

## Abstract

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest development challenges and the problem is rapidly growing in almost every region of the world including Kenya. Youth enterprises are essential components of Kenya Economy. Such enterprises are vital for creation of job opportunities. It was on this basis that the government of Kenya introduced the Youth Enterprise Development fund (YEDF) in 2006 to foster positive youth development. It is however unclear whether YEDF services such as loans, entrepreneurial training and market and linkages support contribute to growth of individually owned enterprises. The purpose of this study was to investigate growth of individually owned youth enterprises through youth enterprise development fund services in Tigania East Sub-County. The study objectives are to determine the relationship between YEDF lending services and growth, the relationship between entrepreneurship training services offered by YEDF and growth, and relationship between marketing and linkages support services provided by YEDF and growth individually owned youth enterprises in Tigania East Sub-County. The study was guided by trait theory, Knowledge Spillover Theory and transnational cost theory. A descriptive survey design and correlation research design was adopted in this study. The research was carried out in Tigania East Sub-County Meru County, Kenya. The target population in this study consisted of all 412 youths who belong to the 23 youth groups in Tigania East sub-County. The study will use a sample size of 119 respondents who were sampled proportionately and randomly from the 23 groups with individually funded members. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire constructed by the researcher. Prior to the actual data collection process, a pilot study was conducted in Tigania West Sub-County. Split half technique using Spearman Brown prophesy formula was employed to compute the reliability coefficient. The questionnaire was considered reliable if the coefficient of 0.7 and above was obtained. Assistance was sought from supervisors and other experts from Meru University concerning content validity of the questionnaires. Data was analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 22 as tool of analysis. The study established that YEDF loans enhance growth of individually owned youth enterprises through increase of sales volumes, profitability, product diversification, customer base growth and conferring competitive edge to recipients over their competitors. It was also established that entrepreneurship training services offered by YEDF enhance record keeping skills, customer care skills, increasing sales volume, understanding of their business, conferring business running skills, increasing profitability and general growth of individually owned youth enterprises. It was further found that marketing and linkages support services provided by YEDF enhance sales, product marketing, customer base growth, product diversification and discovery of new markets for individually owned youth enterprises. The finding could be used by the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender to develop and implement appropriate youth policies to address youth unemployment based on the degree of influence that each service was reveal on the growth of youth enterprises.