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**The South African youth employment programmes: exploring the experiences
of young black African parents in Johannesburg.**

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DECLARATION OF HONESTY

I, Danai Valeria Nyagani, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work. Secondary material has been used (either printed sources or the internet) and has been carefully acknowledged and referenced according to the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

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ABSTRACT

The high rate of youth unemployment in Johannesburg and the increased demand for highly skilled job seekers have created a need for effective youth employment programmes which aim to bridge this gap. To determine the impact of youth employment programmes on young parents' participation, we examined their experience as beneficiaries of such programmes and the identities they derived from the programme using a multi-case study approach. A semi-structured text-based interview was conducted with 12 participants aged between 18 and 35 years old who resided or participated in youth employment programmes in Johannesburg. The participants came from varying experiences regarding parenthood and internship participation. The results indicated that young parents who participated in youth employment programmes faced new financial and emotional challenges. Additionally, all the participants strongly requested that the youth employment programmes be enhanced with additional resources to support youth in gaining permanent employment and extend the programme to two years. A prominent identity uncovered was resilience fatigue identity and the impact of COVID-19 and youth employment programmes on exacerbating and providing financial and emotional relief for young parents. The results also indicated that youth employment programmes might positively impact young parents and position them as active contributors to their community. The findings suggest that the current format and duration of the youth employment programmes may need to be reviewed, with particular attention paid to integrating developmental elements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a global challenge that plagues many countries and can potentially affect the youth population's potential to contribute negatively to developing society. In 2021, African males and females made up 43,6 % and 35,9% of South Africa's economically active population (people aged between 15 and 64 years). Since Black South Africans make up a significant portion of the EAP, unemployment impacted Black South Africans. In addition, youth will make up 35.1% of South Africa's population in 2021, with 28,6 % of the youth living in Gauteng. Because of this, youth, according to Clayton (2020), are more likely to experience high rates of unemployment and poor educational outcome. On the other hand, South Africa faces a high teenage pregnancy rate. Since the onset of COVID-19, the number of children born to teenage mothers has increased by 60%, with 4% of the births recorded in 2020 occurring to mothers under 17 years old (Save the Children, 202; StatsSA, 2021). While the factors associated with teenage pregnancy are beyond the scope of this research, it is essential to note that adolescents' parents who decide to take parental responsibility become young parents as they transition into adulthood.

Young parents often face financial challenges because they lack human and economic capital. When interrogated further, the rationale and the barriers present when young parents enter the employment market is influenced by how they identify with parenthood. For young women, one of the challenges with entering the workforce is their parental and domestic responsibilities (Chakravarty, Das & Vaillant, 2017). In the report produced by Chakravarty, Das and Vaillant (2017), they cited 16.5% of women in Malawi and 17,4% of women in Uganda, highlighting the prioritisation of their caregiving duties. For young men, however, the high rate of youth unemployment places a strain on the relationship between the mother as they may not be able to provide for their family as the young mother would like (Bhana & Nkani, 2014). In addition, the influence of culture added to the complexities of how young parents navigate parenthood despite facing employment constraints. Both young fathers and mothers are more likely to look for employment opportunities that pay well, given the financial responsibilities that are associated with parenthood. For example, Clark,

Cotton and Marteleto (2015) highlighted in their research that young fathers who are unemployed might fear not meeting the financial expectation of their child and thus opt to contact the youth.

Based on this context, this research aims to explore the experiences of parenthood among Black youth within the context of South Africa's youth employment programmes. The research intends to understand how youth participation in youth employment programmes based in Johannesburg influences their experiences as parents. Secondly, to highlight how young Black youth position their parenthood within youth employment programmes. Lastly, the results from the study inform recommendations for ways to improve youth employment programmes that enrich their experience as young Black parents.

Sociologists have seen the influence that socio-economic models have on the nature of employment. Today, neoliberalism has created an opportunity for employers to adopt employment practices and business efficiency that rely less on large staff size and more on a small yet efficient human resource (Thomas et al., 2020). The increased precarious and insecure work results in "in-work poverty and uncertainty over future employment" (Thomas et al., 2020, pp.106). The effects of neoliberal employment practices on job seekers became apparent in that job opportunities have become less secure and precarious. In response to the neoliberal employment practices that have had a contributing factor to a rise in youth unemployment rates, the South African government established the youth employment programmes under national laws to ensure that youth gain critical work experience, knowledge and skill needed to gain meaningful employment whilst addressing the skills gap.

The youth employment programmes in South Africa also create an opportunity for young Black parents to provide financial support for their young families. What has been extensively researched is the experience of graduates participating in internship programmes. Mchunu and Mutereko (2020), Mseleku (2022) and Mabiza e al. (2017) outline the experiences of graduate interns in occupation-specific internships. There is very little research on the impact of youth employment programmes in empowering

young Black parents to gain a sense of empowerment and autonomy. Therefore, this research aimed to understand and highlight the experiences of young Black parents in their participation in youth employment programmes in South Africa.

1.1 Problem statement

South Africa's youth unemployment has been the centre of many national discussions and interventions because of the devastating impact on society, the economy, and the country's overall future. The City of Johannesburg (CoJ) is always associated with ambitions, wealth, and success. It is South Africa's most significant metropolitan regarding economic activity and population size, with almost 10% of the South African population living in CoJ (CoGTA, 2020). About 40% of the population are part of the young working force aged between 25 -and 34 years, with the bulk being between 25 and 34 years old. However, in 2020, youth unemployment was estimated to be 44.6%, approximately 5% higher than the national average. For this research, young people, young people, or youth are individuals between 18 and 35 years old. This definition is an adaptation of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the South African National Youth Commission Act (1996), the Commonwealth and the African Union (AU) Commission and the African Union Youth Charter definition of youth (Baah-Boateng, 2016; AU, 2006; UNICEF, 2020).

While COJ provides the most significant number of employment opportunities compared to other districts in Gauteng, the district cannot sustain the creation of employment opportunities due to slow economic growth (CoGTA, 2020). Therefore, there is an urgent need for youth employment programmes to bridge the skills and experience gap. Five government initiatives in South Africa are targeted toward increasing youth's accessibility to the labour market. These are formal education, vocational training, public employment and deployment programme, entrepreneurship intervention and youth employment programmes (Mayer et al., 2011). For this research, youth employment programmes will be the main focus. Youth employment programmes are work opportunities that provide continuous practical development in preparation for further entry into the labour market (DPSA, 2022). They provide youth with exposure to industry-specific workplace experience, skills and knowledge. In the context of this research, youth employment programmes include internships and

learnerships. The difference between internships and learnerships is that the latter involves a structured learning component that leads to a formal qualification (SAQA, 2022).

The most popular youth employment programmes are provided by Youth Employment Service, Sector Education and Training Authority and the newly established Presidential Youth Employment Initiative. These providers are either a private sector initiative mandated by legislation or a multi-sector action plan spearheaded by the president of South Africa (Jobsfund, 2022, ServicesSeta, 2021, Investec, 2022). From a policy perspective, establishing youth employment programmes aims to meet the labour market's demand by creating opportunities for youth to gain work experience and build their social and human capital. These programmes serve as a pathway for youth to enter the labour market and begin to compete for permanent positions. Similarly, Sobantu (2019) conducted a study to understand the experiences of young job seekers' participation in youth development programmes in Johannesburg. One of the key findings was that young job seekers believed potential employers were looking for a combination of formal education and relevant work experience (Sobantu, 2019). Therefore, these findings support the objectives of youth employment programmes in that they aim to capacitate youth to make them more attractive to potential employers.

This research, therefore, aimed to investigate the similar and differing experiences of young Black parents in their participation in South African youth employment programmes. This research applied the empowerment theory to understanding how young parents experience youth employment programmes and how these programmes bring about change in their parental identity. Moreover, it sought to determine how young Black parents view the value of participating in these programmes by conducting semi-structured text-based interviews with them. The study focused on young Black parents aged 18 and 35 from various residential and educational backgrounds in the greater Johannesburg area in Gauteng.

1.2 Research questions

The key questions guiding this study were:

1.2.1. What are the experiences of young Black parents in the South African youth employment programmes in greater Johannesburg?

1.2.2. What identities do they derive from these programmes?

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The current state of the labour market in South Africa is highly competitive as many potential employees are competing for limited opportunities. As young Black parents, their entry into employment is further challenged by the parental obligations to their children. Young parents gravitate to employment opportunities that are relatively easier to apply for, and youth employment programmes like internships become attractive to young parents. Additionally, youth employment programmes are an accessible way for youth to enter the labour market

The experiences of young parents within the youth employment programmes have yet to be extensively researched. Hence, this research intended to understand the experiences of young Black parents in CoJ who participate in youth employment programmes. Therefore, the aim was addressed by meeting the following objectives:

- Evaluate the impact of youth employment programmes on youth in CoJ.
- Understand how young Black parents construct their identities from participating in youth employment programmes.
- Propose recommendations to youth employment programmes to further enhance the experience for young Black parents.

1.4 The rationale of the study

This study aimed to understand the experiences of young Black parents participating in youth employment programmes in Johannesburg. Specifically, this study aims to understand how young parents relate to their identity as parents participating in youth employment programmes that capacitate youth and increase their ability to enter entry-level roles. The study focused on understanding the experiences of youth who engage with Johannesburg-based youth employment programmes. Johannesburg was used as a study site as the city is often referred to as a “world-class city” (para.1) where individuals can follow their dreams (Ansell, 2020). Many youths are more likely to migrate to Johannesburg to find better employment opportunities. Secondly, given the impact of Covid-19, young parents were selected as the target group for this study as

there was little research on how young parents relate to the parenthood identity through their engagement in the youth employment programmes.

