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Youth entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review of the domain and future research agenda

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Youth entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review of the domain and future research agenda

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this article was to review the existing literature on youth entrepreneurship (YE), focusing on the context, methodological and theoretical approaches employed, alongside any emerging themes on the subject.

Design/methodology/approach - A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted, drawing on an evidence base of 77 articles identified from different databases. These articles were either published in Association of Business Schools (ABS) or Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) listed journals.

Findings - The review revealed that the majority of research on the topic has been conducted in Africa, employing a quantitative methodology. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been the dominant theoretical lens used by scholars. The four major themes covered on the topic to date include i) entrepreneurial motivations; ii) entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) and entrepreneurial attitudes (EAs); iii) entrepreneurial competencies, education, training, and support, and iv) innovation and technology adoption.

Originality/value - To the best of the authors' knowledge, this SLR is the first review that addresses this fast-growing area of research. This paper incorporated insights on YE across academic disciplines. It also provided a nuanced discussion of the major themes covered in the research and suggested directions for future research.

Keywords: Youth entrepreneurship, Systematic review, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Entrepreneurship, Intention and attitude

1. Introduction

Several scholars have acknowledged entrepreneurship as the driving force behind the economic development and the growth of nations (Adu-Appiah and Amankwah, 2024; Urbano *et al.*, 2019). However, youth entrepreneurship (hereafter YE) regularly plays an even greater role in economic growth (Djordjevic *et al.*, 2021; Moos *et al.*, 2022; Papić-Blagojević and Stankov, 2024). This explains the recent proliferation of initiatives aimed at supporting YE globally, as well as the attempt to reduce youth unemployment rates (Bignotti and Le Roux, 2020).

Youth unemployment is a common issue in both developing and developed countries. Global estimates for 2021 indicate that approximately 75 million youths were unemployed, and 702 million were not in the labour force (International Labour Organisation, 2022). These high rates of youth unemployment are due to several factors, including a large number of youths still in education, a lack of relevant skills and work experience, a lack of graduate jobs, and geographical unemployment (Fakih *et al.*, 2020; Ralph and Arora, 2022). In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment is caused by high fertility rates which at times leads to a rapidly growing population in search of jobs (Baah-Boateng, 2016; Moos *et al.*, 2022).

One of the most important ways of integrating young people into the labour market is to encourage YE, which is also regarded as a long-term solution (amongst others) to high youth unemployment rates (Adu-Appiah and Amankwah, 2024; Brixiová *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, to reduce youth unemployment, regions such as the European Union (EU) are actively encouraging schools to teach and promote self-employment and entrepreneurship among young people, and support services for start-ups are in place for young people (Organisation of Economic Development [OECD], 2020). Countries in Africa, such as South Africa, have also implemented policies aimed at increasing youth employment and establishing entrepreneurial support centres to nurture and support young entrepreneurs (Moos *et al.*, 2022). The efforts

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3 shown by different governments are aimed at promoting YE, since it reduces high levels of
4 unemployment, while also creating job opportunities, especially in disadvantaged
5 communities. Despite this important role that they play, youth entrepreneurs are faced with a
6 myriad of challenges; these include a lack of entrepreneurial skills, a lack of access to financial
7 support and a lack of business networks (amongst others) (Brixiová *et al.*, 2015; Gribben, 2018;
8 OECD, 2020).

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17 As with other branches of entrepreneurship, YE does not have a unified definition.
18 Scholars (e.g., Gubik and Farkas, 2016; Leshilo and Lethoko, 2017) have attempted to define
19 the concept in their own way, resulting in the lack of a consensus on its definition. It is
20 important to emphasise, however, that most elements from the different definitions proposed
21 by scholars form an integral part of what entrepreneurship is (Gubik and Farkas, 2016). Despite
22 this intriguing assertion, the primary distinction between YE and entrepreneurship is the age
23 factor. However, different regions have different criteria when considering who a youth may
24 be, which could also exacerbate the differences and debates about the definition of YE. For
25 instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, South African policymakers posit that youths are individuals
26 between the ages of 15-34 (Stats SA, 2021), while in the EU, youths are those between the ages
27 of 15 and 29 (European Commission, 2022). In line with these different points of view, other
28 research categorises youth entrepreneurs into pre-entrepreneurs (15-19 years), budding
29 entrepreneurs (20-25 years) and emergent entrepreneurs (26-29 years) (Schoof, 2006). Based
30 on the various definitions found in the literature, this study defines YE as the engagement in
31 entrepreneurial activities by youths to create value for themselves and society, encompassing
32 creative and innovative ideas within businesses that contribute to economic growth and
33 development.

In recent years, YE research has attracted much scholarly attention. Most research focus on topics such as youth entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) (Bağış *et al.*, 2023; Bignotti and Le Roux, 2020; Ukil and Jenkins, 2023); YE and skills development (Brixiová *et al.*, 2015; Rosas *et al.*, 2022); YE challenges and importance (Danns and Danns, 2022; Hulsink and Koek, 2014), and YE support (Maleki *et al.*, 2023; Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2016). The available literature provides compelling evidence that the number of researchers and publications on YE has increased over the last few decades. This would also imply that several themes covered in this particular domain have been thoroughly researched. However, the existing research on YE is fragmented, indicating a need for synthesis to establish a solid base on the topic. As a result, a rigorous and systematic review of the literature on the topic would provide an overview of the current state of research, as well as guidance on underexplored themes. The authors aim to address the above gap guided by three research questions, namely:

- *RQ 1: How thorough is the body of literature regarding the concept of YE?*
- *RQ 2: What is the focus of the literature regarding YE thus far? and*
- *RQ 3: What are the potential trajectories for YE research?*

To answer these questions, the authors adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) procedure. They collected, analysed, and consolidated findings from 77 peer-reviewed articles from leading **business management journals published** between 1995 and 2024.

