated that peers and family form part of the primary sources of social support. However, the youth drew on all three types of social support to create a network of support. Similar to the emotional support provided by family, participants highlighted the ways in which peers provided support.

> *"My friends because most of my friends we are supporting each other. Because we finished schooling then none of us got the opportunity to go further their education, so we're looking for a job together then we're encouraging ourselves, we will get it no matter what"* (Martha).

Participants highlighted that the sense of community among job-seekers provided an avenue for both emotional and instrumental support, evident in participants having sought work together. Participants also began to tap into the skills and knowledge available among themselves, making use of the broadened social capital. This in part challenges the assumption that young people from low socio-economic backgrounds have little social capital, evidenced through the opportunities youth access through their informal networks (Putnam, 1993).

> *"My social capital is a bit broad now, and we also built a social capital among ourselves as a catalyst because everybody has now spread away. Although when we started people, others were from Kagiso, Soweto and Randfontein but now we have this little bond of ours whereby we know 1,2,3 when they want something that has to do with police work they always come to me, I don't know why but when they want something that has to do with organisations and leadership they always go to Lesego and if you want something that's gonna be writing you always go to Kate because she's a writer. So, we've actually built ourselves a social network to say Kate I need to write a motivational letter joe and you know my English in not that par so help. So, you just tell her what to do and she'll do her magic"* (Thabo).

Participants' responses gave insight into the ways that various entities provided support, as well as the different forms of support provided and the ways in which they aided the job-seeking process.

The literature on youth and peer groups indicates that peers often form part of the primary group from which youth seek social support (Kort-Butler, 2017). Moreover, from a developmental perspective, adolescence is the developmental stage in which peers are a critical source of affirmation and support (Brady, Dolan, & Canavan, 2014; Erikson, 1978). The issue with social support, however, is the lack of means available to measure its impact and extent, thus limiting the ways in which social support can be incorporated into support structures aimed at helping young job-seekers. Nevertheless, social support was identified as a beneficial resource in the job-seeking journey of unemployed youth.

4.3.6.2. Family: A two-edged sword

Parents and family members were identified as the primary source of instrumental or tangible support, primarily in the form of money, which participants used to fund their job search. With regard to emotional support, youth gained encouragement and motivation primarily from friends and family.

4.3.6.2.1. Family and kinship: An invaluable asset

The study found that participants identified family as a key source of social support. Participants highlighted the various ways and sentiments shared by family that formed the critical emotional support participants felt they needed.

> *"[My family has been] very supportive and encouraging, even if they didn't call me I told tell they did call but they will keep encouraging me that don't give up. That's why I'm still pushing and pushing"* (Martha).

One participant, Martha, highlighted that, despite their living in different provinces, phone calls between the participant and her family would provide the encouragement she felt she needed to persevere. Another participant discussed how parents who support the opportunities that do emerge, regardless of the kind of job it is, provide the motivation and cognitive space for youth to think of careers rather than jobs.

> *"Parents who want you to be all of this will support you to get there. At home when I was like I'm going to be a hostess they were like okay cool. You need to start somewhere and if you know what you are working towards hopefully you will get there"* (Naomi).

The study also found that, beyond parents, the support of caregivers and extended family was as significant and motivating as the emotional support that participants received from parents, as illustrated in the comment made by Macy:

> *"Yes, they really support us. Everything that we decide we want to do they are there they support, especially my Uncle"* (Macy).

This suggests that young job-seekers are receptive to and in need of social support, regardless of its source. This is echoed by research findings that suggest that youth may draw on similar forms of support from facets of their primary group, which includes family and friends (Kort-Butler, 2017; Umberson, Crosnoe & Reczek, 2010).

While family plays an integral role in providing social support to job-seekers, the study also found family to be a source of pressure that negatively affects job-seekers and their search experience. This happens through the familial expectations of financial support and parents' expectations, and as a result of complex pre-existing family dynamics.

4.3.6.2.2. 'Black tax' and family pressure

While limited, the literature defines 'Black tax' as the economic and social support that the middle class provides for family and the wider kinship network (Magubane, 2016). This can include food, shelter, clothing, and money. Black tax is often the result of, and is perpetuated by, a combination of internal factors such as the death of family members, and external factors such as high unemployment rates and inequality in society (Nattrass & Seekings, 2002; Seekings, Liebbrandt & Nattrass, 2004). On the basis of ubuntu, the spirit of communalism, youth feel pressured to contribute to household income, which represents a challenge in their job-search experience.

The study found that the absence of financial resources in households placed significant pressure on young people, particularly those who were among the oldest children in the household. On the one hand, this served to motivate the young people to find employment. This is echoed in the existing literature on youth unemployment (United Nations Commission for Social Development, 2007; van Aardt, 2012; Yu, 2013). On the other hand, it put pressure on them to choose employment over other post-school avenues such as education and training, as evident in George's comment:

> *"It is because… lack of income in the house… and especially boys. I have my needs…. And you know… the things that I need is too expensive. And my younger brothers were struggling... maybe they want to go out with their friends, they don't have money. Or sport, they going from…to… they going to go play maybe another field they don't have fees to go there. So I came with the idea, let me find a job, then collect the money, then send it back"* (George).

The findings suggest that parents place a limit on the length of time young people have to figure out what it is they intend to do, further adding to the pressurised youth experience. James Marcia developed a theory of stages of identity development that describes four kinds of identity status in which individuals exist: foreclosure, moratorium, identity achievement, and identity diffusion (Marcia, 1980). 'Moratorium' is the status in which members explore aspects of their identity, experience intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict, and grapple with issues of identity in order to find

closure in relation to that aspect of their identity (Marcia, 1980). Marcia's 'identity achievement' refers to the stage at which the individual "has experienced a decision-making period and is pursuing self-chosen occupation and ideological goals" (Marcia, 1980, p. 111). This stage can be related to adolescents who are grappling with options among their occupational and educational interests, as they progress towards identity achievement. As evident in Naomi's response, youth from previously disadvantaged communities do not have the luxury of navigating these developmental stages free of the pressure to supplement family income and support the family.