The findings from the study were significant in providing insightful information regarding the experiences of young Black parents who participate in youth employment programmes. Specifically, it highlighted the role youth employment programmes play in creating accessibility for youth to the labour market. The findings from this research were significant in providing additional information on the effectiveness of the youth employment projects in empowering young Black parents. It also provides valuable contributions from young Black parents on what ideal elements should be included in a youth employment programme to empower its beneficiaries truly.

The findings from this research further enhance the experiences of unemployed youth who participate in youth employment programmes by highlighting the complexities surrounding young parenthood and young Black parents navigating the labour market through youth unemployment programmes. Moreover, the results highlight the critical role that youth employment programmes play in establishing young Black parents within the labour market, which has the potential to influence how such programmes are structured. Given the impact that neoliberal employment practices have on youth's ability to enter the employment market coupled with the global pandemic had on the reduction of entry-level roles available due to financial constraints, the findings from this research create a lens to begin understanding how young Black parents are adapting to this new environment. The research question was answered by conducting semi-structured text-based interviews with young Black parents to understand their experiences of youth employment programmes in South Africa. The empowerment theory was used to understand how young Black parents' participation in youth employment programmes affects their ability to meet parental obligations.

The introductory chapter highlighted the context in which young Black parents navigate parenthood, mainly focusing on their participation in the labour market. This section also outlined the parameters of this research, including the research question,

objectives and rationale and located the research within the Johannesburg area. The subsequent section will detail an extensive literature review that aims to contextualise the current societal environment in which young Black parents are located. It will focus on the state of youth unemployment in South Africa and how youth employment programmes aim to equip youth with the necessary skills and experiences to succeed in the employment space. Secondly, the section dissects how young people define mother and fatherhood.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The increased focus on youth employment programmes such as learnerships and internships in South Africa has created an opportunity for further research on the experiences of young people in youth employment programmes in Johannesburg. This review used existing literature to understand how young Black parents experience youth employment programmes by highlighting key contributors and observations.

Youth unemployment

In 2020, the youth unemployment rate (youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET)) among 15-35 years was 41.7% which is an increase of 1% compared to 2019 (StatsSA, 2020). The unemployment rate among Black citizens was 33.8% in 2020 compared to their white counterparts, which was 8.1% in the same year (StatsSA, 2020). Additionally, Eichhorst et al., (2013) reported that over the past five years, Greece and Spain's youth unemployment rates had significantly increased to over 55% and 53%, respectively, partly because of the economic turmoil witnessed by these countries. There is a danger of having a youth population experience a high unemployment rate as it could spark future economic and social instability, migration, and xenophobic conflict (Baah-Boateng, 2016). In addition, the role of neoliberalism contributes to youth unemployment and its impact on how youth position their identity as parents.

Baah-Boateng (2016) investigated the key drivers of youth unemployment in Africa and categorised unemployment into frictional and involuntary. Frictional unemployment is the lack of knowledge and resources that youth have to identify and successfully obtain employment opportunities (Baah-Boateng, 2016). Involuntary unemployment occurs when youth cannot enter employment because employers limit the number of posts despite potential employees willing to work for less (Baah-Boateng, 2016). Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011) share similar sentiments as they associated the high rate of youth unemployment with the lack of "formal sector jobs to absorb new labour market constrains (p.119). The presence of frictional and involuntary unemployment increases the competition among youth for the remaining

limited employment opportunities and increases the period of unemployment many youth experiences,

Long periods of youth unemployment are more likely to cause societal issues such as crime, substance abuse and other behavioural issues exhibited among the youth (Ismail and Koolamparambil, 2015). The reality confronted by youth when they cannot participate in employment successfully is beyond the loss of income. It impacts their psychological well-being and social status within their community Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2011). The extended period of unemployment means that youth do not have access to finance mechanisms that they could rely on, such as UIF and pension funds (Ismail and Koolamparambil, 2015). Therefore, this results in youth entering inferior quality and low-paying employment to exit unemployment quicker and provide financial support for their families.

Ismail and Koolamparambil (2015) studied how personal identifiers such as gender, age, marital status, residence, and education attainment influence a young person's duration in unemployment. Like South Africa, underqualified youth experience higher unemployment rates, making them most vulnerable to dismissals and less likely to be hired (Eichhorst et al., 2013). Borat, Cassim and Tseng (2016) pointed out that the present biggest challenge with the labour market is the oversupply of individuals with low education levels. This is in line with the youth unemployment statistics mentioned earlier. This background creates additional pressure for young parents, especially fathers, as the gender stereotype often requires men to be the financial providers for their families (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015). Moreover, young mothers are less likely to invest in improving their educational attainment because of the time and financial resources that would be diverted away from their stereotypical responsibilities as mothers (Ismail and Koolamparambil, 2015). When young women enter the labour market, they face multiple barriers such as skills, available time and cultural gender roles (Chakravarty, Das & Vaillant, 2017).

Secondly, Ismail and Koolamparambil (2015) found that male youth aged between 19 and 21 years old who are unmarried and do not have a child or children experience the

shortest duration of unemployment. Young Black women are more likely to invest in finding employment that improves their education, resulting from the financial obligation of being a parent. Chakravarty, Das and Vaillant (2017) illustrated in their Sub-Saharan gender and youth employment report that young women's employment has a ripple effect on the youth's life and the prospects of their children and household (Chakravarty, Das & Vaillant, 2017).

Youth Employment programmes

There have been various research, reports, and legislative acts in countries battling high youth unemployment rates to create sustainable opportunities for youth. Specifically, there has been an establishment of youth development programmes that aim to empower youth with the skills and work experience needed to give youth a competitive advantage. In Canada, for example, their youth employment programmes aim to combat youth unemployment through implementing the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS). YESS aims to empower youth with flexible employment opportunities that foster skills development and valuable workplace experience (Canada, 2019). The strategy outlined employment and development programmes such as career development, short-term workplace experience, and an employment network (Canada, 2019).

In the new democratic dispensation, the South African government anticipated that there would be a massive gap regarding the quality of skills set and work experience of the working population. In response to this anticipation, six critical interventions were implemented, including developing and implementing the national skills development framework and adopting a youth strategy (Mayer et al., 2011). Multiple governments and private sector agencies actively address youth unemployment and implement youth employment programmes. The Department of Women, Youth, and People with disabilities are the custodians of the National Youth Policy, which articulates which youth-related challenges are considered priority areas (DWYPD, 2022). This is key in informing how interventions targeted at youth employment are shaped. The second key player is National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), a youth development agency mandated by various legislations to tackle issues faced by

youth, including unemployment (NYDA, 2022). The third player in the Department of Higher Education and Training is responsible for overseeing the work of the Sector Education and Training Authority, which will be discussed later in this section.

The Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) is a regulatory body with the mandate of providing quality skills development and training opportunities within a particular sector as set out by the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the South African Qualifications Act 1995 (South Africa, 1998; ServicesSeta, 2020). The 21 SETAs are mandated to allow youth to develop the skill set needed to be competent, valuable, and skilled members of the labour force (ServicesSeta, 2021). These opportunities include internships, learnerships, apprenticeships, and unit-based skills programmes. However, for this paper, the focus will be on learnerships. A learnership is a learning programme that equips learners with theoretical knowledge and practical skills, gaining on-the-job experience for youth between 16 and 35 years old (Merseta, 2021).

Additionally, learnerships are unique to South Africa as they allow employees to legitimise their occupational experiences, which result in a nationally recognised qualification” (Davies & Farquharson, 2004, p.183)—completing the learnership results in the learner receiving a qualification registered with the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Merseta, 2021). Upon completion of the learnership, the participant ought to have an advantage over their counterparts, as they have the required skills needed to be a valuable contributor to the workforce. Therefore, the effectiveness of the SETA is determined by how they can transform their skill base within the sector, thus producing more qualified candidates (Davies & Farquharson, 2004). Tuner, Halabi, Sartorius and Arendse (2013) conducted a study to determine the efficiency of the SETA by monitoring its ability to meet the five principal objectives. The study found that “only one SETA achieved all five objectives” (Tuner, Halabi, Sartorius and Arendse, 2013, p.6). Mayer et al. (20) also highlighted that the technical skills mismatch is not fully addressed within the SETA programme as the quality of the training is not what many industries expect. Whilst this paper is focused on young Black parents’ experiences in youth employment programmes, the efficiency

of SETA to deliver quality learnership does influence how youth attribute their ability to meet their financial obligations as parents.

The second major youth initiative was the Youth Employment Service. In August 2018, the Youth Employment Services (YES) initiative was gazetted into notice 502 of 2018, which enables organisations taking part in the YES initiative to benefit from the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) recognition scheme (Hayath & Pillay, 2018). The establishment of the YES programme aimed to leverage corporate employers to improve the chances of youth locating, getting, and keeping employment in South Africa. The rationale behind the YES initiative was to acknowledge that the SETA programmes are under capacitated to address youth unemployment (Cenfed, 2019). The YES initiative, established by the Department of Trade Industry and Competition (the dti), aims to create one million job opportunities for youth by 2023 (Staff reporter, 2018). The success of the YES initiative lies in its ability to leverage the B-BBEE scheme to incentivise cooperatives to address youth unemployment and development through entry-level job creation internship opportunities over 12 months. (South Africa, 2018, government gazette).

Additionally, the YES initiative further recognises the potential barrier that lower education attainment plays within the employment sector and attempts to address it by allowing youth who have not completed matric to gain valuable work experience (YES, 202). Mayer et al. (2011) reviewed similar youth employment programmes in countries like Belgium, Romania and Chile. It was noted that when work experience was combined with short-term training, youth were more likely to get future employment. However, it was noted that training programmes need to be comprehensive and not focus solely on supply-driven training (Mayer et al., 2011). Based on this insight, the SETA programme could be better positioned to bridge the educational and experience gap highlighted by Borat, Cassim and Tseng (2016).