In doing so, this study offers some key contributions. First, it provides a more nuanced appreciation and synthesis of research on YE. As Kraus *et al.* (2023) state, systematic reviews enable researchers to identify relevant research gaps and appropriately fit and propose future conceptual and empirical research agendas. In this regard, this review contributes to the entrepreneurship discussion by being the first of its kind to synthesise the available literature

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3 on YE. The review unravels research contexts alongside the methods and theories used; it also
4
5 focuses on the major themes that have been covered on the topic of YE. Secondly, by
6
7 synthesising the literature and identifying avenues for future research on the topic, the authors
8
9 provide a firmer starting point and guidance for new researchers regarding YE.
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13 The remainder of this paper is structured into several sections. Section 2 covers the
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15 research methodology, whilst Section 3 deals with the findings and discussion of themes.
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17 Sections 4 and 5 cover the directions for future research, implications, and limitations of the
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19 study.
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22 2. Methodology

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24 This paper followed a SLR methodology (Kraus *et al.*, 2020; 2024). Systematic reviews are
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26 conducted for a variety of reasons, including synthesising information on a particular topic or
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28 a ‘specific’ research question, giving context to a ‘specific’ body of research and providing
29
30 avenues for future research on a ‘specific’ topic (Borenstein *et al.*, 2021; Rousseau *et al.*, 2008).
31
32 In addition, systematic reviews serve as invaluable resources to scholars, policymakers and
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34 practitioners (Kraus *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, they also give readers a clear and holistic
35
36 understanding of the current state of knowledge in research areas (Dwertmann and Van
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38 Knippenberg, 2021; Kraus *et al.*, 2024). To conduct this review, the authors followed the steps
39
40 (or guidelines) proposed by Kraus *et al.* (2022).
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46 The authors searched for relevant articles as of March 2024 on two databases, namely
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48 Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. These two databases were chosen due to their
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50 comprehensive coverage of different journals, subjects, and disciplines (Mariani *et al.*, 2023;
51
52 Singh *et al.*, 2021). The search was limited to articles published in the English Language and
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54 peer-reviewed scholarly journals. This process helped to enhance the quality of the material
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56 included in the review, considering the rigorous review process that articles in peer-reviewed
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3 journals undergo before publication (Champenois *et al.*, 2020). Several keywords were used to
4
5 obtain the material for the review. These included “youth entrepreneur*” OR “young
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7 entrepreneurs*” OR ‘youth enterprise*” OR “youth venture*” OR “youth business*”. The
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9 search was also limited to articles published in the realms of business, management, economics,
10
11 finance, and accounting. Based on the search criteria mentioned above, the initial search
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13 resulted in 502 items (Scopus had 390 and WoS had 112). The authors excluded books, book
14
15 chapters, conference papers and proceedings, then removed the duplicates from the two lists
16
17 and retained 395 articles.
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22 The authors used another critical criterion to further screen the articles - the focus of the
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24 article had to be on YE. Following this round of screening, the authors had a final sample of
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26 173 articles, which was further screened based on the publication outlet. The authors restricted
27
28 the analysis to papers published in Association of Business Schools (ABS) or Australian
29
30 Business Deans Council (ABDC) listed journals. Both lists are considered to include premier
31
32 journals that publish quality research, thus matching the goal of this study; to unpack the most
33
34 original and rigorously produced knowledge on YE (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). To ensure
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36 comprehensive coverage, the authors used a snowball approach, adding three articles identified
37
38 from the reference lists of reviewed papers found in databases such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost,
39
40 Emerald, and Google Scholar. This resulted in a total of 77 articles included in the analysis. A
41
42 summary of the search process used in this review is presented in **Figure I**.
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47 **Insert Figure I here**

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49 **Figure I:** PRISMA flowchart

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51 **Source:** Authors’ work.
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3. Data analysis and results

The authors performed a systematic categorisation of the final sample of 77 articles. The next section provides the descriptive features of these articles based on their publication date (publication trend), country of publication, theoretical frameworks, research method (empirical and conceptual), research design (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) and the data collection method.

3.1. Publication trend

The results indicated that researchers have dedicated effort towards this research domain; they started publishing on the topic about three decades ago (**Figure II**). However, only 1.3% of articles in the sample were published between 1995 and 2000, while 2.6% were published between 2001 and 2005 and 5.1% were published between 2006 and 2010. A significant number of papers were published between 2011 and 2024 (91%).

****Insert Figure II here****

Figure II: Publication trend

Source: Authors' work.

These findings underscored YE as an established domain with a diverse array of publications spanning over three decades. This extensive timeline highlighted the interdisciplinary essence of YE and its relevance amidst social, economic, and technological changes.

The rise in population and urbanisation paves the way for new entrepreneurial prospects, while shifts in the economic structure drive a transition towards service-based industries from traditional agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Furthermore, the rapid progress in technology and information and communication technology (ICT) creates fertile

ground for burgeoning startups led by young entrepreneurs. The advent of digital technologies has democratised access to resources and markets, empowering aspiring young entrepreneurs to launch startups with unprecedented ease and agility. These evolving dynamics emphasise the ongoing evolution of research within the domain of YE.

3.2. Country/regional focus

The findings revealed that studies on YE have been conducted in 31 countries, with developing regions leading the list (**Figure III**). Notably, YE has garnered significant attention in Africa (35%), with South Africa producing the most research (seven papers), followed by Ghana (five papers) and Kenya (three papers).

****Insert Figure III here****

Figure III: Distribution of articles by country

Source: Authors' compilation

This heightened focus on Africa may be attributed to the continent's rapidly expanding population, which is forecasted to increase from 1.1 billion to 2.4 billion by 2050 (Kew, 2015). This demographic surge is driving a growing interest in entrepreneurship as a means to address youth unemployment and stimulate economic growth (Kew, 2015). Asia was the second most studied region (16.8%), with Malaysia contributing five papers. Europe ranked third with 15.5% of the studies. This interest was likely bolstered by several initiatives at the EU level, such as the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), which aims to support young people through education, employment, and entrepreneurship. In contrast, **the American continent** received limited attention, with North America (5.1%) and South America (1.2%) contributing fewer studies. This limited attention underscored a potential area for further research and

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3 development, considering the significant youth populations and the growing interest in
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5 entrepreneurship across these regions.
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7 8 *3.3. Methodological and theoretical focus* 9

10 The findings indicated that studies on YE have both been empirical and conceptual. Empirical
11 studies were mostly quantitative (76.6%), followed by qualitative (11.6%), and mixed methods
12 (7.7%). Quantitative research explored topics such as factors influencing rural youth
13 entrepreneurs' use of ICT (Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2016); EIs (Bağış *et al.*, 2023; Bignotti and
14 Le Roux, 2020); motivations (Kiuma *et al.*, 2020), and entrepreneurial training and support
15 (Alzua *et al.*, 2020; Brixiová *et al.*, 2015; Maleki *et al.*, 2023).
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25 Data collection methods included primary surveys (e.g., Bignotti and Le Roux, 2020)
26 and secondary archival data (e.g., Chen *et al.*, 2023). Qualitative studies covered topics such
27 as youth entrepreneurs at the bottom of the pyramid (e.g., Dolan and Rajak, 2018); YE
28 development in Russia (Martynova *et al.*, 2017); gender roles in venture motivations (Wilde
29 and Leonard, 2018), and entrepreneurial challenges (Hulsink and Koek, 2014). Mixed-methods
30 research included financial literacy (Munyuki and Jonah, 2021), and youth views on support
31 (Moran and Sear, 1999).
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41 The analyses indicated that 62.3% of the papers included in the review did not use a
42 specific theoretical lens, while 33.8% of the articles did (over 50% of these used the Theory of
43 Planned Behaviour [TPB]). Other theoretical lenses used included the Resource-Based View
44 (RBV), Embeddedness Approach, Human Capital Theory, Institutional Theory, Social
45 Cognitive Theory, Galenson's Theory of Creativity, and the Entrepreneurial Event model.
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3.4. Trending themes in YE research