> *"Because my mother would be like remember in school you were like a top student, right now you are sitting in the house with the marks, what are they doing for me. The pressure that she was putting, even though it was indirect you could feel the hit that you actually need to do something. It's either you go back to school or you look for a job. So, when I graduated last year, I was like I need to find work. I started at the call centre and I saw that it doesn't work and then I joined this Justice in Peace Solidarity at church, we actually help people who don't have IDs, SASA, Grants and whatever"* (Naomi).

The study also found that young people are faced with a pressure rooted in the assumption that success in basic education leads inevitably to success in finding employment. However, the literature suggests that employers do not trust graduates of the basic education system, and are thus unlikely to hire them without additional activities and experience to motivate and support the job-seeker (Bhorat, 2014; Graham et al., 2017; Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008). Nevertheless, parents and families continue to hope and to expect young people to secure jobs and add to the family income.

> *"I'm 21, I have a big sister, and a small sister, I have mother, I have father so I have to take care of the whole family. But when they [referring to foreign nationals] come here they have approximately a year to fix their things, no one calls at home ayibuyi imali kanti [when are you sending the money]. No one questions how far are you with your success. You can put it in both ways they work hard but they don't have too much pressure to do that and that's why they master it in a different form in our South African system"* [Kat].

As highlighted in Kat's comment, the study found that youth felt pressured to support their families financially and to improve their personal well-being at the same time, which further limited their exploration process (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015). Marcia's stage of identity achievement refers to the stage at which the individual "has experienced a decision-making period and is pursuing self-chosen occupation and ideological goals" (Marcia, 1980, p. 111). However, youth from previously disadvantaged communities face manifold challenges while attempting to navigate these developmental stages.

4.3.6.2.3.   Parental expectations

Youth are faced with the expectation of making career-related choices that ought to benefit and support their parents and families, and the youth themselves. Choosing between education, employment, and entrepreneurship is weighed against the effect it will have on the wider kinship network attached to the young person. The literature on the career aspirations of African youth has indicated that family plays a critical role in the career aspirations of young people (Watson, McMahon & Longe, 2011). This is to say that they have to consider how their choices affect the household and potentially their extended family, as evident in Lee's comments:

> *"For me it goes back to 2016 July, I got a job in transportation and after six months I decided that this job thing is not for me, I want to be an entrepreneur. So the first of January I left, after leaving my job then my mom wasn't happy and then my younger sibling continued to work there, so everything was fine…"* (Lee).

Half of the study's participants highlighted the expectations of family members as a source of pressure. However, the study found that some participants were able to identify some of the motivations and thinking patterns that underpin their parents' desire for their children to become economically stable. Naomi's response highlighted that some parents have a desire for financial stability for their children, stemming from concerns for their wellbeing in the event that they (the parents) should die.

> *"They think once security and stability they gone, Oh my Goodness my child will suffer when once dead. Rather they become a doctor. Some parents even say that pray to God that you get married to a man who is rich what-what. I was not raised by my dad, I was only raised by my single mother so there's always that thing of look out for yourself make sure by this age you're secure enough, even if I die now, you have stability you're alright. Don't go running to your father because I'm not there, at least have something to lean on so it's always been that okay go to school, okay you're working, push this. Most parents feel you need to be stable, they won't be there forever – their role will not be there"* (Naomi).

Participants believed that parents have the desire for their children to achieve financial stability. Another dimension of the financial stability that parents desire is rooted in materialism. Mandla's response highlights the parents' desire for their children to own things that reflect a life of comfort, such as "nice clothes". This pressure is regarded as a barrier to or a challenge in the process of seeking employment.

> *When it comes to clothing I was wearing the same clothes, each and every day I had to wash them. I used to get comments from my mom comparing me with my cousin, saying your cousin is working, is*

wearing nice shoes and all of that, you understand…. Saying that if I want to be a successful business
person one day you need to wake up and go get a job, so it was two months back I went back and now
I'm working night shifts, you understand. So, each and every day I have a thought, I don't like this job
but at home the situation, you understand" (Mandla).

A long-standing body of literature has indicated correlations between individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds and an inclination towards materialism; however, no causality has been established (Duh, 2016; Li, Lu, Xia & Guo, 2018). The desire for material wealth is likely due to parents perceiving these possessions as markers of success. Closely linked to the notion of materialism is parents' concern with the opinions and perceptions of others – e.g., family members and community members – about the kinds of employment opportunities youth pursue. As a result, youth felt a sense of pressure to include certain jobs, fields, and industries, while omitting others, due to the perceived likelihood of success and financial stability associated with those careers.

"Because they have this picture of what kind of a job I should I get. For now, I don't have those
qualifications so if I say okay mama I'm going to market there for jobs and this and that, No you can't
go work there, what will people say? You understand, they want you to do something suitable for them.
Like Eh heh who's gonna take us out of the struggle that we're in? You understand, so it brings you
back again to education, honestly for me it's hard" (Bree).

Ultimately, the act of exploring and pursuing employment opportunities was not a process determined by the youth based on their dreams, interests, and passions. Rather, wider external influences played a role, with parents being a source of pressure and, to some extent, serving as challenges and barriers during the job-seeking process.

4.3.6.2.4. Lack of social support

In light of the extensive pressure that youth feel, the study found that young people felt under-supported; and this lack of support emerged as a challenge in the process of seeking employment. This is evident in the response of Lee:

"So, in January, I left my job then I started talking with this guy, we were supposed to start something.
So, from January until now everything started going down, you understand. So, at home there were no
support at all for me, so I got no transport fares if let's say maybe something came up and want to go
there and check it out. I had no support at all" (Lee).