For example, the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) in Ghana shares similar ambitions and challenges with YES and SETA, resulting in a tiny group of unemployed youth directly benefiting from the programme. Firstly, Gyampo (2012) highlights that the lack of youth consultation has created a perception that NYEP is

not an initiative for them and thus does not address their needs. Secondly, NYEP has only created employment for two percent of youth, which is concerning as it may signify that the programme is not effective (Gyampo, 2012). The findings expressed by Gyampo (2012) are not unique, as Davies & Farquharson (2004) found similar challenges with the SETA programme in South Africa. Davies & Farquharson (2004) reviewed the finding from the 2001 National Learnership Programme pilot study in South Africa. They concluded it was essential to define the function of the SETA learnership programmes to either increase industrial productivity or to fit unemployed youth into the labour market. This conclusion is still relevant today as various stakeholders involved in executing the SETA programme highlighted that the programmes continue to experience high dropout rates, inadequate quality of training and the quality of the youth produced from the programmes.

Therefore, Gyampo (2012) suggests that youth employment programmes must create platforms whereby youth can attain their goals of temporary financial stability, valuable experience and skills needed to remain and experience upward mobility within the employment sector. Moreover, the stipend provided by the youth employment programme needs to be appealing as the cost of looking for a job combined with childcare-related costs is often high (Youth Capital, 2022). The cost of the stipend for many youth employment programmes payout is aligned with South Africa's minimum wage at R3 470,40 per month (Labour, 2021). This amount is considered insufficient, given the average cost of child care starting at R1500 and the average household food basket cost of R4001.17 (Old Mutual, 2021; Business Tech, 2022). With that said, the stipend goes a long way in providing financial relief for young parents. It is challenging to determine if youth view youth employment programmes only to address their short-term goals or is creating an opportunity for upskilling and development whilst providing enough financial support for youth to provide for their families.

Parenthood

Youth unemployment affects men and women differently because of the employment space and the societal and cultural expectations imposed on men and women. A

significant factor in how successful youth experience parenthood is their social capital. Ungar (2011) social capital as “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthy” (p.1745). Social capital is key as it links youth in accessing information, resources, and people who would aid in achieving social goals such as gaining employment and education. For young parents, parenthood often presents complexities as they are tasked to seek new social networks that relate to both their young parenthood and their career prospects. According to Yeung and Rauscher (2014), social capital exposes youth to behaviours that promote their integration into the workplace. For example, youth can exchange insights on work readiness and integration, career growth opportunities and accessibility to additional resources. Through their social network, many youths are deterred from transitioning into adulthood through parenthood. Inanc (2015) conducted an interesting study that aimed to understand, among other factors, the implication of partner employment on the timing of youth transitioning into parenthood. Inanc (2015) refers to the “income effect” (p.222), which is an effect that explains how unemployed people would defer their entry into parenthood because of their potential inability to provide financial support for their child whilst unemployed.

In the same study, Inanc (2015) referred to the “price-of-profit effect” (p.222), which speaks to how unemployed people would consider entering parenthood as they can invest more time in raising their children. The ability of an unemployed woman or man to exercise either income or price-of-profit effect may be attributed to the traditional stereotypical expectations of men and women within parenthood. Another factor could be the strength of their social network. Song (2012) highlighted that child-rearing tends to limit women’s ability to access opportunities as they have stronger “child-centred interaction” (p.11), and mothers tend to relate to other mothers rather than colleagues in the workplace. The effects highlighted by Inanc (2015) may provide insight into how young Black parents decide to enter parenthood at an early stage.

Fatherhood

Clayton (2020) conducted a study to understand young fathers' experiences with fatherhood. Clayton (2020) and Bhana and Nkani (2014) describe parenthood for men

as an essential milestone that partly defines their masculinity. Bhana and Nkani (2014) articulated that the provider status had a significant attachment to the expression of masculinity. The study highlights how young fathers are seen because of a violation of societal norms, which expect young men to transition into education and employment before entering parenthood (Clayton, 2020). However, Richter & Morrell (2006) posed a different argument and highlighted the significance of becoming a father within the community. Additionally, culturally, men who are fathers gain more cultural respect and authority than their counterparts which may partly explain why young men would want to enter parenthood at an early age. Dariotis, Pleck, Astone, and Sonenstein (2011) shared this notion as they described that due to the lack of opportunities associated with identity formation during the transition into adulthood, disadvantaged youth are more likely to use parenthood as a means to transition into adulthood.

Both Clayton (2020) and Enderstein & Boonzaier (2015) believe that employment status determines young men's relationship with their children. Khumalo (2022) conducted a study to understand youth's perception when thinking about the barriers to young fathers' participation in their child's lives. Based on the study, it was evident that participants believed that financial security was one of the roles that a father embodied. Like Khumalo (2022), Enderstein & Boonzaier (2015) conducted a study to understand the experiences of youth entering fatherhood. Like Ismail and Koolamparambil (2015), young fathers felt that financially providing for their children signalled their dedication and investment in their child's life. The participants attributed financial support as a significant expression of their masculine and fatherhood identity. Therefore, parenthood is stress-inducing for unemployed young men, and some men opt not to accept paternity to avoid this financial obligation, thus keeping parts of their masculine identity intact (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015).

Motherhood

Erfina, et al. (2019) conducted a study to understand adolescent girls' transition into motherhood. One of the key findings from the study was the participants' regret of entering motherhood at an early stage, which led to them experiencing challenges in

finding employment (Erfina, et al., 2019). Concurring with Erfia et al. (2019) sentiments, Bradbury (2006) highlighted in their study of young Australian mothers who experienced more significant socio-economic challenges because of their early entry into parenthood. However, Bradley (2006) and Florian (2010) state that employment challenges faced by young mothers in their early 20s are reversed later as they are more likely to contribute more hours in the workplace as their children would have aged. This phenomenon may also factor in Baah-Boateng's (2020) report, highlighting Ghana's youth unemployment factors. What was clear from the report was the low youth unemployment rate between 2015 and 2017 which was 13.7% and 12.4%, respectively, among youth aged between 15 and 35 years (Baah-Boateng, 2020). Additionally, youth unemployment affected urban men more in 2015, partly accounted for by women's likelihood of participating in informal employment (Baah-Boateng, 2020). This insight into how young parenthood affects employment prospects is vital in understanding how youth employment programmes affect the youth's experience and how their ability to relate to and support their child has changed.

The literature review section briefly describes the history, rationale, and goal of the various youth employment programmes in Johannesburg. The literature review outlined how these programmes impact youth's ability to fulfil parental roles. Inanc (2015) and Bradbury (2006) discussed how youth might attribute their entry into young parenthood to them, increasing their ability to invest more time in their employment ambitions once their children have grown. In addition, parental identity and the experiences that young parents have to navigate the financial aspect of parenthood were discussed. The theoretical framework of this research is empowerment theory, and the next chapter will focus on defining the theory and highlighting its relevance within this research.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The empowerment theory explains how young people develop decision-making and autonomy over their lives. Peroz & Rosca (2007) and Carr (2011) defined empowerment as an ability for people to overcome barriers and gain access to services and goals that meet their life objectives. A component of empowerment is contributing and participating in the decision-making process regarding self and community (Peroz & Rosca, 2007). Furthermore, Weidenstedt (2017) describes empowerment as transferring power from an individual with more power to one with less power. This simple definition was further defined by Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006) to include the process of “sharing real power, fostering human welfare and fostering productivity” (p. 2).

Similarly, Gibson (in Carr, 2011) views empowerment as helping people take control over factors that affect their lives. This definition is essential in understanding how successful youth employment programmes tackle the key factors that negatively affect young Black parents. Garcia-Ramirez, et al., (2005) defines empowerment as a process centred around intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural activities. These components relate to how individuals can relate to their decisions, identify and relate to their social and economic environment and have their actions result from the empowerment process (Garcia-Ramirez, et al., 2005). Similar to Weidenstedt (2017), Kabeer (1999) (in Noureen, 2015) describes empowerment as a process that fosters power for individuals to be able to act on issues that are deemed necessary to them. For most individuals, decision-making power, access to resources, and accessible mobility are indicators of women's empowerment, and this definition could be extended to the empowerment of men (Noureen, 2015). For this research, the definition mentioned above will be applied.

Empowerment theory was selected for this research as youth employment programmes at their core aim to empower youth with critical skills and knowledge that would facilitate upward mobility within the labour market. Moreover, the transition into parenthood is often associated with gained social capital and analysing how youth's employment prospects in this context could inform how youth relate to their newly acquired identity. Hence, empowerment was operationalised as an activity facilitated

by a youth employment programme that enables individuals to provide for their families and engage in meaningful employment financially (Garcia-Ramirez, et al., 2005; Weidenstedt, 2017).

This section outlined how empowerment theory as a theoretical framework is positioned to create a lens through which the impact of youth employment programmes is viewed on young Black parents in Johannesburg. The next chapter, research methodology, focuses on the critical elements of the research and highlights the factors that influenced how the research was conducted.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explored the experiences of young Black parents of the employment programmes the proposal mentions. A qualitative methodological approach was adopted to collect the necessary data to answer the critical research questions. This section describes the research process by outlining the research design, the study setting, target population, sampling, data collection and analysis.

4.1 Research design

Qualitative research is the “systematic collection, organisation and interpretation” (p. 483) of social phenomena through observation (Malterud, 2001). It aims to understand how people make meaning of events, behaviours, and ideas within their natural context. Qualitative research design is based on open-ended, semi-structured and structured research questions answered through various person-centred data collection methods like interviews and focus groups (Boeren, 2018). Therefore, this design was beneficial for this study. The researcher could gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of young people enrolled in fixed-term learnership and internship opportunities.