The authors identified four major themes which have been studied in the literature on YE. These include i) youth entrepreneurial motivations; ii) youth EIs and entrepreneurial attitudes (EAs); iii) youth entrepreneurial competencies, education, training, and support, and iv) innovation and technology adoption in YE. The themes are discussed next.

3.4.1. Theme 1: Youth entrepreneurial motivations

In the past two decades, scholars have examined various factors influencing youth engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Studies in both developed and developing countries showed that youths are motivated by their cultural, community, and family networks (Afreh *et al.*, 2019; Hulsink and Koek, 2014). Youth entrepreneurs across different contexts may decide to engage in informal entrepreneurship due to bureaucratic constraints and cumbersome formalisation procedures (Afreh *et al.*, 2019). Despite these bottlenecks, youth entrepreneurs are motivated to engage in entrepreneurship due to access to critical resources from their community and personal ties (Afreh *et al.*, 2019). For example, in Ghana, YE is driven by access to credit, age, and education, while older entrepreneurs (often owning vehicles) focus on agriculture for produce transportation (Akrong *et al.*, 2020).

In Asia, a country such as China has established more than 70 national cross-strait bases for YE, which serve as motivators for Taiwanese youth to engage in entrepreneurship in China. The study suggested offering resources, administrative services, and relocation assistance to encourage youth from neighbouring countries such as Taiwan (Chang and Lai, 2023). Other key findings surrounding youth entrepreneurial motivations suggested that in some contexts, young people engage in entrepreneurship out of necessity, such as a lack of formal employment and extreme poverty (Dolan and Rajak, 2018; Kiuma *et al.*, 2020; Krafft and Rizk, 2021; Senou

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3 and Manda, 2022; Wilde and Leonard, 2018) whereas in others, role models influence them to
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5 start entrepreneurial ventures (Hulsink and Koek, 2014).
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8 The findings indicated that economic instability and pressures of joining the football
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10 industry in Ghana stem from economic instability, with youth either becoming players to travel
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12 abroad or starting clubs to profit from player sales (Esson, 2015). In Greece, financial pressures
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14 and unemployment push youth into entrepreneurship for family support (Ierapetritis *et al.*,
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16 2010). Other motivations include role models, parental influence (Krafft and Rizk, 2021), and
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18 personal ambitions such as job creation, wealth accumulation, and independence (Chiloane-
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20 Tsoka and Botha, 2015; Holdsworth and Mendonça, 2020; Martynova *et al.*, 2017; Toscher *et*
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22 *al.*, 2020). Thus, they are not motivated towards entrepreneurship as a result of their creative
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24 potential but rather their ambition to build generational wealth (Martynova *et al.*, 2017).
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29 3.4.2. Theme 2: Youth EIs and EAs 30

31 This particular theme originates from research that **examined** the relationships between youth
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33 entrepreneurs' EIs and EAs. One of the earliest studies to examine the relationship between EA
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35 and YE, Adamonienė and Astromskienė (2013), focused on the values and attitudes of young
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37 people towards entrepreneurship. They found that satisfaction with entrepreneurial
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39 participation leads to YE, depending on EA and value systems. Another avenue of investigation
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41 was the impact of financial literacy on YE. Aljaouni *et al.* (2020) studied the effect of high
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43 school financial literacy initiatives on EAs, finding that completing such programs
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45 strengthened positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, with teachers' attitudes playing a
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47 limited role in this relationship.
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52 The complex links between religious beliefs, EA, and YE were the subject of another
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54 body of research on this theme (Dvouletý, 2023). The research drew attention to a significant
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56 finding that **illustrated** the limited impact of religious beliefs on YE and EA performance. Of
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3 more importance, the authors demonstrated differences in the EA and YE performance of
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5 young entrepreneurs belonging to various religious groups, such as Roman Catholic, Jewish,
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7 Islamic, and Hindu. Wasilczuk and Karyy (2022) introduced the gender component of the link
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9 between EA, EI, and YE among college students. It was interesting to note that their research
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11 showed that male students had a comparatively higher EI - that is, a greater inclination to launch
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13 their own business - than female students. However, the authors showed no disparities among
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15 male and female students on their EAs.
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20 Several studies approached the relationship between EI and YE from diverse
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22 perspectives. St-Jean *et al.* (2014) explored how culture affects EI in developed and developing
23
24 nations, showing stronger effects in developed countries. Conversely, Bignotti and Le Roux
25
26 (2020) looked at how young South African entrepreneurs' EI was impacted by their own
27
28 experiences launching or running a business. According to their research, entrepreneurship
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30 education and past experiences working in and trying to launch a firm have a major beneficial
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32 impact on young people's EI. Interestingly, it was found that peers' EI exerts a negative
33
34 influence on youth EI in developing contexts.
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39 Gulzar and Fayaz (2023) investigated environmental and personal elements that
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41 contribute to Pakistani college students' EI development. Remarkably, their results showed that
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43 contextual factors, exposure to entrepreneurship, and personal abilities are critical in
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45 developing youth EI. Porfírio *et al.* (2023) examined how entrepreneurial education and culture
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47 affect EI among university students in Portugal. Their research emphasised the impact that
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49 entrepreneurial culture and educational courses have on the development of youth EI.
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51 Furthermore, they demonstrated that understanding this association effectively requires
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53 consideration of individual characteristics of young people, including gender and age.
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3 Chen *et al.* (2023) utilised the entrepreneurial ecosystem perspective to investigate how
4 the tech entrepreneurial learning environment boosts adolescent tech EI. Their study
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6 the tech entrepreneurial learning environment boosts adolescent tech EI. Their study
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8 underscored the substantial influence of the adolescent tech entrepreneurial learning ecosystem
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10 on tech EI, commitments, and subsequent careers. Shirokova *et al.* (2022) explored EI from an
11
12 institutional angle, focusing on how a country's legal institutions impact youth's inclination
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14 towards entrepreneurship globally. This study found significant effects of legal institutions on
15
16 enhancing EI, while the national financial system had minimal impact. Djordjevic *et al.* (2021)
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18 conducted longitudinal research on university students in Serbia, revealing that fostering an
19
20 entrepreneurial environment is crucial for boosting EI and increasing the number of young
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22 entrepreneurs.
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27 Nungsari *et al.* (2023) focused on psychological qualities and socio-economic factors
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29 in youth EI. Their paper showed how proactiveness links EI, internal locus of control, and self-
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31 esteem. More crucially, their research indicates how psychological qualities help young, low-
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33 income Malaysian entrepreneurs overcome a lack of parental financial support. Sharma (2018)
34
35 conducted a study that examined the relationship between EI and the barriers reported by male
36
37 and female university students in India. The students were studying professional courses and
38
39 aspiring to become entrepreneurs. Remarkably, their research revealed substantial disparities
40
41 between genders in how young people perceive obstacles and EI. Significantly, the perceptions
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43 of barriers and EI differed across genders and varied across different cultures at the regional
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45 level (Sharma, 2018).
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49 3.4.3. Theme 3: Youth entrepreneurial competencies, education, training, and support