The participants' responses suggested that the lack of social support from family, particularly instrumental support in the form of money, made it difficult to access and pursue opportunities. This is echoed in the literature, as families are identified as the primary source of financial support for

youth seeking employment (Graham et al., 2017; van der Merwe et al., 2018). However, the participants' responses also suggest that youth value non-financial support.

"No one was there. Like everyone disappeared. We were just in this hole as a family. As when we were good, everyone was good. We've never created that whole space that you are at the bottom of the food chain, we're here. Because we were there but now I'm at the bottom, nobody was there nobody was reaching out" (Thandi).

One participant highlighted the negative emotional and relational consequences that emerged from the lack of social support she experienced, particularly from the wider family network. Linked to this is the challenge of pre-existing familial dynamics.

4.3.6.2.5.   Kinship network and poor family dynamics

Several participants discussed or alluded to the complexities that emerge when seeking assistance and support from extended family and the wider kinship network. This is largely due to pre-existing tensions such as competition, which then creates barriers for young people in terms of accessing opportunities or seeking financial support to find employment or enter training and education.

"So in most families, our black families you find that maybe my dad has passed on and I have a little sister whom I don't even share a father with, our relationship crashes from there. Because if I grow up and my little my sister grows up and she has kids and I have kids, they won't have a relationship because we feel like our blood is not even connected even though we say we come from the same mother. So, I think it starts from the head of the house, if the mother makes sure that when we grow up we are united, we are loving, and we share Christmas together and we share food together, we share everything together there no way the bond will…[sever]" (Mandla).

Participants referred to the structure and composition of Black families and the dynamics of single-parent households, blended families, and half-siblings, which affect bonds, in turn affecting the social capital in the household and kinship network. Research highlights the effects of family structure on career aspirations, suggesting that family structure has implications for the resources available, both financial and non-financial, which in turn affects the opportunities available to children as well as the quality of relationships, all of which affects aspects such as confidence and self-esteem (Davids & Roman, 2013; Ward, Makusha & Bray, 2015). This is linked to and stems in part from the effects of apartheid, which broke down the foundation of Black society by dispersing family members due to the geographic placement of residential spaces in relation to employment spaces (Burawoy, 1976; Rotich, Ilieva & Walunywa, 2015; Southall, 2016).

"With the extended families, I have this belief that let's say for instance if my aunt has two children and her sister which is my mom has three, if two of them are working, definitely sure she doesn't want the other three to surpass her children, you understand. So, that's why our own parents don't want us to go

visit family members over the holidays to go see mang-mang [so-and-so] because when I get there they will show you that you and your family are poor and you gonna stay there forever" (Mandla).

The findings indicate that the high degree of competition in families was seen as restricting the extent of support to which young people would have access, thus emerging as a barrier to accessing opportunities. One participant, Siya, extended the tensions and dynamics to Black people as a race, and the barriers created in the Black community.

"When I take into consideration all the points that we have been raising, it shows that as a race… Indians are united and when they are united they're successful. Us Blacks we're not united and that's why we have a high unemployment rate as Blacks, not Whites not Indians, that's what the statistics shows. We will remain that way if we continue with the mentality that our parents had" (Siya).

Participants echoed this perspective by drawing comparisons between their perceptions of social capital and social support available among other races as opposed to that in the Black community, which often contradicts the values of Ubuntu. These sentiments reflect the work of Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon, among other pan-African authors, who argued against disunity among people of colour and in favour of collective responsibility and solidarity (du Toit, 2008; Mpungose, 2016). The participants suggested that the beliefs and perspectives they criticised perpetuate high unemployment among Black people, and add to the complex web of challenges that young people have to overcome to find employment.

4.3.7.   The effects of the job-search process

4.3.7.1.   The emotional pain

Overall, six participants expressed the view that the job-search process and experience was not enjoyable and was largely negative. The findings indicate that 7 of the 12 of the participants felt that job-seeking had a negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of young people. This supports the literature that states that a unemployment and income poverty is associated with poor overall health outcomes (Thern, de Munter, Hemmingsson & Rasmussen, 2017). Participants such as Thabo made reference to the impact that the process had on their sense of self-worth and significance, particularly when reflecting on their inability to be productive members of society.

"It's not a fun space to be. Let's take public transport for instance, normally I use Rea Vaya for going anywhere within the City and so I would actually be sitting there with student or someone who's going to work, and you are dressed looking like you're going to work when you are going to look for work and not knowing the very same person that you're sitting next to is the very same person you'll be handing your CV to" (Thabo).

Thandi, too, described how the repetitive nature of employment-seeking activities, with the same result, left her feeling hopeless and in despair.

> *"You're doing the same thing over and over again but there were days where I'd just stops I feel like screw this I'm not looking for anything I'm not doing anything because my head has had it"* (Thandi).

The hopelessness, frustration, and feelings of stagnation were often made worse by the lack of social support and the additional pressure from family – and from being compared with their peers. Bree's response illustrates how the participants' self-esteem was impacted:

> *"And I'm like okay fine I'm gonna change in matric and I took Maths Literacy and it was fine for me, but then now it's like we told you, look at so-so is now at UJ, she did pure maths. She's working for herself and will be able to drive a car and you'll be doing laundry, stuff like that. So that breaks me, it pulls me down and make me feel like I should have continued with pure maths and maybe my marks were going to be okay and I could get there and all that because remember our parents think if you don't have Maths you can't go to Varsity"* (Bree).

Participants like Thandi resolved to internalise their unemployment status and assume responsibility for their inability to find employment, ignoring the fact that unemployment is a national phenomenon.