This study deployed a descriptive qualitative case study approach to answer the research question. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), the qualitative case study approach aims to understand a phenomenon from multiple lenses, allowing the phenomena in question to be thoroughly described and understood. Hence, this study aimed to use the method to explore the experiences of young Black parents about their engagement in youth employment programmes (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Secondly, a multiple-case study approach was adopted for this study to explore the experiences of young Black parents living in multiple areas with varying parental statuses. The similarities and differences between the cases were examined (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Baxter and Jack (2008) believe that multiple-case studies are reliable and vigorous despite being time-consuming. Notably, the limitation placed by Baxter and Jack (2008) was overcome in this study by using social media to collect data, which enables multiple semi-structured text-based interviews to be conducted simultaneously, thus reducing the data collection period.

4.2 Study setting

This study was conducted virtually using WhatsApp due to its accessibility to the participants. The study setting had initially been confined to participants who reside in COJ. CoJ was chosen as a target population because of its population characteristics, specifically, the educational and household demographics. According to the StatsSA (2016), the median age of CoJ was 30 years old, with 82% of the population being Black, with women making up 49% of the population, with 32.8% of them heading households (StatsSA, 2016). However, during the interviews, it became apparent that many participants had indicated that they lived in districts and provinces surrounding COJ. A possible factor for this shift in the study setting is the participants' engagement with Johannesburg-based youth employment providers (see section 6.2).

4.3 Study participants/target population

The target population for this study was young women and men between 18 and 35 years old. Participants were the biological parent or legal guardian of at least one child, as this study aims to understand the experiences of these participants in fixed-term learnership and internship opportunities. Additionally, the participants' educational background was at least a grade 10, which aligns with many of the minimum educational requirements for learnerships in South Africa.

The sample population included individuals who were active users of WhatsApp. This criterion is suitable as many young people are technologically savvy and spend considerable time on social media applications like WhatsApp. Moreover, the target population comprised individuals with varying educational backgrounds from Grade 10 who lived in districts and provinces surrounding COJ. This criterion was selected as many young people are in schooling or had recently left their educational institutions. In addition, this criteria accounted for participants who would temporarily migrate to Johannesburg to participate in youth employment programmes based in the city.

4.4 Sampling

This study used snowball sampling techniques to complement the purposive sampling method to recruit a diverse target population. Snowball sampling is a sampling method that describes participants by referring potential participants within their network to

the researcher (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). The first participants were identified through active recruitment using my workplace network within the youth development sector (colleagues who work with interns, friends, and family members (Gelinas et al., 2017). After that, the initial participants were asked if they knew other individuals interested in participating in the study. In total, 14 participants indicated they were interested in participating in the study. However, during the interview process, two participants did not complete the process as they became non-responses, and their information was removed from the sample. In the end, 12 participants formed the sample size of this study. Individuals who meet the criteria of being young, between 18 and 35, are biological parents or legal guardians who are active in their child's lives and on WhatsApp. Moreover, they lived in communities in Gauteng that have an educational background from Grade 10 upwards. This criterion ensured that the group was heterogeneous and that the data collected represented a diverse population of young people.

4.5 Data collection

This study used WhatsApp as a platform to interview participants. The primary reason for using WhatsApp as a data collection method is its accessibility, affordability, and efficiency. It allowed the researcher to communicate with the participants and collect the data in real-time and asynchronously. A mobile instant messaging interview guide catered to the functionality of WhatsApp to ensure that the questions posed are easy to read and understandable, providing an opportunity for the participant to express themselves (Kaufmann & Peil., 2020).

The interview guide (Appendix 1) assisted the researcher in getting information from the participant regarding their demographics and perception of youth parenthood, among other relevant topics. Because of the functionality of WhatsApp, which enables a user to have multiple conversations simultaneously, the interviews were conducted in a time-efficient manner. As this study was conducted during the height of the Covid-19 national lockdown, the use of WhatsApp as a data-collection method was most appropriate as it allowed for data collection could continue despite the physical interaction restriction. The strengths of WhatsApp are that it is convenient, cost-efficient, and enhances the anonymity and privacy of users (Singer et al., 2020;

Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al., 2022). Specifically, the text function enables participants to respond at the most convenient time. Given that there was a high possibility that participants were likely occupied with either workplace or care duties, this was the best mode of communication.

During the interview, the researcher informed the participant of the number of questions in the interview schedule and asked the interview questions one at a time. This process ensured that the participants could ask specific clarifying questions and answer each question to their ability. At the end of the interview, all the participants were reminded of counselling services they had access to should they require it and the information provided on the information sheet shared prior to the interview.

4.6 Data analysis

This study utilised a thematic analysis to interpret the responses of the participants. Thematic analysis is a data analysis method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Nowell et al., 2017). The advantages of using thematic analysis are that it provides an in-depth and complex account of data, especially when examining participants' perspectives and creates a possibility for generating surprising insights" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2).

The data was downloaded into a text document from the WhatsApp text interview of the participants. In the data cleaning phase, any data that could explicitly identify the participant, such as their name or any referred participants, were either anonymised or removed from the data. Any conversational points in the data file that did not directly relate to the research were also removed. The next phase involved allocating codes to the data. The researcher read the data to understand the recurring thoughts expressed by the participants and the meaning of the words, and the context in which they were used. This was done on a duplicated version of the processed interview data to allow for comparisons to occur. Additional codes that related to each other were consolidated under the same theme. The final phase of thematic analysis related to defining the themes in the context of the research and compiling a narrative with relevant quotations from the participants being used.

The research methodology highlighted the qualitative perspective that the research adopted and the factors that influenced the study setting. For example, the study setting was initially in COJ, but the nature of the youth employment programme and the study settings expanded beyond the COJ. This change is discussed in more detail in the results section. The ethical consideration section detailed how the research ensured that the research remained ethical and upheld the confidentiality of the participants.

4.7 Reflection on own positionality

Given that I am a young black graduate woman with Zimbabwean origins, there are limited but strong connections between myself and the participants. I may not be a young parent, but being a youth who gained permanent employment through an internship, I relate to some of the challenges expressed by the participants. Noting my background, primarily as a master's student, may have influenced how the participants related to me, especially given that many participants expressed their desire to further their education. However, there was no indication of any judgement towards me based on my educational background.

Given the nature of my work, I have a personal investment in the topic, which includes creating learning and developmental programmes that aid the upskilling of youth who participate in youth employment programmes. In conducting this research, I hope to understand better the experiences of young mothers and fathers, which could inform what content would be beneficial in capacitating youth with industry-aligned skills. As youth unemployment in South Africa continues to rise, there is an urgent demand to find methods to place more youth in sustainable and long-term employment.

In hindsight, using WhatsApp as a data collection tool influenced how the participants related to me. It is challenging to establish non-verbal cues, which may have influenced the participants' connection with me as a researcher. For example, I noted that the young fathers were less likely to go into depth with their responses and delve deeper into their experiences with being a parent and a youth who participated in a youth employment programme. Given the opportunity to engage with me during a physical interview, the degree to which many young fathers shared their experiences may have been different.

These experiences as research utilising social media as a data collection tool provided some perspective on the intrusive nature of research and how WhatsApp could be used to increase the anonymity of research.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study received ethical clearance from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria (HUM019/0521). All potential participants referred to the researcher were sent a digital copy of the information letter and consent form informing them of this study's purpose, aim, objectives, risk, and benefits (Appendix 2). Participants were informed of their voluntary participation in the study and their ability to end their participation with no consequences. Participants were assured of confidentiality and that their data would be saved under a pseudonym to guarantee anonymity. As the interview was conducted on WhatsApp, the participant's name was saved under a pseudonym to ensure that the participant's identity remained anonymous. The participants were assured that the only individuals with access to their details were the researcher and their supervisor. This study limited the participant's exposure to any harm because of the recruitment process by not disclosing any sensitive information to any other participant without their explicit and written consent. All interested participants were required to submit an electronic copy of their signed consent form via email before the commencement of the interview. If the participant could not sign an electric copy of the consent form, they were required to provide written consent of their participation in the study using the chat function on WhatsApp.

6. RESULTS

This chapter presents the study's primary findings through semi-structured text-based interviews with 12 young people. The interview was conducted using the social media platform WhatsApp for two months. The data was then analysed using a thematic analysis process and arranged into themes aligned with the research questions. The demographic profile of the participants was highlighted in this section to provide an overview of the participants. In addition, this chapter will detail the experiences of young Black youth as young parents, as beneficiaries of youth employment programmes and as unemployed youth.

6.1 Data collection

The young people who were approached to participate in the study were allowed to review the information sheet and were encouraged to ask questions before they provided their consent. The semi-structured text-based interviews were facilitated using WhatsApp with twelve young participants. The age groups of the young people ranged from 22 to 31. The names of the participants were changed to protect their identity (see Ethics Consideration). The average time for the survey took three days, and this was due to a mixture of internal and external factors such as participants' access. Most initial and follow-up questions were structured according to the research schedule (see appendices 1). The questions were centered around the following topics:

- Demographics
- Experience of parenthood
- Employment background
- Experience of the youth in a youth employment programme

These topics were selected as the participants' demographic background could provide insight into how participants could engage with youth employment programmes and how they view their role as parents. For example, participants' upbringing and their journey through high school could inform how they relate to parenthood and provide the backdrop for understanding what they seek to gain from participating in youth employment programmes. The need to want to understand the perspective of young parents stems from the limited research that currently exists about young parenthood. Given the high rate of youth unemployment in South Africa coupled with a global

pandemic which further restricted youth's accessibility to employment opportunities, it was essential to understand how youth identify with parenthood.