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51 Botha and Pietersen (2020) defined entrepreneurial competencies as skills and abilities that are
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53 needed by an entrepreneur to start and successfully grow a business venture under conditions
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55 of uncertainty, instability, and volatility. Findings in Ghana indicated that personal, people and
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3 political competencies support YE (Quagraine *et al.*, 2023). Studies in South Africa reported
4
5 a positive relationship between financial literacy and the entrepreneurial success of youths
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7 (Munyuki and Jonah, 2021; Oseifuah, 2010). The entrepreneurial skills and competencies that
8
9 support entrepreneurship could be acquired through education and training. In this regard, some
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11 studies on this theme focused on government (Alzua *et al.*, 2020); private and educational
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13 (Brüne and Lutz, 2020; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2016; Sobel and King, 2008; Urbain *et al.*, 2017), and
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15 other institutional support programs for youth entrepreneurs (Brixiová *et al.*, 2015; Di Nunzio,
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17 2015; Krause *et al.*, 2016; Okolo-obasi and Uduji, 2023).
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22 Insights from Tanzania showed that entrepreneurship training programs and support
23
24 policies effectively help youths develop knowledge and technical skills which can improve
25
26 their livelihoods - including business performance (Krause *et al.*, 2016). Findings in Swaziland
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28 also highlighted that young entrepreneurs who receive formal business training report better
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30 performance than those who receive informal or no business training at all (Brixiová *et al.*,
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32 2015). In Uganda, the government launched institutions aimed at training youths with business
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34 and management skills, coupled with the integration of vocational education in primary and
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36 high school, as well as the development of industrial parks and business incubation centres
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38 where ideas can be developed. Youths acquire critical skills in these centres; for instance,
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40 findings in this context indicated that youths who exhibit lower demand for credit had business
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42 training which increased their awareness of the actual risks related to credit (Alzua *et al.*, 2020).
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48 Sambo (2016) found a strong positive correlation between the provision of
49
50 entrepreneurship education and the performance of youth entrepreneurs in Kenya. In Italy,
51
52 Campanella *et al.* (2013) found that the presence of a business incubator on campus provides
53
54 support to any student interested in entrepreneurship. However, findings from another review
55
56 indicated that entrepreneurship education in schools is gender and age-sensitive; for female
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3 and older pupils, entrepreneurship education harms entrepreneurship outcomes compared to
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5 male and younger pupils (Brüne and Lutz, 2020). Other studies have, however, found that some
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7 of the support offered to youth entrepreneurs by institutions is not very effective. In this regard,
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9 findings in Greece indicated that the absence of appropriate teaching activities in higher
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11 education meant student support was difficult, and students could not reach their
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13 entrepreneurial potential (Karanassios *et al.*, 2006). Similar findings also emerged in the United
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15 Kingdom (UK), where youth entrepreneurs expressed dissatisfaction with the support
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17 programs because training officers did not have the skills, knowledge, or competence to
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19 provide critical entrepreneurship training (Moran and Sear, 1999). An important finding was
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21 that, while institutional support is very critical, it should not just be limited to offering training
22
23 programs but should include the provision of financial support as well (Shutt and Sutherland,
24
25 2003). Moreover, Rosas *et al.* (2022) explored the effect of cash and training on YE, skills and
26
27 resilience during an epidemic in Sierra Leone. Their findings indicated that market skills and
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29 business training as well as stipends are very effective in stimulating economic outcomes
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31 including youth entrepreneurial performance (Rosas *et al.*, 2022).
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38 Some of the studies on this theme focused on family support (Bignotti and Le Roux,
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40 2018; Maleki *et al.*, 2023; Manolova *et al.*, 2019). Key findings indicated that family support
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42 reduces the negative impact of unfavourable access to resources, social norms, and values.
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44 Therefore, family provides more critical resources to youth entrepreneurs than older
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46 entrepreneurs, particularly in cultures considered to be less supportive of entrepreneurship
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48 (Maleki *et al.*, 2023). Family support also helps youth entrepreneurs overcome capital market
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50 voids, thus increasing their chances of success in entrepreneurship (Manolova *et al.*, 2019). As
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52 such, family finances can be used in the absence of alternative financial sources, thus enabling
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54 the youth to continue with their entrepreneurial journeys. Other intriguing findings indicated
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3 that young women have a lower likelihood of having a nascent entrepreneurial status than
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5 young men. In this regard, in-group support is critical, especially for nascent and early-stage
6
7 entrepreneurship by women (Weiss *et al.*, 2023). It was found that in-group or ties provide
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9 critical instrumental and emotional support to young women in the early stages of
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11 entrepreneurship, particularly in gender-biased contexts where women face unequal
12
13 entrepreneurial opportunities in comparison to men.
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17 Promoting entrepreneurship enables youths to build confidence in their ability to start
18
19 and manage entrepreneurial ventures (Petronyte and Ulbinaite, 2021). A study conducted in
20
21 China explored the effect of mentoring on younger entrepreneurs. Findings indicated that the
22
23 intentions of the mentor in addition to their skill and quality have the greatest effect on the
24
25 young entrepreneurs' success; thus, highlighting the importance of mentoring support for youth
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27 entrepreneurs (Ting *et al.*, 2017). Gribben (2018) highlighted the need for countries to package
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29 policy and ministerial support for YE, in addition to the YE development fund from which
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31 youths can source funding for their ventures. With this regard, a study conducted in Malaysia
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33 identified the different support programs available for youth entrepreneurs (Khan *et al.*, 2016).
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35 Findings from this study highlighted that these support programs have greatly improved the
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37 performance of youth enterprises, though they still encounter some challenges. Other studies
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39 also highlighted the importance of support forums such as networks which provide access to
40
41 resources to youth entrepreneurs. Pillai and Ahamat (2018) noted that youths in Malaysia and
42
43 Laos are embedded in privileged networks that are usually family-based, inherited or expanded
44
45 over time (Laos) and **families with** multi-ethnic groups (Malaysia). This provides them with
46
47 access to socio-cultural capital which can be converted into economic and business resources,
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49 thereby contributing to their entrepreneurial performance.
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3.4.4. Theme 4: Innovation and technology adoption in YE