> *"I don't know… I feel like I wasn't desperate enough I wasn't looking enough…I don't know… I knew that I had what it takes to make whatever opportunity I get work, but… it just didn't work. I feel like I didn't have that drive maybe I felt I have it but my actions were the complete opposite I don't know.*
> *…After CJC a couple of months after CJC I realised this life it's just too much for me and I think I started sinking into depression that's when it became way too much for me being at home not working [you have to ask for money to buy bread]*. It was too much for me then I started looking for a job"* (Thandi).

These findings illustrate the negative impact that the job-search experience had on the young participants, facilitating the development of stress and symptoms of depression in some. This coincides with the existing literature, which suggests a strong correlation between unemployment and poor mental health and wellbeing (Cygan-Rehm, Kuehnle & Oberfichtner, 2017; Paul & Moser, 2009; Thern, de Munter, Hemmingsson & Rasmussen, 2017). Overall, the findings point toward unemployment having a largely negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of youth seeking employment.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to paint a picture of the results obtained as they pertain to the experiences of young people seeking employment. The first section outlined the demographic profile of the participants with regard to their ages, their geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, their employment status at the time of the study, and the duration of their job searches. Participants in the study were Black males and females between the ages of 18 and 25, from the south and south-west of Johannesburg. Half of the participants (6 out of 12), were employed at the time of the study, while the remaining participants were equally split between unemployment, self-employment, and enrolment in training and education.

In light of these demographic factors, the second section sought to discuss the findings of the study in relation to the sub-themes that emerged from the research. The sub-themes were drawn from quotes by the participants, which the student used to interpret the discussions, and which were then supported by the existing literature.

With regard to perceptions of unemployment, participants were mostly unaware of, or did not take into consideration, the context of high unemployment in South Africa. However, they were cognisant of the history of South Africa and, to some extent, of how it shaped the unemployment landscape. Participants predominantly held the perception that youth are lazy and have the luxury of comfort that previous generations did not, adding to their understanding of the high youth unemployment rates.

Participants outlined the approach and activities they engaged in while seeking work, with most of them using a largely unstructured, opportunity-based strategy. With regard to their search activities, the majority of the youth relied predominantly on online-based searching, with direct inquiry searches being the next most popular method. Reasons for this centred on the cost of searching, and participants seeking the most efficient ways to find employment.

The participants discussed the challenges they faced while seeking employment, as well as the barriers that emerged, thus complicating their job-search experience. The findings included the spatial mismatch that excluded the youth from opportunities on the basis of distance and the related cost implications. The participants felt that the structure and quality of education in the public sector underprepared them to search for work. They also described the pressure of family responsibilities placed on them, as well as the high cost of searching, often negatively, that affected their ability to search for employment.

In addition, the findings illustrated the various resources and aids that the youth perceived as supporting their job-search process. These include their possession of and access to assets such as cellular phone devices and computers, which facilitate practical support while searching for work. Similarly, the availability of organisations such as CBOs and NGOs, which make resources and non-tangible support available to youth, also aided the process. The participants described the role of faith and social support as having buffered them from the stress of the process, and as helping to undergird their resilience and endurance through the difficult process.

Lastly, participants described the effects that the process of seeking employment had on their emotional wellbeing, with most participants experiencing heightened emotional distress and overall poor mental health. In light of the participants' experiences, various recommendations can be made for ways in which youth seeking employment can be better supported to improve the job-search experience and, one hopes, improve their employment outcomes, while simultaneously decreasing the number of discouraged job-seekers. These suggestions and recommendations will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 5: Summary of the findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The discussion of the foregoing is arranged in line with the objectives. The limitations of the study are presented before the chapter is concluded.

This study aimed to explore the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth who have participated in a youth development programme. The study was conducted from a social development perspective that argues for the enhancement of human development and the advancement of social and economic opportunities that are available to people. The social development perspective draws on person-centred, rights-based, and empowerment approaches to achieve concurrent social and economic development (Midgley, 1995; Patel, 2015).

The study applied a qualitative approach and an exploratory research design to gain insight into the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth. Responses were collected from 12 youths aged 18-25 years who were participants in the Catalyst programme, a youth development programme in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The participants were from communities in the south and south-west of Johannesburg, namely Soweto and Kagiso. The study emerged as a result of the student's interest in the experiences of unemployed youth from previously disadvantaged communities, particularly with finding employment. The data was collected between June and November 2017.

Participants in the study were selected through purposive sampling. Six participants were interviewed through face-to-face semi-structured interviews, while the remaining six were interviewed in a focus group. The data was analysed using Atlas.ti software and the Tesch (1990) thematic analysis method.

The goal of this study was to explore the job-seeking experiences of unemployed youth who are participants in a youth development programme in Johannesburg.

The objectives of the study were to:

   i.   Describe the job-seeking activities undertaken by unemployed youth.
  ii.   Explore the job-seeking challenges experienced by unemployed youth.
 iii.   Describe the positive experiences of job-seeking on the part of unemployed youth.

iv.   Develop recommendations for youth development workers who work with unemployed youth.

In light of these objectives, a summary of the study's findings is given below.

5.2. Summary of findings

The study was conducted in light of the four research objectives. The study provided various insights into young people's experience of unemployment. A summary of these findings, related to each of the respective objectives, is given below.

5.2.1.   Objective 1: Describe the job-seeking activities undertaken by unemployed youth

In light of the high youth unemployment rates in South Africa, the study aimed to explore the ways in which youth sought employment. Youth job-seekers predominantly made use of an unstructured approach to searching for employment, that is they did not plan for or have a strategy for seeking employment. Knowledge of the process and steps involved in job-seeking, for instance the model proposed by Quintanilla and Wahl (2017), namely (1) exploring, (2) researching, (3) applying, (4) interviewing, (5) following up, and (6) negotiating, may have helped participants better structure their search. The benefits of using a structured approach centre on efficiency. Participants who were structured in their approach were cognisant of the time and financial cost of searching, and thus were able to plan for the efficient use of time and money. However, neither of the approaches was associated with greater success in securing employment for the youth.