6.2 Profile and demographic information

The most apparent demographic profile of the participants was their gender breakdown and geographic location. There were eight young mothers and four young fathers, and as such, most of the responses will reflect the experiences of young mothers. In addition, young women were more likely to detail their experiences by providing examples.

All 12 participants grew up in and lived in different areas outside the jurisdiction of the city of Johannesburg. However, most participants have interacted with youth employment providers based in Johannesburg, and the participants' location indicates the severity of youth unemployment in South Africa. Youth employment programmes in Johannesburg may operate in surrounding districts and provinces due to the high demand for youth desperate for financial relief, work experience, and skills development. For example, the Africa Foundation (2022) is based in Johannesburg but has youth employment programmes that YES funds in Mpumalanga.

Nine of the 12 interviewed are unemployed after completing their youth employment programme despite all participants achieving a matric certificate. Four participants mentioned wanting to further their education when they reflected on their experience before participating in a youth employment programme. However, due to their financial position, they were not able to. One participant highlighted that they had enrolled on tertiary education but had to drop out due to not coping with their studies and a part-time job.

6.2.1 Andisiwe

Andisiwe is a 23-year-old young mother of 1 and lives in Tsakane. She had an exciting high school career and planned to further her education but could not due to limited finances. Andisiwe has participated in a youth employment programme, but she finds herself back in unemployment. Andisiwe mentioned that their mental health had been negatively impacted. "Always depressed and feeling useless...I can't even take care of

my family and my personal needs”. Her unemployment for the last 11 months is the most significant contributing factor.

6.2.2 Brenda

Brenda is a 26-year-old young mother of one who currently lives in the North West. Brenda grew up with her grandmother as her parents were looking for employment. She matriculated in 2021, furthered her education, and received an N4 certificate in HR Management. Brenda has participated in a youth employment programme and is currently improving her matric marks to further her studies. When reflecting on the impact of the internship, Brenda mentioned, “as an African black young parent, it made a very big impact on my life, I now have a chance to get another opportunity with my work experience, chances are very high.”

6.2.3 Cynthia

Cynthia is a 22-year-old woman who lives in Pretoria. She was raised by a single mother who ran a supportive household for her children, and Cynthia’s mother supports her in raising her 2-year-old child. Cynthia enjoyed her high school experience, although she did express her desire for additional academic support, despite the level of support she received at home. “I am coming from a supportive home so that also made my schooling easy though I wish we could have been able afford to hire a private tutor for Mathematics.” After obtaining her matric qualification, Cynthia desired to further her studies, but her admission was unsuccessful. Cynthia is currently completing a 12-month internship.

6.2.4 Diana

Diana is a 28-year-old mother of a son and comes from Springs. Her grandmother and her cousins raised her. Diana had a challenging experience in high school as the pressure to perform well and pass increased. Diana’s mental health was affected as she developed stress and anxiety and could not focus on academics. “Then secondary (was) where there was a pressure to pass my classes, and that pressure didn’t help me. I was getting low marks; the more I stressed about passing, the more I got bad marks. I had stress, anxiety fear of failing I couldn’t study well because of it.” Despite this,

Diana overcame her academic fear and is currently studying for Early Child Development at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

6.2.5 Edgar

Edgar is a 23-year-old man who grew up in Soweto and was raised by their mother and grandmother. Edgar's high school experience has been insightful and beneficial as he could learn resilience and perseverance. After high school, Edgar had intended to pursue an engineering career but could not continue due to unforeseen circumstances. Edgar completed an internship in 2020 but found himself unemployed. Despite his current circumstances, Edgar highlighted that "if it wasn't for the internship/learnership I wouldn't have experienced all of what I've mentioned and I would not have a job experience and all the things I've learned".

6.2.6 Frans

Frans is a 25-year-old man who lives in Soweto. He initially grew up with his parents, but "I was taken by my Grandparents and stayed a few years with them up until my Parents was able to take me back (due to) financial stability". Frans had a challenging high school experience as despite being in a "developed school", they felt they could not get what they wanted due to finances. Frans's ambitions were to become a pilot, but he went to college to study Marketing due to personal circumstances. Frans is currently on an internship/learnership as a Telephonic Tracer at a health NGO.

6.2.7 Gloria

Gloria is a 27-year-old woman living in a supportive household in Soweto. She mentioned that she was cared for by her grandmother growing up. Gloria had an informative high school experience "it was great learning each and everything I needed to know...well comes to subjects I don't like we normally sleep lol...but I enjoyed every moment.. I could go back if it was possible". After matriculating, Gloria wanted to study nursing however missed the application deadline and instead participated in an internship. Gloria got another employment post her internship but was retrenched in March 2021.

6.2.8 Henry

Henry is a 25-year-old father of two children. Before moving to Benoni, he grew up and completed his primary and secondary schooling in the Free State. Henry found high school exciting as they were one of the best students in their class until Grade 11. “I was really not that serious with my school work...I failed and it was so sad because people I felt I performed better than were progressed due to age cohort.” Henry subsequently became depressed and ill, which required him to be in and out of hospital in his final years of schooling. With the support of his friends and mother, he successfully obtained his matric in 2015. Henry had intended to study IT; however, they got an opportunity to study electrical engineering in Gauteng. Unfortunately, he could not complete the qualification due to family issues.

6.2.9 Ivan

Ivan is a 29-year-old father of one child who grew up with his mother and three friends and currently lives in Tembisa. Ivan found high school fun and had plans to become a comic after high school. Ivan participated in an internship however was not able to secure further employment. Ivan hopes to “further develop my working skills in the health care environment”.

6.2.10 Judith

Judith is a 31-year-old mother of two children who lives in Katlehong. She is an ECD practitioner by profession and has “working experience in Retail, corporate, education and health.” Judith’s experience in high school was insightful as she could overcome her fears and become an independent person. After matriculating, Judith planned to study for a four-year degree, launching her into many professional careers.

6.2.11 Kathrine

Kathrine is a 26-year-old mother of one from the North West. She is a first community development student at UNISA and a founder of an NPO. Kathrine’s school experience was complex, and faced various challenges as a rural primary school learner and as a learner in a multi-racial high school. When Kathrine matriculated, she “went to study psychology with North West University then I didn't complete due to financial constraints. Now am a first year student studying a degree in community development”.

6.2.12 Naledi

Naledi is a 23-year-old mother of one child who lives in Boksburg. Naledi matriculated in 2015 and described her schooling experience as significant despite being challenging. After high school, “I wanted to study nursing but was too late when I applied on the gpg nursing intake page.” Naledi has participated in an internship, was unable to secure further employment, and is thus back into unemployment.

Young parenthood

6.3.1 Individual experience of being a young parent

The participants reflected on their experiences as a young Black parents. The responses from the mothers significantly differed from the fathers as mothers expressed more hardship in their transition into parenthood.

The young mothers provided detailed accounts of their experiences which included gaining a sense of purpose and motivation, adapting, learning perseverance, losing a sense of identity, and struggling to cope with the new responsibilities. Diana highlighted that one of the benefits of being a young parent is motivation to be a better person and succeed in life to provide a better future for their child.

“You grow up to a person who now have a purpose to life, you start making choices that doesn't only involve you but your child also” - Diana

When the young mothers delved deeper into some of the challenges they faced as young parents, some of the responses highlighted the psychological impact of being a young parent, feeling judged and not having time for personal activities. For example, Diana and Kathrine highlighted that financial stress is associated with being a young parent, especially when the journey into parenthood was not planned and the youth is facing unemployment. Brenda highlighted the emotional toll that being a young parent has on an individual.

“Being a young parent takes everything out of you emotionally, where sometimes you won't have a strength to go on, but you have to keep on pressing” – Brenda

Naledi delves deeper into the sentiments shared by Brenda in that the pressures of being a young parent affect all aspects of your life. Yet, as Brenda stated, one needs to be resilient and overcome those obstacles.

“It's hard. I've learned that being a parent you need to be ready in everything because it's draining emotionally, physically, spiritually and financially. It's worse when you're young” – Naledi

In addition to the challenges mentioned, Diana mentioned that being a young parent includes not having the child's father's support. They reflected that the father did not want to be involved in the child's life, which impacted them emotionally.

“The father of my child never been in his life because he didn't want him.” - Diana

The experiences of the father of Diana's child contrast that of the young fathers who participated in the study. The male participants, on the other hand, spoke of their involvement in their children's lives. For example, Henry mentioned how he enjoyed seeing his child grow. Notably, the young fathers spoke of the added responsibility of being a young parent.

“Being a parent is a huge responsibility, but I enjoy watching my kids grow” - Henry

“You have to worry about a child who is dependent on you” – Henry

However, unlike the women, men did not elaborate on parenthood's financial or emotional responsibilities. When asked about the positives and negatives of being a young parent, Frans and Ivan mentioned that parenthood impacted their ability to live lives similar to their peers who are not parents.

“ The negative of being a young parent is you cannot live a typical life of a teenager”- Ivan

6.3.2 Reaction from parents when becoming a young parent

The responses varied when asked about their parents' reaction when they were informed about the participant entering parenthood at a young age. Based on the responses, young mothers predominately expressed their parents' disappointment and the drastic adjustment from being a carefree young adult to becoming a young parent with responsibilities they had to make. A young mother participant mentioned that their parent was initially angry but eventually accepted the journey into parenthood. Naledi's parents were disappointed at the situation while supporting the youth throughout the journey. Brenda mentioned that their parents worried about how the youth would adjust to becoming a new parent despite being excited about a new family member.