Each article on this theme examined the intricate relationship between YE and innovation, providing a unique viewpoint on the subject. The study by Brixiová *et al.* (2015) was among the earlier research that increased understanding of the role of YE in supporting innovation and long-term business growth. However, given that young entrepreneurs often incur significant costs in their search for business opportunities, the authors emphasised the need for training to **develop skills and subsidising that needs to be in place for this development**. Kariv *et al.* (2022) offered a more thorough viewpoint by highlighting the impact of both internal factors (such as risk-taking behaviour) and external factors (such as external supports) on the link between YE and innovation. The authors investigated how internal traits, especially young entrepreneurs' inclination to take risks, might spur innovation and increase the effect of outside support on it.

Prasad *et al.* (2015) offered an alternate viewpoint about the relationship between YE and innovation. As some young entrepreneurs develop unique business ideas while others rely on being 'copycats', Prasad *et al.* (2015) acknowledged that young entrepreneurs' creativity may function as a stimulant for venture success. Thus, the idea that the existence of youthful entrepreneurs with distinctive products is necessary for venture success was heavily emphasised by the authors. A study by Marchesani *et al.* (2022) offered a thorough examination of the relationships between the concentration of high-tech businesses in cities, knowledge immigration, innovation promotion, and YE. Their findings provided insight into how a sizable number of high-tech businesses in town affect innovation and information flow. However, the extent of YE in a particular location influences this relationship. Alternative literature on this topic presented an opposing viewpoint on the connection between YE and innovation. Osabohien *et al.* (2022) asserted that attributes such as the rate of new product introduction and

1
2
3 Internet availability define the overall innovation levels in the business environment, which
4
5 YE is more sensitive to.
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8 Some studies have examined how young entrepreneurs utilise technology since
9
10 technology is a major catalyst for innovation (Taalbi, 2017). In connection with this theme,
11
12 two distinct articles were found (Hassan, *et al.*, 2016; Zaremohzzabieh, *et al.*, 2016) that both
13
14 concentrated on the use of ICT among young entrepreneurs. The articles emphasised how
15
16 business knowledge and attitudes towards technology may help encourage young entrepreneurs
17
18 to use technology.
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22 **4. Discussion: Future research agenda**

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25 This review indicated that YE is a fast-growing field of research which has attracted increasing
26
27 attention from scholars since 2011. Different themes have been explored on the topic by
28
29 scholars. This section focuses on different areas of future research which the authors believe
30
31 will stimulate and guide more research on the topic of YE.
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34 *4.1. Context, methodologies, and theoretical approaches*

35 *4.1.1. Contexts*

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39 As the review has indicated, most research on YE has been conducted in Africa, Asia and
40
41 Europe. Given the important role which YE plays in developing countries, the authors still see
42
43 the need for more research on the topic in emerging market contexts. Moreover, though the
44
45 majority of research on the topic has been on Africa, this research has been conducted only in
46
47 12 out of the 54 African countries, necessitating the need for future research in unexplored
48
49 countries. Research in these countries could explore what motivates youths to start businesses,
50
51 whether it is out of necessity or by choice. Other aspects, such as those that have been explored
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2
3 in other contexts, such as Africa, Asia and Europe, could be considered for comparative
4
5 analysis.
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7
8 **Several ventures**, particularly in Oceania region countries **such as** New Zealand
9
10 (Theyers-Collins, 2017) and Australia (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015) are owned
11
12 and operated by young people. This provides an opportunity for studying youth entrepreneurs
13
14 in these contexts, especially since the review found no studies that have been conducted in this
15
16 region. Studies in these regions could focus on mapping the youth entrepreneurial ecosystem,
17
18 identifying (in addition to other aspects), their motivations, contributions to the economy, the
19
20 challenges they encounter and how they deal with such challenges. Studies have shown that
21
22 youths - particularly from developing countries - migrate to developed countries and start
23
24 ventures there. This also presents an opportunity for future research to explore youth immigrant
25
26 entrepreneurs, not only in the developed world contexts but also in developing countries. This
27
28 could **include countries such** as South Africa, Morocco, Ghana, and Egypt, since these
29
30 countries house many migrant youths both from Africa and other continents.
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35 36 4.1.2. *Methodologies* 37

38
39 **The majority** of the research on YE has been empirical, **generally** using quantitative methods
40
41 over others. The authors note that some studies adopting a quantitative research approach were
42
43 based on archival data from government databases and other agencies and such methods do not
44
45 track youth entrepreneurial activities over a long period. As such, there is limited understanding
46
47 of how YE evolves, highlighting the need for longitudinal studies. Moreover, future research
48
49 could consider comparing data from different databases across different years to unravel the
50
51 changes that are taking place in the YE space across different contexts and years.
52
53
54

55 **As with** social entrepreneurs (Dart, 2004; Nicholls, 2010) and immigrant entrepreneurs
56
57 (Dabić *et al.*, 2020; Fubah and Moos, 2024), youth entrepreneurs also encounter legitimacy
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1
2
3 issues (Kansheba *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, longitudinal surveys around this topic could be
4
5 beneficial to explore how youth entrepreneurs struggle and overcome their venture legitimacy
6
7 challenges over time. Given the importance of YE, the authors posit that there is a need for
8
9 more studies using different qualitative methods that can advance theoretical development
10
11 around this topic. This could also enhance the understanding of the topic in different contexts,
12
13 including grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical narratives, among others. In
14
15 addition, the review also indicates that conceptual studies and the use of mixed methods are
16
17 also minimal. The authors therefore see the need for future studies to be conceptual and use
18
19 mixed methods to advance knowledge on the topic. Moreover, additional conceptual studies
20
21 on YE can contribute to the development of a theory for the field and offer deeper and clearer
22
23 definitional boundaries and clarity on the concept.
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28 29 4.1.3. Theories