Participants employed two main methods of seeking employment opportunities: web-based searching and direct-inquiry searching. These findings are supported by existing literature with regards to the most frequently used methods of searching, however findings in prior research distinguish between methods used for searching for employment versus methods used for applying for the jobs (Graham et al., 2017; Lloyd & Liebbrandt, 2014). Web-based searching was the most popular method for several reasons. First, the use of personal mobile devices to search the internet made the method accessible to the youth. Second, despite high data costs, searching online was perceived as lower in cost due to the lack of travelling expenses. Third, web-based searches gave the youth access to a wider pool of opportunities that met their criteria, particularly through platforms, such as Lulaway and LinkedIn, that are specifically designed for finding employment. However, participants faced some challenges with this approach. First, the type of smart device they owned impacted the web search experience, sometimes creating barriers to applying for opportunities. At times it necessitated

the use of a computer to bridge the gap created by the device's limitations. Second, the online nature of the opportunities meant that participants entered a large and competitive pool of applicants. Third, the approach relies on the technological literacy of participants in order to tap into the full potential of the method.

The secondary approach used by the young people was the traditional one of inquiring at prospective places of employment and leaving one's curriculum vitae and supporting documents. Participants predominantly used this method in the context of retail jobs, characterised by leaving CVs at shopping malls and stores in the CBD. This approach was used for several reasons. First, participants believed that being able to speak to management would increase their chances of employment, which this approach allows for. Second, this approach allowed participants to gauge the likelihood of success, as they were sure their documents were received, which is not possible with an online search and application. Third, in-person searches were better received by friends and family, as they implied a more active search process than "sitting on your phone". On the other hand, the costs associated with this approach (printing, scanning, travel, and time) made it unsustainable. This echoes findings that indicate young job seekers spend an average of R550 seeking employment per month with an average of R350 going toward transportation (Graham et al., 2017). This approach also limited participants to the opportunities available at the specific location where they applied.

In this way, the study successfully described the ways in which unemployed youth search for employment, and the activities in which they engage, as discussed thoroughly in the section on participants' job-seeking processes in Chapter 4.

5.2.2.   Objective 2: To explore the job-seeking challenges experienced by unemployed youth

The process of seeking employment is not without its challenges. The participants encountered a range of challenges and barriers during the job-search process. These challenges can be organised into three broad categories: structural or systemic challenges, socio-economic challenges, and psychosocial challenges. With regard to the structural or systemic challenges, youth had to face the outcomes of a fractured education system, aligning with the existing literature regarding youth unemployment in South Africa. The poor quality of education, the lack of relevant skills, and the overall failure to prepare youth for the labour market were both contributors to and perpetuators of unemployment (Aliber, 2003; Bhorat, 2009; Lam, Leibbrandt, & Mlatsheni, 2008). In this way the supply of workers does not meet the demand for skills that are needed in the South African labour market, thus maintaining youth unemployment rates. Also, from a demand perspective, the mistrust

of employers in light of the poor education prevents youth from entering the labour market. The covert gatekeeping methods evident through the experience and qualification requirements listed in many entry level jobs further keep youth from accessing employment opportunities.

With regard to the socio-economic challenges, these pertain to the limited financial resources at a personal and household level, and are reflective of the macro-economic challenges in South Africa. Youth are faced with limited income in their households and with the high financial cost of seeking employment that stems from needing to access services such the internet, resources such as computers, printers, and scanners, and the cost of travelling in order to access employment opportunities. These challenges are located in a complex network of macro-level socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment rates, extensive poverty, and one of the highest levels of inequality globally. Moreover, the urban bias in development, which is part of the legacy of apartheid, creates a spatial mismatch that leaves youth geographically excluded from job opportunities as outlined in the literature (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Klasen & Woolard, 2008; Weir-Smith, 2014). And this network of challenges is set against the backdrop of a stagnant economy, evident in the 3% drop in employment figures for 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2018c). Failure to address these systemic and structural issues perpetuates and deepens inequality which directly contradicts the aims of social development theory and practice.

The psychosocial challenges faced by young work-seekers centre on the under-utilisation of their skills and capacity. Inherent to the social development framework is the notion of person-centredness, which in part draws on the skills, assets, and capabilities of people. Job-seeking and an absence from training and education does not enable youth to tap into these assets, thus wasting the potential of the labour force who are presently unemployed. In light of the financial strain and limited access to resources, youth face the additional challenge of pressure and expectations for support, primarily from their familial network. This in turn creates the challenge of poor mental health and wellbeing. This echoes the arguments highlighting the link between unemployment and poor health outcomes (Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986; Caban-Martinez, et al., 2012; Moller, 1992).

In this way, the study succeeded in meeting this research objective by exploring the various challenges and barriers that youth encounter while seeking employment. The findings and discussion in chapter 4 detail the narratives about these challenges and barriers.

5.2.3. Objective 3: To describe the positive experiences of job-seeking on the part of unemployed youth

In addition to identifying the challenges, the study also aimed to explore the positive experiences and support structures that youth encounter during the job-search process. The supporting factors can be divided into two broad categories: social support, and spirituality.

With regard to social support, the study found that youth benefitted significantly from the various forms of social support provided by a network of people and institutions. The three main sources of support included family, friends, and local organisations, with friends and family being the core providers of support. Friends and family accounted for the provision of emotional support and tangible support (money and shelter). Local organisations were other sources of informational and emotional support when necessary. While the role of social capital is acknowledged, the impact of social support is not widely explored in the existing literature on youth unemployment in South Africa, however interesting insights have emerged that can be used to strengthen programmes offered by YDPs. The literature on social capital emphasizes the opportunities youth access via their networks, however findings suggest the buffering effects social support from these networks can offer youth, against the negative health outcomes associated with unemployment.