“They seemed so worried asking that am I ready to become a parent, telling me that being a parent is not easy, and happy that they are going to be grandparents and the family tree is growing.” – Brenda

Henry and Frans shared similar experiences with Naledi in that their parents were initially disappointed but stressed the importance of being present in their child's life.

“They were surprised, disappointed but also encouraged because parenting is not a play thing” – Henry

6.3.3 Reaction from the community for being a young parent

The majority of the young parents mentioned that the response from the community was similar in that the community was either judgemental, not supportive or unbothered by their pregnancy. Kathrine mentioned that people judge young parents within their community, and the community elders do not provide the necessary support to guide young parents to navigate their new reality. Naledi's response speaks to how their community treats young parenthood as a topic of gossip and is seen as a scandal. Brenda, however, mentions that their community lacks insight and has normalised young people being parents. Two other young mothers shared similar sentiments around the lack of education and awareness, with Judith detailing what information is lacking in their community.

“A lack of education, inconsistent and incorrect use of contraceptives and lack of information about reproduction has left the community normalising pregnancy in young people.” - Judith

One young mother mentioned that the lack of employment opportunities within the community is a factor that contributes to the normalisation of young parenthood.

“Being young parents in this community it’s the norm which is not the good thing because most of the young people are struggling to get a job, we don’t have many opportunities, so they get bored.” – Diana

Ivan, Edgar and Frans had similar sentiments to the young mothers about the community’s response. Edgar mentioned that his community did not approve of young people becoming parents because many of them are not working. Frans mentioned that many young men in his community often do not take care of their children, and he wanted to be a role model for all the young fathers in the community.

“The community responded with negative reviews cause some of these young parents tend to neglect their kids and live them up with their grannies” – Ivan

It was important for this study to gauge how the participants’ parents reacted to their transition into parenthood, given that certain stereotypes about youth exist. Many South African communities have historically had high teenage pregnancy rates (Odimegwu & Mkwanaenzi, 2018; Thobejane, 2015). Though this topic is outside the scope of this research, some of the connotations associated with being a teenage parent may still be associated with young adults. Elders’ interpretation of success could fuel these stereotypes for the child, the portrayal of youth in mainstream media and the cultural obligations associated with being a school leaver (Arndt, 2014). For example, Dube-Addae (2019) noted that being a parent could elevate the social status of youth as they may be associated with the “respectable (parent) marker “as opposed to that of unemployed (youth)” (p.162). As Frans had highlighted, the community have strong

perceptions about young parents and that perspective framed how he would parent his child. Therefore, the community and parental perspective on young parenthood provide depth to the participant's parenting style and the potential reasoning behind their actions and behaviours.

Young parents' participation in youth employment programmes is only possible if youth can find an individual willing to take over the parental care of the participant's child. In many South African communities, shared responsibility for raising a child is a common practice as a mechanism to save on childcare costs (Rabe, 2017). Moreover, it is a form of community and family cohesion to the famous proverb (it takes a village to raise a child) that underpins many South African cultures (Moussié & Alfes, 2018; Murovhi, Matshidze, Netshandama & and Klu, 2018). In understanding how participants' parents and the community reacted to the youth's transition into young parenthood, one can gain some perspective on who are the potential caregivers of the youth's children when they are in employment. As Kathrine had highlighted earlier, her community do not provide the necessary support for young parents entering parenthood which could influence the kind of child care young parents looking to participate in youth employment programmes have. Suppose the parents of youth also hold the sentiments shared by the community. In that case, youths' participation in youth employment programmes could be to gain income for child care rather than a mechanism to gain work experience.

6.3 Internship/learnership programme

The research aimed to understand the experiences of young Black parents in youth employment programmes. Based on the interviews, youth found that the youth experience programmes helped capacitate them with key workplace skills and knowledge. The description shared by many youths included building a network of fellow youth with a shared vision, learning from each other, and gaining financial security. Some of the youth highlighted that they were able to get further employment after their initial participation. Based on their newly established social network, young parents were able to foresee what their future was after completing the programme and could reflect on where the shortcomings of youth employment programmes were.

Secondly, many youths related to the notion of wanting to be upskilled and confidently adopt the identity of being a skilled youth. Below is the detailed feedback from the participants.

6.4.1 Experiences of being on an internship

The participants' experiences did not significantly differ between young mothers and fathers. Most of the young mothers and fathers mentioned that they had a good experience in their internship/learnership programme. Some factors that made their internship/learnership enjoyable included gaining more skills related to the workplace, growing their network and being more independent. Frans mentioned that his experience was filled with very inspiring and goal-driven individuals who were able to challenge him and help him strive to be a better person. Diana mentioned that one of the highlights of being on an internship/learnership was that they could empower their community.

“Being part of the people who wake up every day to save our communities was extremely exciting for me.” – Diana

Ivan and Andiswe highlighted that their experiences were challenging as their often-experienced delays with receiving their stipend impacted their ability to commute to work. Andisiwe mentioned that she and her colleagues were threatened and had to fight to receive their stipend. Ivan detailed his experience and how the late payments impacted his internship experience.

“We never received our stipends in due time, which was an obstacle for some of us cause we had to pay for transportation and buy lunch, but we improvised” – Ivan

Kathrine mentioned that during their experience, they felt like the staff took advantage of them as interns as they mentioned that they were overworked without recognition. Kathrine also mentioned how their managers would double their workload and not acknowledge their work. Additionally, she highlighted how some of the staff members

they worked with would reprimand them for not completing their tasks and mentioned that their inefficiencies would be why they lost their job.

“Just that managers tend to overwork interns and give them double workloads with little or no recognition for the work done” – Kathrine

The time it took for the youth to find the internship/learnership opportunity ranged from two months to two years. When asked about their reason for participating in an internship/learnership programme, all participants responded about gaining work experience and improving their skills. Participants detailed why they chose to participate and highlighted what they expected to get from the internship/learnership programme.

“Needed a job, identify my strengths and weaknesses, create a good professional network. Secured good references and recommendations. Chance to explore other opportunities” – Brenda

Some participants reflected on how they typically spent their stipend, with dominant categories being transportation, personal needs, and household contributions, such as groceries. Diana mentioned they used their stipend for transport and groceries at home and the rest for personal use. Additionally, Naledi highlighted that they use their stipend to cover their child’s expenses and contribute to their household needs.

“I used it (stipend) to pay transport, toiletries, food, and some clothes” – Naledi

However, two participants mentioned that the stipend was insufficient to cover all their needs and used different techniques to make their stipend last the month. For example, Edgar mentioned that they entered debt during the internship due to their lifestyle habits caused by transport and food costs.

The participants expressed that the internship/learnership programme positively impacted their lives. Some impacts included gaining new knowledge and improved

skills and reconsidering tertiary education. For example, Cynthia mentioned that they could improve their CV and apply for more opportunities to obtain further employment. Moreover, Henry stated that after their internship experience, they planned to study engineering. However, the impact of their experience made them reconsider studying towards a public management qualification. Only Brenda mentioned that they could obtain references after the internship programme, which enabled them to get hired after their internship.

“I secured good references and recommendations. And got a chance to explore other opportunities. I managed to get hired after my internship programme” –
Brenda

6.4.2 Young people’s expectations of internship providers

When it came to reflecting on their internship experiences, young fathers reflected more on the internship duration, whilst young mothers spoke more about the additional support they needed from internship providers.

The participants were asked about their opinion on what internship/learnership providers can improve in the delivery of the youth employment programmes. The responses were centred around the programme’s extension, additional support, and the expansion of the age criteria. Two participants mentioned that they believe that the current duration of internship/learnership is insufficient and recommended that they extend the programme. Diana mentioned that they believe that the current duration of the internship/learnership was not sufficient given that many jobs require applicants to have two- or three years of experience. Henry mentioned they would like the programmes extended to two years to give youth the necessary experience.

Most participants mentioned that they recommended that providers enhance the support they provide to the youth. Some participants mentioned that they would like assistance obtaining employment after their internship. Diana said they would like to see the internship/learnership providers advocate for their youth at potential employment companies.

“And at the end of an internship, they should also help them to get other jobs if they can’t all fit in one company. They should at least put on a word to for them to other companies, I think that can help.” – Diana

Other participants mentioned that they want to receive support from the provider whilst on the programme. The kind of support mentioned included financial incentives, performance reviews and the creation of a network for youth to seek additional employment opportunities. Cynthia highlighted that they wanted future programme beneficiaries to receive a more challenging work experience and incentives such as airtime and food vouchers. Kathrine mentioned that she would like to gain more information on the available opportunities in their current departments. One participant specifically mentioned that the eligibility criteria for an internship/learnership programme needed to be reconsidered to allow for more people to gain work experience:

“Most opportunities end at the 35 years old while else some people who are older than that also need exposure to gain experience” – Diana

6.5 Experiences of being an unemployed youth

Most of the participants who mentioned that they were unemployed were asked to reflect on their experience of being unemployed and how they managed to look after themselves and their families. There were some differences between mothers and fathers as fathers spoke more about how they tried obtaining some form of income. Mothers, however, spoke more about the emotional toll that unemployment has.

Two young fathers are unemployed, and the other two young fathers are still in employment. Ivan and Edgar mentioned that they struggled financially and relied on the support of their families, gambling and the welfare grants they received. Ivan mentioned that due to their lack of income, they received a lot of pressure from the mother of their child to provide financial support for them. However, Ivan did mention that they have a small income source through tenants’ rental payments, which covers their needs. Edgar mentioned that he struggled to have enough money for data and transport to obtain job applications which added stress to his life. Edgar, therefore,

relied on gambling with the hopes of winning so that they were able to meet their monthly needs and support his family.