30
31 Concerning the theoretical lenses, the majority of studies in the review used the TPB. The
32
33 authors, therefore, see a need for studies to use other organisational management theories such
34
35 as the Resource Dependence Theory and the RBV approach. Studies using these theories could
36
37 explore how youth entrepreneurs acquire their resources and what types of resources they
38
39 acquire from different sources. In addition, studies using these theories could investigate how
40
41 youth entrepreneurs use their resources - both tangible and intangible - to establish their
42
43 ventures.
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49 Institutions also play a critical role in YE and as such, the authors see the need for more
50
51 future studies to adopt the Institutional Theory lens with a focus on institutions and YE. Studies
52
53 using this theory could explore how formal and informal institutions influence YE development
54
55 across different sectors and settings. In addition, studies could explore or investigate the role
56
57 that culture and formal and informal institutions play, especially in contexts where there is
58
59

1
2
3 unequal treatment of females and males involved in entrepreneurship or in contexts where
4
5 women in particular are prohibited from owning a business. Thus, the least-used theories
6
7 identified in this review can also be considered by future research.
8
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10 11 12 13 *4.2. Youth entrepreneurial motivations* 14

15
16 Several studies have focused on what motivates young people to engage in entrepreneurship.
17
18 **However**, the authors still see a need for studies to explore whether existing theories seeking
19
20 to explain youth entrepreneurial motivations to begin informal entrepreneurial ventures take
21
22 into account the importance of non-economic factors (Afreh *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, as
23
24 research suggested, contexts can facilitate and at the same time constrain entrepreneurial
25
26 activities, implying that entrepreneurial motivations across different contexts may differ (Zahra
27
28 *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, future research could explore and compare whether youth
29
30 entrepreneurial motivations across different contexts are similar or different as research on this
31
32 is lacking. Future research could also explore and compare whether there are any differences
33
34 in youth and adult entrepreneurial motivations. These studies can target developing countries
35
36 where the majority of the ageing population is engaging in entrepreneurial activities rather than
37
38 retiring.
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42

43
44 Some studies in the review indicated that youth entrepreneurs start businesses as they
45
46 intend to create jobs (Chiloane-Tsoka and Botha, 2015). Thus, future studies could explore the
47
48 contributions of youth entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Other research also
49
50 indicated that youths engage in entrepreneurship out of necessity, while others do it by choice
51
52 and the influence of role models (Chiloane-Tsoka and Botha, 2015; Dolan and Rajak, 2018).
53
54 Future research could focus on exploring the performance and success rates of those who start
55
56 by necessity in comparison to those who start by choice. Future research could also explore
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58

1
2
3 whether youths motivated towards entrepreneurship by role models perform better than those
4
5 pulled towards entrepreneurship by choice. The authors believe exploring this aspect could
6
7 provide some guidance to those with or without youth entrepreneurial motivations. This is
8
9 because many individuals may think that because youth start enterprises out of necessity, they
10
11 may not succeed. However, findings from the research could say otherwise. Longitudinal
12
13 studies could also be conducted to understand the process leading to the motivations for and
14
15 impediments to YE. Future research could also explore the contextual differences in the factors
16
17 that motivate youths towards entrepreneurship in developed and developing countries.
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21 22 4.3. Youth EI and EAs

23
24 Future research on EI, EA, and YE is essential. Studies such as Porfirio *et al.* (2023) and Duong
25
26 (2022) highlighted the impact of entrepreneurial culture and education on youth EI in single-
27
28 country contexts. Further exploration should consider the intention-behaviour link among
29
30 young entrepreneurs, personal factors such as age, gender, and family background, and include
31
32 demographic variables in research models. Future research should expand on Nungsari *et al.*'s
33
34 (2023) study by incorporating longstanding financial advantages and volatile financial
35
36 indicators and examining how they affect young entrepreneurs' psychological attributes. The
37
38 focus should be on i) strategies influencing proactiveness and EI among youth; ii) identifying
39
40 institutional challenges in developing countries, and iii) the necessary skills, traits, and
41
42 resources to overcome them. Studies on digital entrepreneurship education's impact on
43
44 fostering EI in students have primarily focused on business courses (Wibowo *et al.*, 2023).
45
46 Future research should explore non-business-related courses in both developed and developing
47
48 contexts.
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53
54 Concerning the role that institutions play in promoting YE (as per Shirokova *et al.*,
55
56 2022), researchers need to look at more institutions at the country level as well as how global
57
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1
2
3 institutions affect the intention-action link to fully understand how EI affects youth EI.
4
5 Research has shown the impact of religious beliefs on EA and YE, as demonstrated by
6
7 Dvouletý (2023), using EA as a mediating variable. Future studies on YE may concentrate on
8
9 other elements, including individual well-being, corporate social responsibility, and creative
10
11 activity. Furthermore, research has demonstrated gender differences in EA and YE in certain
12
13 settings, such as Eastern and Central Europe (Wasilczuk and Karyy, 2022). Subsequent
14
15 research may provide cross-national comparisons of the idiosyncrasies in the evolution of YE,
16
17 using examples from other settings with diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, such as
18
19 Africa.
20
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23 24 *4.4. Youth entrepreneurial competencies, education, training, and support*

25
26 Research has highlighted the importance of family support in YE. However, limited studies
27
28 explore the types of family support. It would be interesting to see future studies that not only
29
30 explore family support but go a step further to explore which types of family support play a
31
32 role in YE. Longitudinal studies on this aspect would provide interesting insights which can
33
34 take the field further (Maleki *et al.*, 2023). Some studies around family support used archival
35
36 data (Maleki *et al.*, 2023); future research could explore and compare the impact of family
37
38 support in cultures that support entrepreneurship with cultures that do not support it, to unravel
39
40 whether or not there is a difference in the impact of family support across cultures.
41
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45
46 Some studies (Karanassios *et al.*, 2006; Moran and Sear, 1999) have shown that training
47
48 can be offered but it may not be very effective in enabling the youth to achieve good results.
49
50 Therefore, future studies could use longitudinal methodologies to investigate the effectiveness
51
52 of the different support and training programs offered to youth entrepreneurs. The ecosystem
53
54 perspective is also underexplored in the YE literature. Future research could, therefore, explore
55
56 how the entrepreneurial ecosystem supports youth entrepreneurs. In addition, future research
57
58

could explore the impact of the entrepreneurial ecosystem's systematic and framework conditions (Stam and Van de Ven, 2021) on YE performance.