Spirituality and optimism form the second category of support or aid that assisted the job-seeking process of unemployed youth. They made use of activities such as prayer to cultivate the resilience and perseverance needed to endure the job-search process. A positive outlook – despite not finding work – helped to keep participants looking. Together, spirituality and an optimistic outlook helped to buffer youth from the stress and challenges of seeking employment. Linked to the interdisciplinary collaboration social development promotes, the identification of spirituality as a barrier or protective factor from the stresses of unemployment and job-seeking, helps locate focus areas for the state and the welfare sector to increase focus, with regards to providing support and developing interventions for unemployed youth (Berner & Phillips, 2005; Lombard, 2007). Faith-based organizations (FBO) can be seen as an additional support structure for youth to draw support from. Moreover, with these FBOs often already located at a community level, the impact of their involvement, and support from the state can be better felt at a grassroots level.

In light of this, this study only partially met the objective of describing the positive experiences. The findings were centred on the aids and resources youth encountered or made use of, which only partly answers the question about their positive experiences. This is likely due to the questions that were developed about the positive experiences of youth, which placed a greater emphasis on the structures,

resources, and aids that assisted, rather than on the subjective experiences of the youth. Future research can explore aspects of the job-search process that youth regard as positive experiences.

5.2.4. Objective 4: To develop recommendations for the youth development programme

The final objective of the study was to develop recommendations for the youth development programme. These were developed in light of the experiences of the youth and the aspects they identified as assets, resources, as well barriers to the job-seeking endeavours. The study purposefully selected youth from the Catalyst programme, a non-profit youth development programme located in Johannesburg. The assumption was that youth who have made use of the services of a youth development programme would be in a better position to discuss their experience of seeking employment, as well as the support structures and barriers they have encountered. In light of the findings in Chapter Four, the recommendations below were developed. They are divided into three categories: recommendations pertaining to access to resources, social support, and reform in skills development, education, and training.

5.2.4.1. Facilitating access to resources

The study developed the following recommendations to aid access:

- Local youth development programmes, community-based SMMEs, and government facilities can improve access to critical resources such as computers, printers, and the internet to make the process of seeking employment easier for young people.
- Increased collaboration between the state, the private sector, and NGOs can aid in strengthening the community-level economy in order to create employment opportunities in communities, and to begin correcting the urban bias in development while facilitating access to jobs.
- Youth development agencies can support youth by providing information about and facilitating access to more varied and flexible learning pathways, and show young people how these affect their prospects.
- Practitioners can advocate for SMMEs in communities to provide young people with opportunities to gain experience, albeit through volunteering, while the government subsidises a stipend.

5.2.4.2. Social Support

Regarding social support, the study developed the following recommendations:

- Youth development programmes can promote and provide a framework for peer support, in which unemployed youth can collaboratively seek employment and learning opportunities while developing a network for emotional support.
- Practitioners can work to create a platform for community-based organisations and non-profit organisations to aid in providing social support for young job-seekers through mentorship and personal development programmes.

5.2.4.3.   Skills development, education, and training

Regarding skills development, education, and training, the following recommendations were developed:

- Youth development practitioners can advocate for reform in basic, further, and higher education to acknowledge the assets, capabilities, and passions of young people in the curriculum, and to work towards a more person-centred approach to education and learning.
- Government and researchers can work towards a more standardised education system that bridges the gaps between the public and private education systems, to give youth an equitable chance.
- YDPs and CBOs can advocate for increased funding options for students who are successful in completing secondary-level education but who are unable to pursue their studies due to financial constraints.
- Youth development programmes can work to enhance the employability of young people by acquainting them with the expectations and requirements of the work environment, and with the careers that are in demand, to align supply with demand.
- Practitioners can advocate for increased collaboration between education departments and labour departments to work towards developing a smoother transition between leaving education and entering the world of work.

5.3. Conclusion of the study

Youth unemployment remains a critical socio-economic challenge in South Africa. This study sought to expand the knowledge base by exploring the subjective experiences of unemployed youth. The reasons for the high unemployment rates in South Africa are manifold and complex, as they are often interconnected. While many policy and practice interventions have been implemented, youth unemployment and NEET rates remain high. Social development, the overarching framework in

South Africa, sees unemployment as the violation of human rights in that it limits the use of human potential and capital, is associated with poverty, negatively impacts the economy, and is detrimental to human development. The study found that youth are faced with challenges pertaining to financial constraints, the lack of appropriate skills training in the education system, and gatekeeping in places of employment, all of which keep young people from finding employment. The study also found that social support structures and spirituality serve as important resources that help youth seeking employment.

Key recommendations for improving employment rates centre on reforming the education system and the labour market system to address supply-side issues, such as the quality of education and the skills that young people possess when they leave training and education; and demand-side shortfalls, such as gatekeeping and the need for improved recruitment practices that support disadvantaged youth. Furthermore, in line with social development theory, increased intersectoral and interdepartmental collaboration and partnership is needed to address youth unemployment. Initiatives such as the Youth Employment Service appear to be a step in the right direction, as it brings government, corporates, and civil society together with existing employment policy and legislation, in an effort to facilitate access to the labour market and to promote growth in the economy. Person-centred approaches and interventions ought to come alongside the economically-driven interventions to raise the psychosocial facets of unemployment and to make efforts holistic and balanced.