“Sometimes I go and gamble having some hope that I win or when my grandmother gets the social grant, we can make ends meet.” - Edgar

Many young mothers shared sentiments that they could not support their families adequately. Naledi highlighted that they could lean on their mother for support, especially when looking for employment. Two mothers mentioned that after their initial internship experience, they could get another employment before being retrenched. As such, that may have had an impact on their self-identity. For example, Gloria highlighted that being unemployed was difficult as they struggled to support their family.

“Things are very hard...I don't wanna lie..I can't afford to even assist at home or get things I need as a girl” – Gloria

Diana mentioned that during her period of unemployment, she relied on state support SASSA child grant of R460 per month. Andisiwe mentioned how the emotional support from his family helped him look for work when they felt depressed during their period of unemployment.

“Always depressed and feeling useless...I can't even take care of my family and my personal needs” – Andisiwe

6.6 Conclusion

Internship/learnership programmes create a platform where young people experience the complexities of the working world. Based on the responses from the participants, mothers and fathers had similar experiences during the internship. All but two participants mentioned that they had a good experience participating in internships. However, young mothers and fathers had different experiences after internships and when they were unemployed. Young fathers predominantly highlighted the strategies they used to try and support their families even if it places them in compromising

positions financially. Young mothers shared strong sentiments about the emotional impact of being unable to provide for their families and relying on them for emotional and financial support.

The results section highlighted the feedback from the participants regarding their experience of being young Black parents and navigating youth employment programmes. For example, some participants mentioned the challenges they faced being unemployed and how beneficial youth employment programs expose them to skills whilst providing them with financial stability. Young parents also expressed what resources they expect to receive from youth employment programme providers. The discussion session will unpack two critical identities that young Black mothers and fathers develop from participating in youth employment programmes. In addition, the empowerment theory is used to underline the experiences of young Black parents and the role that youth employment programmes play in empowering them.

7. DISCUSSION

In this study, several identities emerged from the participants' experiences of being young parents participating in youth employment programmes. The prevalent identity which emerged from the study was the resilient fatigue identity, and the impact youth employment programmes have in providing financial and emotional relief. Additionally, the results highlighted the impact that youth employment programmes have on developing the confidence of young parents, thus empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed to be active contributors to their families and society. The above insights will be discussed in more detail in the below section.

7.1 Resilient Fatigue Identity

Resilience is seen as the process of navigating, adapting, and managing significant moments of stress (Young, Roberts & Ward, 2020). Due to the complex nature of parenthood, young parents often face numerous stressful moments they need to navigate. Young mothers especially feel the burden of responsibilities associated with being a young mother who has financial instability. According to Laframboise (2019), women earn about 28% less than men and find it more difficult to find sustainable employment.

Some challenges include managing the relationship with their partner, providing financial and emotional support for their child, and adjusting their lifestyle to fit their parental responsibilities. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decrease in available long-term employment opportunities for youth, the above stressful moments have been highly exacerbated, demanding young parents to be more resilient for the health and wellbeing of their child/ren. This is especially true for many young mothers as statistically and socially, mothers are more likely to be the primary guardian of their children (Laframboise, 2019). Resilience fatigue, therefore, is the exhaustion young parents face because of always being motivated and positive (Butko, 2020). Cynthia describes their resilience fatigue experience as the willingness to continue supporting their family in times of turmoil and finding positive outcomes.

Very little research has been done on resilience fatigue; however, based on this study's results, two factors could explain the root of resilience fatigue among young mothers.

A young mother has high financial expectations, as Stack & Meredith (2018) highlighted how finances become a constant stressor. All young mothers except one young parent mentioned that they are raising their child/ren with little to no financial support from their partner and thus rely more on their family to support the young parent. Young mothers who face financial challenges surrounding their ability to support their child's desire want to ensure that their hardships do not become their child's. Young mothers interviewed, like Diana and those who participated in van Vugt & Versteegh (2018) study, shared similar sentiments around their motivation behind their resilience and their desire to provide their child with a better life than they experienced. A few young mothers mentioned using a portion of their stipend to cover their child's daycare expenses. Therefore, the financial incentive provided by youth employment programmes further empowers young mothers to make an informed decision that works towards their desire to provide a better life for their child/ren.

A study by Gbogbo (2020) indicated that the lack of employment opportunities contributed to the high rates of young parenthood in the community, which Naledi highlighted in their interview. Govender, Naidoo & Taylor (2020) and Mjwara & Maharaj (2018) revealed that the lack of community support influenced how young mothers perceived their journey into parenthood. Young parents, especially mothers, who participated in youth employment programmes saw it as an opportunity to gain support and financial relief and refocus their attention to include their ambitions. In essence, youth employment programmes let young parents lean less on their resilience and other identities.

Young fathers in this study did not speak explicitly about the emotional challenges they face as young parents. The two unemployed fathers spoke about their desire to support their families. For young fathers, the pressure for financial independence also contributes to the youth's social capital, as financial independence is a "social marker of adulthood" (Baldry, Graham & De Lannoy, 2019, p. 18). This is especially true for fathers as society had often associated fatherhood with being financial providers. As such, young fathers may feel pressured to meet that social expectation and participate in economic activities such as gambling, going into debt or engaging in exploitative

work to provide for their families. Despite this societal pressure to uphold the image of being a father figure, young fathers do not seem to embody the resilient fatigue identity as much as young mothers.

The lived experiences are still being lived by many young parents today who rely on family to care for their child whilst providing financially for their family. The pandemic negatively impacted the economy, which saw a significant portion of the working class see a massive reduction in their disposable income, thus propelling young parents to heighten their resilience to seek opportunities to meet their financial needs. Without readily available long-term employment opportunities, youth employment programmes provide temporary financial relief to young parents as they earn a small stipend while enhancing their professional capabilities. One could argue that youth employment programmes provide the financial capital to defy the community stereotype and lessen the burden on the family by creating the financial means to outsource specific responsibilities such as adult supervision during the day.

7.2 Skilled youth

The overall intent of youth employment programmes is to gain the necessary skillset and knowledge to advance them within the workplace. All the participants had been beneficiaries of a youth employment programme, and their experience has reflected elements of empowerment. Unlike the resilience fatigue identity that young mothers predominately experienced, young mothers and fathers both adopted the skilled youth identity. Both parents expressed their desire to gain experience and skills for better and sustainable employment.

When the participants reflected on their experience, their sentiments were secured around their newly acquired knowledge and improved skill sets, which they believed would make them more appealing to future employers. Additionally, Judith mentioned that their participation “changed my life” and that they “had a positive experience despite earning a little.” Young parents’ excitement and positive experience in youth employment programmes contribute to their inward perception of themselves as assets to their community. Parry (2014) confirmed the above sentiment as their results highlighted that employment status of being employed brought about a “sense of pride,

empowerment and achievement” (p. 33). Notably, most of the comments made by the participants regarding their workplace responsibilities were positive, as the youth expressed that they could demonstrate their abilities in the workplace. Based on the responses from the participants, the youth employment programmes they have participated in have, for the most part, created a sense of empowerment. Similarly, Ile and Boadu (2018) highlighted the role that youth employment programmes play in creating a sense of empowerment through initiatives that foster active participation and contribution and enable youth to acquire knowledge and skills.

What was significant in the results was that one participant mentioned that their negative experience in the youth employment programme was influenced by their interactions and relationship with their senior co-workers. Henry mentioned that they were overworked and often intimidated into doing the work of their co-workers without any recognition or support. Introducing youth interns in a workplace could be seen as direct competition for work opportunities and thus threaten permanent employees (Naidoo & Hoque, 2017). What is interesting is that none of the participants highlighted an experience of being a “professional hot drinks maker” (p.445) tasked with mundane tasks which create no room for meaningful learning and empowerment (O’Connor & Bodicoat, 2017). Despite this experience, the youth employment programme saw the participants gain more confidence regarding their skillset, position themselves within the job-seeking environment, and develop higher hopes about obtaining new employment. Chakravarty, Das and Vaillant (2017) suggested that a programme that aims to strengthen three critical skills could be key in improving youth’s employment prospects. This includes reinforcing numeracy, literacy and life skills and increasing technical, vocational, business and entrepreneurial skills (Chakravarty, Das & Vaillant, 2017). Based on the participants' responses, this kind of programme would be most welcomed by many youths.

A frequent response from the participants was that they had ambitions to pursue their passion. However, due to their inability to enter tertiary education, both parents have had to adapt and focus on professions in which they are likely to gain employment. According to Baldry, Graham & De Lannoy (2019), young people are attracted to

youth employment programmes as an alternative pathway to additional skills development and empowerment and often provide clarification on youth's professional ambitions post-high school. Gloria mentioned that they were willing to participate in another youth employment programme to gain different experiences. This response indicates that youth employment programmes are essential in furthering their professional aspirations through upskilling.

7.3 Impact of youth employment programmes in COJ

One of the impacts of youth employment programmes is that youth can develop their occupational identity and future orientation. According to Ivzori, Sachs, Reiter & Schreuer (2020), occupational identity refers to youth's ability to develop a clear understanding of their "current abilities, strengths and desires" (p.4) relating to their professional life. The youth employment programmes create an environment where youth develop their professional aspirations based on their strengths and interests. For example, Brenda mentioned that they developed communication and problem-solving skills through the programme, which allowed alignment of current skillsets with their career path.

Diraditsile (2021) noted that the most significant contributor to youth unemployment is the skills gap and lack of experience youth have. There is some evidence from the results that youth employment programmes empower youth with enough relevant skills and knowledge to make them attractive for employment. Two of the participants could secure short-term employment post their internship. However, the prevalent shortcoming of youth employment programmes is their inability to create a sustainable pathway to more secure employment that significantly reduces youth unemployment (Diraditsile, 2021; Miller, McAuliffe, Riaz & Deuchar, 2015). For example, the two participants who received post-programme employment either experienced contract termination or lapse of the contract, thus propelling them back into unemployment.