4.5. Innovation and technology adoption in YE

Several potential areas for further studies can be identified from the theme of innovation and technology adoption in YE. Kariv *et al.* (2022) highlighted the importance of external support and internal factors in fostering entrepreneurial innovation in developed countries such as Canada. Future research should replicate this in developing continents such as Africa, where there may be limited external support, and explore how entrepreneurial ecosystems support innovation among young entrepreneurs. Marchesani *et al.* (2022) found that promoting YE in cities boosts competitiveness by attracting knowledge and supporting high-tech sectors in developed countries. Future research should explore the link between knowledge flows and innovation, considering YE's magnitude in developing contexts and other sectors driven by innovation, such as manufacturing, in other developed countries. Previous research (Zaremohzzabieh, *et al.*, 2016; Hassan *et al.*, 2016) used the technology acceptance model (TAM) to study ICT adoption in rural areas, considering both EAs and EIs. Future studies should focus on mid-sized towns, as their context differs from rural areas. Researchers can also use theories such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to explain technology adoption.

5. Conclusion

This paper made several contributions to the literature. In terms of theoretical contributions, the paper offered a review of the literature on YE, thus providing a more nuanced appreciation and synthesis of the research domain. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first paper that provides a somewhat detailed account of the literature on YE, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of it. Second, the review identified various research gaps on

1
2
3 different research themes, and the authors hope these will guide existing researchers and those
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5 new to the field by providing them with a firm foundation on what has been covered and where
6
7 they should focus next. Finally, this paper contributed to the growing body of knowledge on
8
9 the topic of YE.
10
11

12
13 This paper had some practical implications. First, YE is of great interest to
14
15 policymakers across different regions, given the important role it plays in economic
16
17 development. Through this review, the authors provided a comprehensive understanding of YE
18
19 and hope that this will help policymakers when developing regulations and support structures
20
21 for the promotion of YE. The authors also encourage policymakers to do follow-up checks to
22
23 ensure that the support they offer is tailored to enhance YE. Finally, the authors encourage
24
25 youth entrepreneurs to consider developing networking relationships with other ecosystem
26
27 players such as investors, fund providers, and other government institutions, since they are
28
29 well-positioned to provide financial resources to the youth.
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33
34 This paper was not without limitations. The search key terms might have prevented
35
36 some articles which focus on the research topic from being identified, thus limiting the
37
38 findings. Moreover, while attempting to be very inclusive in the choice of keywords, the
39
40 interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship complicates this task. Furthermore, the authors
41
42 only reviewed papers published in ABS and ABDC-listed journals. Finally, the authors only
43
44 included papers written in English; therefore, papers in other languages were excluded, thus
45
46 creating a language limitation.
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List of Figures