Challenges such as urban bias, globalisation, and fiscal constraints experienced by the state continue to limit progress. In the South African context, a consciousness of the structural barriers inherited from apartheid is needed, and interventions ought to acknowledge and address disparities. Moreover, the highly dynamic world of work and continuous changes in the skills needed by the labour market require innovation, research, and collaboration between stakeholders to give South African youth a fair chance at employment. However, for any intervention to be effective, it must acknowledge the voices of the people it aims to serve. So research should continue to explore the experiences and perceptions of unemployed youth; and perhaps youth unemployment will begin to be addressed in a meaningful and sustainable way.

5.4. Recommendations for further research

Research plays a critical role in addressing challenges, and youth unemployment is no exception. The gaps in this study provide opportunities for future research endeavours.

5.3.1. Recommendations for youth development organisations:

- This study found that the high costs associated with searching for employment serve as a significant barrier to finding it. Further research on the feasibility of a transport and job-search subsidy for unemployed youth may help in developing a model in order to reduce the costs of travelling and searching for employment. Evidence of success has been found in Ethiopia (Franklin, 2015), and a similar model could be researched and piloted.
- The study found that youth perceived the current education system as one that does not celebrate or encourage their passions, abilities, and assets. Future research could explore the relationship between asset-based person-centred education and employment rates in a developing country.

5.3.2. Recommendations for researchers:

- This study focused on the 18-24 age cohort, whereas youth in South Africa are defined as persons aged 15-34. Moreover, this study focused on youth who possess the National Senior Certificate (i.e., matric). Future research could conduct a similar study to explore the experiences of youth aged 15-17 who have left basic education and opted not to enter further education and training (FET).
- The study found that, despite entering the same youth development programme, some participants were successful in finding employment and returning to education and training while others were not. The reasons for this are unclear. Future research regarding the impact of youth development programmes could be conducted to understand better the relationship between the support provided by the programme and the outcomes for unemployed youth.
- This study focused on the experiences of predominantly able-bodied youth, with the exception of one participant who is hearing impaired. To increase knowledge of the experience of youth, studies should explore the job-search and unemployment experiences of youth with disabilities.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to present a summary of the findings obtained through the research study, in line with the four research objectives. It outlined the limitations of the study as they pertain to the ages represented in the study, the small study population, and the challenge of the NEET criteria. In light of these limitations, the chapter highlighted the ways in which these challenges were addressed. This chapter also sought to provide summative comments about the study, before proceeding to outline recommendations for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

REC 02–125–2016   **19 May 2017**

APPLICANT   : XEJ Skosana
TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: *Job-seeking Experiences of Unemployed Youth Participants in a Youth Development Programme in Johannesburg*
DEPARTMENT   : Social Work

Dear Ms Skosana

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities; University of Johannesburg. Please quote the above clearance number in all correspondence with the REC.

The REC would like to extend their best wishes to you with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Tharina Guse
Chair: Faculty of Humanities REC
Tel: 011 559 3248 email:
tguse@uj.ac.za

Appendix B: Consent Letter

Department of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Prospective participant/parent/guardian

My name is Xoliswa Elizabeth Joan Skosana. I am a social worker and MA student in the University of Johannesburg. My student number is 216021164. I am conducting a study titled: *Job-seeking Experiences of Unemployed Youth Participants in a Youth Development Programme in Johannesburg*. In this study, I am interested in understanding the experiences of youth who are unemployed and have made use of the services provided by a youth development programme in Johannesburg. With this study, I am to make recommendations to this youth development programme.

Interviews and discussion groups will be conducted with selected participants. An interview schedule will be used during the interviews and discussion groups. Each session will take 60-90 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from it without any consequences. Your name will be kept confidential and your data will be destroyed should you withdraw from the study. There are no financial gains or rewards for participating in this study. The results of the study will be presented to the staff of the youth development programme without revealing your identity and you will also be able to read the report at the end of the study should you seek to do so.

I am conducting this study under the guidance of Mr M. Sobantu who is my supervisor. He can be contacted at msobantu@uj.ac.za or 011 559 2414 for further enquiries with regards to the study. In this study personal questions will be asked about your life experiences. These questions might remind you of some of the challenges you experienced in your life which in the process might leave you feeling sad or angry. Should this happen, I will provide you with the contact information of a social worker/counsellor within your area available to you.

Thank you for considering participating in the study. If you agree to take part, please complete the attached informed consent. If you are below the age of 18, kindly give your parent or guardian the form to complete on your behalf.

Yours faithfully,

Xoliswa Elizabeth Joan Skosana
(c) 0746723653
(e) elizabeth_joan@yahoo.com

Exploring the Job-seeking Experiences of Unemployed Youth Participants in a Youth Development Programme in Johannesburg

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Every participant, regardless of age, must complete the informed consent form before engaging in interview Participants under the age of 18 must also request their parent's consent.

Your surname	
Your first names	

I, the above mentioned individual, volunteer to participant in the research project conducted by Xoliswa Elizabeth Joan Skosana called "*Job-seeking Experiences of Unemployed Youth Participants in a Youth Development Programme in Johannesburg.*

I understand the researcher is doing this study to better understand the resilience factors that enable learners who dropped out to return to school and continue with their studies.

1. I understand that participating in this study is voluntary and I have to the right to withdraw or choose not to take part without any punishment.
2. I understand that participating in this study does not come with financial or material rewards.
3. I understand that what is required of me is to engage in an interview with the researcher and that this will be kept confidential.
   I understand that my personal details will remain anonymous, only the field worker from UJ will know who was interviewed and that my name will not appear anywhere in the report.
4. I will answer all the questions asked during the interview honestly, openly and to the best of my abilities.
5. I understand that counselling will be arranged afterwards if requested.

Signature of Participating Learner	
Signature of Parent if the Learner is under 18 years	
Today's date	

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

<div style="border: 1px solid black;">

Demographic Information

</div>

1. How old are you?
2. **RESIDENCE:**
   a. Where were you born?
   b. Where do you currently live?
   c. How long have you lived here?
   d. Where did you live before?