A significant number of participants mentioned that they believe in extending the youth employment programmes' duration to allow youth to gain more experience and diversify their knowledge through interactions with different departments. Naidoo & Hoque (2017) highlighted that the short duration of youth employment does impact

the depth of knowledge that youth ultimately gain and that mentorship and developmental opportunities aid in further empowering young people, thus increasing their likelihood of future employment.

The discussion section detailed young Black parents' identities when participating in youth employment programmes and how such programmes could be a source of empowerment in navigating their parenthood. For example, it was evident that the role of youth employment programmes is a critical pathway for young Black parents, especially when they lack the necessary skills needed to gain meaningful employment that creates a sustainable financial position for them and their families. The last section highlights limitations faced within the research and proposed two recommendations to youth employment programme providers to enhance young Black parents' different and better position.

8. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion

This research aim was to understand the experiences of young parents as a participant in youth employment programmes based in Johannesburg. The prominent themes that emerged included resilience, fatigue and skillfulness. The emergence of the resilience fatigue identity was notable as it described the hardships young mothers face in trying to create a better life for their children and navigating their career prospects. Young mothers have found that their participation in youth employment programmes increases their social capital and contributes to their willingness to continue to make sacrifices that would see their children move up in society. An expected theme from the results related to the desire of young mothers and fathers to be seen as skilled youth to improve their attractiveness towards long-term employment. Given that the sentiments shared by the participants highlighted a misalignment between the objectives of youth employment programmes and the experiences of the participants, there is a need for more research to be done.

This research contributes to the literature on youth employment programs and young parenthood as it offers insight into how employment programmes help young parents

strengthen their identification with parenthood. Specifically, the results from the research complement the current literature pool and suggest elements that could increase the value-added experience by young parents. In terms of implications for further studies, this research can be replicated with an increased sample size with a greater diversity of participants and a data collection method that encourages in-depth reflection and discussions by the participants.

8.2 Limitations

Two limitations influenced the interpretation of the results: the sample demographics and size and the data collection method. Researchers like Moser & Korstejens (2017) considered the sample size below the minimum number for research data saturation. The demographics of the sample were skewed toward young mothers, which could have influenced how the data was interpreted towards the experiences of young mothers. The demographics limited the researcher's ability further to explore the potential complexities between young mothers and fathers.

The second limitation relates to using WhatsApp as a data collection tool, as some of the responses were very short, and there were limited opportunities to probe further without discouraging the participant from engaging in the interview (Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al., 2022). In addition, the platform's convenience resulted in participants taking longer to respond to questions which required the researcher to send reminders to the participants to respond to the questions. This platform may have limited the ability of the researcher to delve deeper into the youth's experience in engaging in youth employment programmes.

8.3 Recommendation for youth employment providers

Based on the literature review and the feedback from the participants, there are two recommendations that youth employment programme providers can implement to empower young Black parents further.

8.3.1 Reassessment of youth employment programmes

Based on the research, there needs to be more investigation done to understand if the current youth employment programme meets the needs of the diverse group of youth who form part of the beneficiaries of such programmes. Youth are also asking for

youth employment programmes not to be monolithic in the experience they provide but rather incorporate elements of personal development, societal skills transfer, and access to critical networks. The varied experience will provide youth with the tools to make informed decisions regarding their careers, propel them to become critical participants within their community and tackle some of the challenges that youth face as young parents. All youth ultimately want to gain work experience and leverage it to assert themselves within society. Creating programmes that match the extensions and adapt to youth changes is essential.

8.3.2 Integration of developmental elements within the youth employment programme

It is critical for youth employment programme providers to develop programmes that produce suitable candidates with critical skills and knowledge that employers are in high demand. Secondly, beneficiaries should be empowered not to seek other short-term employment opportunities such as internships/learnerships as a permanent fix to their resilient fatigue identity and financial strains but rather as a temporary first step into sustainable employment. Thirdly, providers must create sustainable relationships with organisations and foster a pathway that sees beneficiaries of such employment programmes having more accessible access to future employers, thus reducing the temptation of returning to short-term youth employment programmes. One of the concerns that Baldry, Graham & De Lannoy (2019) highlighted was that the acquisition of technical knowledge and work experience does not “directly translate into employment” (p.16). This lack of translation is due to insufficient job opportunities that match the youth’s current skill set. A suggestion made by Baldry, Graham & De Lannoy (2019) was the prioritisation of Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprises to buy into the youth employment programmes and create a possible pathway for more sustainable employment.

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10. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information sheet form for key informants



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Dear participant,

My name is Danai Nyagani (Student number: 14187443), I am a Sociology Masters student at the University of Pretoria conducting a study titled “Youth and unemployment: exploring the experiences of young black Africa parents aged between 18 and 35 years old on youth employment programmes in Johannesburg”, as part of fulfilling the requirements for my Master’s degree.

Aim: This study aims to understand the experiences of young black African parents in Johannesburg who take part in youth employment programmes.

I am requesting your permission to participate in a digital individual interview using the WhatsApp chat function to gather the information described above. This interview will not take more than 2 hours long. I am also seeking your consent to transcribe the WhatsApp conversation for the write-up of my mini-dissertation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and once you have decided to participate in the study, you are allowed to withdraw your participation at any point in the process without any consequence. If at any point during the interview you do not feel comfortable answering the question, you have the option to decline to respond to the question.

I will treat our conversation and the information collected from our conversation with the utmost confidentiality and as such you will be given a pseudonym name (an alias name) to ensure that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and in the mini dissertation. This will ensure that the risk of you being recognised by what you have said is reduced and that your information is not recognisable in the final report. Confidentiality is guaranteed and that only I, the researcher, as well as my supervisor, Dr Sepetla Molapo, will have access to the screenshots and the transcriptions of the WhatsApp chat and other information shared between us during the process of my study. During the transcription process, any of your identifying information that is visible in the screenshots will be blacked out prior to them being stored. For confidentiality, the WhatsApp screenshots and transcriptions will be saved separately from the consent form which will confirm your participation in the study. All the information collected from the conversation will be stored at the Department of Sociology for 15 years and thereafter, it will be destroyed. This data will only be used

for academic purposes, and there is a possibility that the data collected may be reused for future academic studies by the researcher.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor should you have any questions regarding any part of this process at absolutely any point. May also inquire about access to the data and about how the results have been published. Should you experience any distress arising as a result of the interview process, please feel free to use the 24-hour Lifeline service (011 422 4242 / 0861 322 322) for counselling services and any additional emotional and mental support.

Danai Nyagani: Danai.v.nyagani@gmail.com

Cell Number: 0724261572

Dr Sepetla Molapo: Sepetla.Molapo@up.ac.za

Thank you,
Danai Nyagani

Appendix B: Formal acknowledgement of consent form



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the research on the experiences of young black African parents in youth employment programs in Johannesburg. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop the WhatsApp chat interview at any time should I not want to continue, and this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. The information obtained from the study will be used for academic purposes only.

Signature of the participant

Date

Signature of the researcher

Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide for key informants

Topic 1: Background information (all informants)

1. Can we start with your background? Who are you?
2. How old are you? (must be between 18-35 years old)?
3. Who did you live with growing up?
4. What was your schooling experience like? (school attended, highest education level)
5. What were your plans after you finished high school?
6. Are you a parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 18?
7. What are you currently doing? (working, studying, unemployed)
8. Have you participated in an internship/learnership before?

Topic 2: Experience of parenthood (informants who are parents/legal guardians)

1. How have you experienced being a young parent?
2. What are the positive and negative experiences of being a young parent?
3. What does it mean to be a young mother or father?
4. What was the reaction of your family when you told them that you were going to be a young parent?
5. How has your community responded to young people who become parents?

Topic 3: Employment Background (informants who are unemployed and are parents/legal guardians)

1. How long have you been unemployed?
2. When was the last time you were employed and what did you do?
3. What did you do when you were unemployed?
4. What challenges do you face during this period of unemployment?
5. How did unemployment impact your ability to provide as a parent?
6. How has your experience been a parent impacted your ability to find and keep a job?
7. How do you support your family?

Topic 4: Experience of youth employment program (informants who were on a youth employment program)

1. How was your experience being part of an internship/learnership?
2. What were your reasons for participating in internship/learnership?
Probe: what were some of the positive/negative experiences?
3. How long did it take for you to find the internship/learnership opportunity?
4. What did you typically use the monthly stipend for?
Follow up: Was the stipend enough to cover all your basic needs?
5. How did the internship/learnership impact your life?
6. How has your family responded to your participation in the internship/learnership?

7. How has your participation in the internship/learnership improved your employment prospects?
8. What can internship/learnership providers do to improve young people's experience?

Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix C: Demographic features of participants

Table 1: Summary of participant's demographic profile

	Participant	Age	Area of location	Participation in internship	Number of children	Current occupation
1	Andisiwe	23	Tsakane	Yes	1	Unemployed
2	Brenda	26	North West	Yes	1	Studying
3	Cynthia	22	Pretoria	Yes	1	Internship
4	Diana	28	Springs	Yes	1	Studying
5	Edgar	23	Soweto	Yes	1	Unemployed
6	Frans	25	Soweto	Yes	1	Working
7	Gloria	27	Soweto	Yes	1	Unemployed
8	Henry	25	Benoni	Yes	2	Unemployed
9	Ivan	29	Tembisa	Yes	1	Unemployed
10	Judith	31	Katlehong	Yes	2	Internship
11	Kathrine	26	North West	Yes	1	Studying
12	Naledi	23	Boksburg	Yes	1	Unemployed