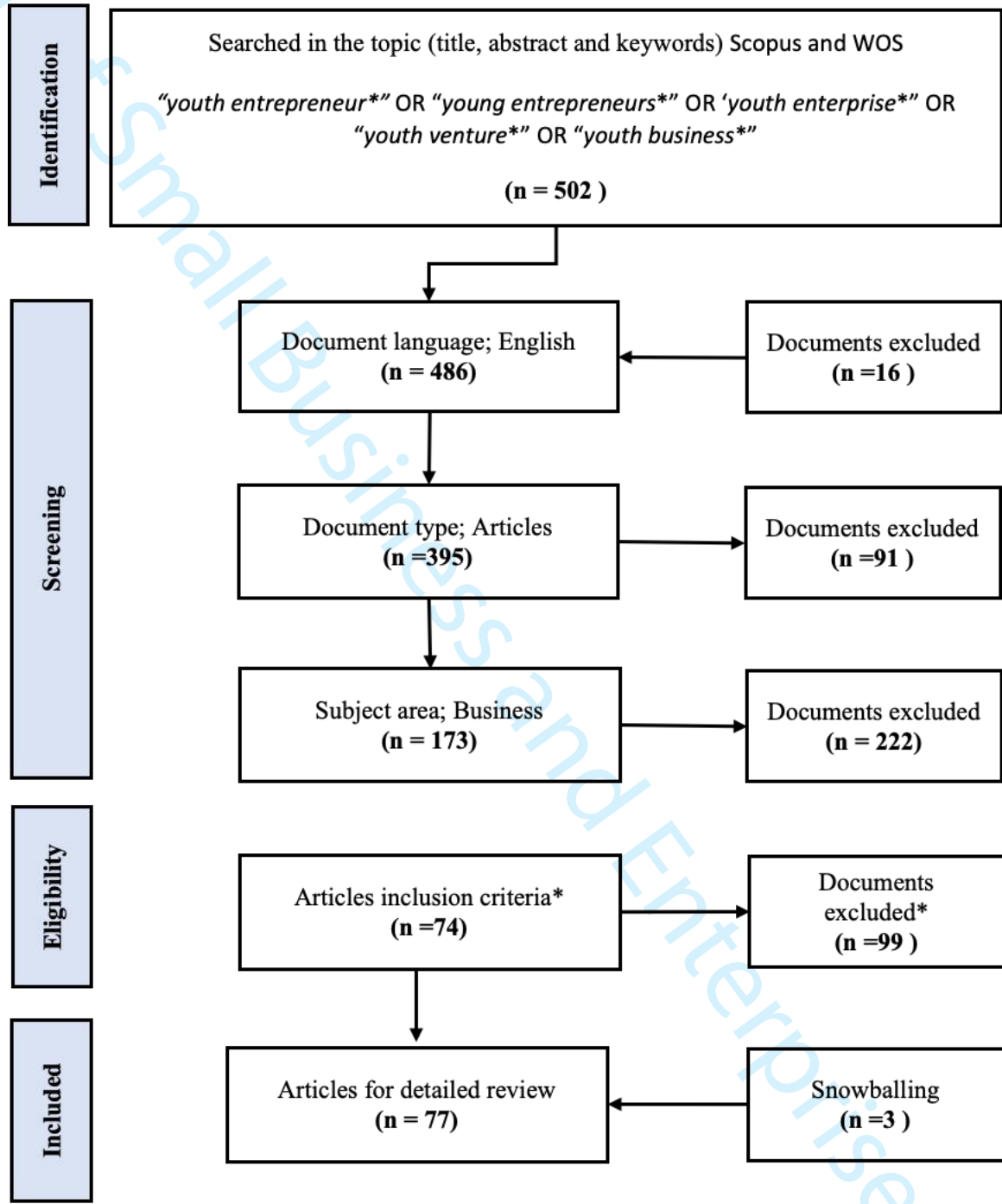


Figure I: PRISMA flowchart

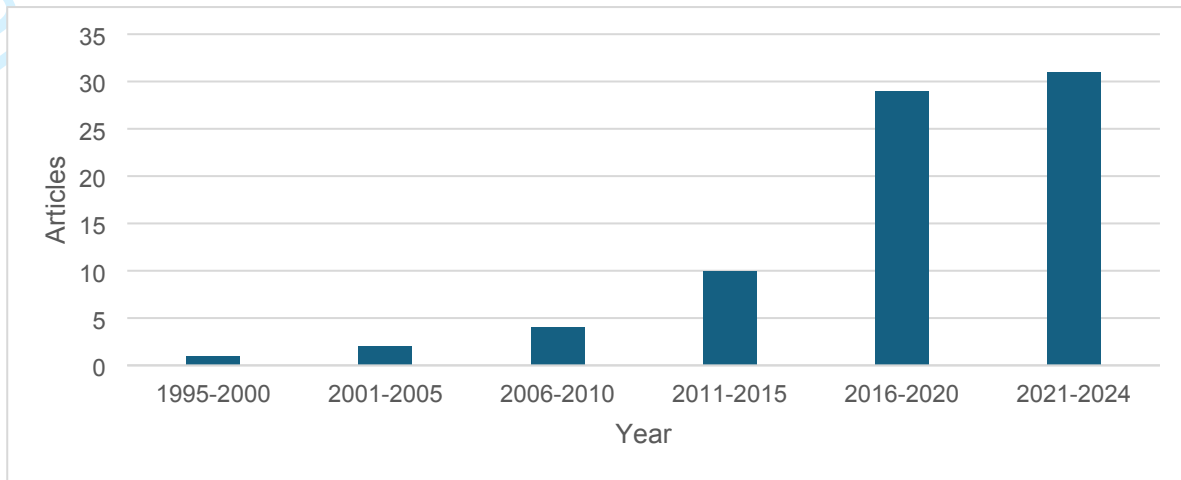


Figure II: Publication trend

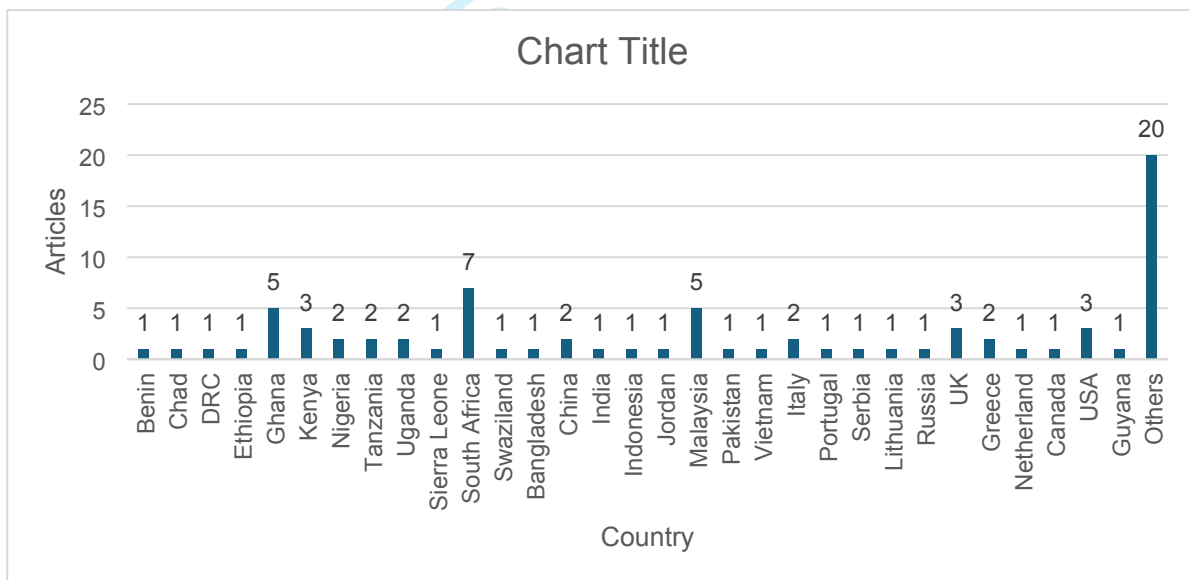


Figure III: Distribution of articles by country

Supplementing materials

Table:

Authors and year	Title	Source title	Ranking ABS	Ranking ABDC	Country	Region	Theory	Research Design
<i>Theme 1: Youth entrepreneurial motivations</i>								
Krafft and Rizk (2021)	The promise and peril of youth entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa	International Journal of Manpower	Level 2	A	Multiple	Africa/Asia	n.a	Quantitative
Tubadji <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Fear-of-failure and cultural persistence in youth entrepreneurship: Comparative analysis: Greece versus Germany	Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship	Level 1	C	Multiple	Europe	n.a	Quantitative
Toscher <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Get Give Make Live: An empirical comparative study of motivations for technology, youth and arts entrepreneurship	Social Enterprise Journal	Level 1	C	Multiple	n.a	Resource-Based entrepreneurship theory”	Quantitative
Pilková <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Differences and similarities between key drivers of youth and senior starting entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern European countries	Post-Communist Economies	n.a	B	Multiple	Europe	Age stratification theory	Quantitative

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Bignotti and Le Roux (2020)	Which types of experience matter? The role of prior start-up experiences and work experience in fostering youth entrepreneurial intentions	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	Level 3	B	South Africa	Africa	Social Cognitive Theory	Quantitative
Aljaouni <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Financial literacy programs and youth entrepreneurial attitudes: some insights from the Jordanian community	Journal of Enterprising Communities	Level 1	C	Jordan	Asia	Theory of Planned Behavior	Quantitative
Wasilczuk and Karyy (2022)	Youth attitude to entrepreneurship in Eastern and Central European countries: Gender aspect	Problems and Perspectives in Management	Level 1	n.a	Multiple	Europe	Theory of Planned Behavior	Quantitative
Dvouletý (2023)	Religion attitudes and youth entrepreneurship performance	Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship	Level 1	C	Multiple	Europe	n.a	Quantitative
Adamonienė and Astromskienė (2013)	Connection of youth entrepreneurial activity and value principles	Public Policy and Administration	Level 2	B	Lithuania	Europe	n.a	Quantitative

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Prasad <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Examining the age-performance relationship for entrepreneurs: Does the innovativeness of a venture make a difference?	New England Journal of Entrepreneurship	n.a	C	USA	North America	Galenson's Theory of Creativity	Quantitative
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Source: Authors own work