3. **FAMILY: Background & Composition**:
   a. Tell me about your family
      i. How many people live in your household?
      ii. Do you have siblings? How old are they? What are they doing presently?
   b. Are both parents working? What kinds of jobs do they do?
   c. Tell me about your parent's educational background.
   d. Do any of your siblings go to tertiary?

4. **SCHOOLING:**
   a. Tell me about your schooling years.
   b. What schools did you go to? Primary & High.
   c. Did you finish grade 12?
   d. When was that?

JOB-SEEKING PROCESS

1. How long have you been unemployed? Before you started working/studying, how long were you unemployed for?
2. Have you been employed before? If yes, where and for how long?
3. When did you start looking for work? What made you decide to look for a job?
4. How did you go about looking for work? Describe the kinds of things you do to find work.
5. What kinds of job have you applied for? Why?
6. What kinds of places did you look for work? Online? Newspapers? Asking people?
7. Are there any jobs you would not apply for? Why?
8. Do you think school (LO) prepared you to look for jobs?

JOB-SEEKING EXPERIENCE

9. Can you recall your very first day of looking for work? What was it like?
10. What are the most enjoyable aspects of looking for work?
11. What are the easiest aspects of looking for work?
12. How much money do you roughly spend looking for and applying for work per week?
13. What kinds of things do you spend the money on?
14. How much time do you spend looking for work per day?

15. What were your expectations from the process of looking for work?
16. How is that different from the actual experience?
17. What motivates you to keep looking for employment?
18. Have you received any calls/emails/correspondences/invitations for interviews? How does that make you feel?
19. Why do you think you have not been able to find a job? (Or the kind of job you want?)
20. Is pursuing education or training something you have considered? Why/Why not?

JOB-SEEKING – RESOURCES & BARRIERS

21. What would you say is the most valuable resource that you have as you look for work? What has made looking for a job-easier?
22. What kinds of things did you spend money on in the process? Eg internet data, printing cvs,
23. What would you say is the most expensive aspect of looking for work?
24. What is the most valuable lesson you have learned while looking for work?
25. Are there any people in your life who have been helpful in guiding you towards finding work? Who were they? How do you know them?
26. How have they been helpful?
27. What other support have you had while you were looking for work?
28. What is the most difficult aspects of looking for work?
29. What do you think is more important? Experience or qualifications?
30. Do you think your training/lack thereof has been a challenge/resource?

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: ENKE

31. Apart from ENKE, have you made use of any other organizations to help you find work or educational opportunities?
32. What made you decide to join ENKE: Make your mark?
33. How has ENKE helped you find work or enter training/education?
34. What role has ENKE played in your job-seeking journey?
35. What do you wish ENKE did more of to help you look for jobs?
36. What aspects of preparing you to find work did ENKE do really well? Best lesson learned
37. What aspects of helping to prepare you for finding work did the programme not do so well?
38. How will you apply what you've learned through ENKE in your job search or in the job you find?

Concluding Interview

39. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

40. Would it be okay for me to contact you if I need additional information?

Appendix D: Focus Group Question Guide

Focus Group Question Guide

Introduction

Welcome Group.

- Introduce myself
- Outline the research, its purpose and the activities to date
- Go through informed consent form and signing
- Ground rules for the group session

Opening Question

1. The unemployment rate for SAs youth is a little over 50%. Why do you think that is?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Job-seeking Activities

2. What kinds of things do you to look for work?

_____
_____
_____

3. The desperation effect - What factors make you apply for a job?

_____
_____
_____

Aids & Catalysts

4. What kinds of things have been helpful while you were looking for work?

_____
_____
_____

Barriers

5. What do you think made it more difficult to find work?

_____
_____

Recommendations

6. Tell me about the successes or positive experiences you've had with the Catalyst programme?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Tell me about the disappointments or challenges you've has with the Catalyst programme?

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Let's say you are in charge and could make one change that would make the program better. What would you do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Anything else you would like to add?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for coming. I look forward to putting together a report and presenting it to you all sometime next year.
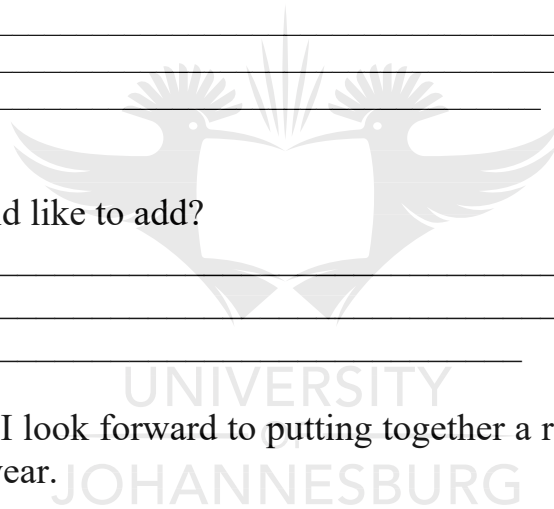
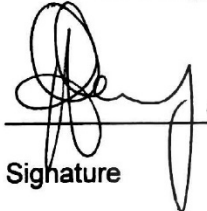# Appendix E: Referral to social worker

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Proof of knowledge of referrals

I Mr (Miss)/ Ms / Mrs _Natasha Asbury_ a social worker at _enke : Make Your Mark_ am aware of the possible referrals that may arise from the research study titled "*Job-seeking Experiences of Unemployed Youth Participants in a Youth Development Programme in Johannesburg*" being conducted by Miss Xoliswa Skosana, MA Social Work student at the University of Johannesburg. I will assist in counselling the participant or help find a suitable counsellor, if I am unable to do so myself.

My contact details are as follows:

Telephone No.: _011 403 1241/3_

Email Address: _natasha@enke.co.za_

Signature   _24/04/2017_
Signature   Date