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Beyond Funding: How Institutional Arrangements Shape Youth Employment Outcomes in Tanzania's Youth Development Fund Program

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Abstract: *Youth unemployment remains a critical development challenge across Sub-Saharan Africa, with rates persisting at 8.9% despite numerous policy interventions. This study examines the institutional arrangements enabling or constraining the effective implementation of Youth Development Fund (YDF) program in Mwanza City, Tanzania; the nation's second-largest urban center and a strategic economic hub. Drawing on Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (RBET), the study investigates six institutional dimensions: enterprise registration procedures, fund application mechanisms, resource distribution adequacy, service quality, stakeholder engagement, feedback systems, and institutional collaborations. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, incorporating surveys with 365 YDF beneficiaries (selected through proportional allocation from 4,144 registered recipients), 14 key informant interviews with program implementers, three focus group discussions, and non-participant observations across 14 wards in Nyamagana and Ilemela Districts. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and chi-square tests, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Findings reveal significant implementation gaps: although all enterprises (100%) were formally registered and beneficiaries demonstrated high awareness of procedures (94.2%), cumbersome requirements, including multiple documents, inter-agency travel, and registration fees, created bureaucratic burdens that discouraged youth participation. Service quality received positive ratings from 72.3% of respondents, yet reports of unethical practices and communication failures undermined trust. Stakeholder engagement was robust (86.3% participation), with transparent decision-making structures extending from ward to council levels, and 82.4% received timely feedback through ward officers. However, critical constraints emerged: a significant funding gap existed between requested (mean: TZS 22.8 million) and disbursed amounts (mean: TZS 13.8 million; mean difference: TZS 9.04 million; $t=6.5706$, $p<0.001$), resulting in undercapitalized enterprises. Crucially, no international collaborations existed, limiting technical support and innovation transfer. These findings suggest that while Tanzania's YDF has established foundational institutional structures, implementation inefficiencies, particularly procedural complexity, resource inadequacy, and partnership deficits, undermine its transformative potential. The study contributes empirical evidence to youth entrepreneurship literature by demonstrating that financial resource provision alone is insufficient without enabling institutional ecosystems. We propose a multi-level reform framework encompassing digitized registration systems, guaranteed funding floors, international partnership protocols, ethics training for implementers, and policy revisions mandating simplified local arrangements. These interventions align with Tanzania's Development Vision 2050 and African Union Agenda 2063, offering scalable lessons for youth employment programming across resource-constrained contexts.*

Keywords: *Youth unemployment, Institutional arrangements, Enterprise development, Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory, Tanzania*

1. Background Information

Youth unemployment constitutes one of the most pressing socioeconomic challenges of the twenty-first century, threatening global stability and undermining sustainable development trajectories (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024; World Bank, 2023). Approximately 73 million young people aged 15–24 are unemployed worldwide, with Sub-Saharan Africa facing the most severe challenges as 10 to 12 million youth enter the labor market annually against only 3 million formal jobs being created (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2023; ILO, 2024). The region's official youth unemployment rate of 8.9% masks deeper structural problems of underemployment and informal sector concentration affecting over 70% of young workers (ILO, 2024; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Global policy responses have increasingly targeted youth entrepreneurship as a pathway to decent work. The

International Labour Organization has championed entrepreneurship education through its 2022 resolution on "Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy" (ILO, 2022), while the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's Entrepreneurship Policy Framework emphasizes enabling regulatory environments and access to finance (UNCTAD, 2020, 2023). The World Bank's "Solutions for Youth Employment" program has invested over $2.7 billion in youth employment interventions (World Bank, 2023). European initiatives such as Greece's Youth Guarantee, Italy's Garanzia Giovani, and Spain's Plan de Choque por el Empleo Joven demonstrate both potential and limitations, with evaluations revealing mixed outcomes due to implementation challenges including resource mismanagement and weak alignment with labor market demands (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2020; Mitrofanova *et al.,* 2022).

In response to persistent youth unemployment, African countries have increasingly adopted Youth Development Funds (YDFs) as policy instruments to catalyze youth entrepreneurship. Kenya's Youth Enterprise Development Fund has disbursed over KES 6 billion to more than 200,000 youth enterprises (Mabururu & Wekesa, 2020). Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme has reached over 100,000 youth (Okello *et al.,* 2022), while Nigeria's YouWiN! program generated over 5,000 enterprises and 25,000 jobs (McKenzie, 2017). Despite these investments, evidence of YDF effectiveness remains mixed, with systematic reviews finding employment impacts often below expectations due to implementation deficits including bureaucratic procedures, weak technical support, and poor loan recovery mechanisms (Kluve *et al.,* 2019; McKenzie, 2017; Mabururu & Wekesa, 2020). A multi-country African Economic Research Consortium (2023) study found YDFs achieved only 34% of projected employment targets, with institutional weaknesses identified as the primary constraint.

Institutional arrangements; the formal and informal rules, procedures, and organizational structures governing policy implementation; play a critical but under-researched role in shaping YDF outcomes (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019; North, 1990; Rodrik, 2022). In youth enterprise development, these arrangements encompass enterprise registration protocols, fund application procedures, resource allocation mechanisms, service delivery standards, stakeholder engagement processes, feedback systems, and inter-organizational collaborations (Helmke & Levitsky, 2020. Comparative evidence highlights stark contrasts in institutional effectiveness: advanced economies have reduced start-up times from 17.5 to 3 days through streamlined regulations (Degsew & Bayere, 2022; European Commission, 2021), while African youth entrepreneurs spend an average of 23 days on regulatory compliance compared to 4 days in OECD countries (World Bank, 2022). Registration procedures often require multiple documents and fees that disproportionately affect youth with limited resources (Kitheka, 2013; Tapewa, 2020). Funding applications similarly suffer from complexity requiring business plans and collateral that exclude precisely those youth most in need (Sebure *et al.,* 2021). Service quality deficits, including unprofessional conduct and delays, further erode trust and participation (Rehema & Tefurukwa, 2025). Yet examples like Rwanda's "One-Stop Shop" demonstrate that reform is possible (AfDB, 2023).

Stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms represent critical institutional dimensions. Evidence demonstrates that meaningful youth participation enhances ownership, relevance, and sustainability (Anyidoho *et al.,* 2022; Truphena, 2022). Tanzania's "Restless Development" strategy (2022–2030) exemplifies youth-led approaches (Restless Development, 2022). Institutional collaboration, both horizontal across government agencies and vertical with international actors, constitutes a further enabling condition, yet remains underdeveloped in many African contexts due to policy fragmentation and bureaucratic silos (AfDB, 2023; AERC, 2023; UNCTAD, 2023).

Tanzania exemplifies both promise and challenges in youth employment programming. With 65% of its 61 million population under age 25, the country possesses significant demographic potential (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024). Official unemployment stands at 3.35%, but this masks severe underemployment with over 70% of young workers in the informal sector (ILO, 2024; NBS, 2022). Tanzania's policy response has evolved through the National Youth Development Policy (1996, 2007), the National Youth Employment Action Plan (2018–2022), and institutional mechanisms including VETA, SIDO, NEDF, and SACCOS (URT, 2018, 2020). The YDF, established under the Local Government Finance Act, mandates that 4% of local government internal revenues be allocated to youth enterprise development, aligning with Tanzania's Development Vision 2025 and Five-Year Development Plan (2021/22–2025/26) (URT, 2021, 2022).

Mwanza City provides a strategic site for investigation. As Tanzania's second-largest city (population 1,104,521) and primary economic hub on Lake Victoria, youth constitute 41% of the population (NBS, 2024; URT, 2022). Between 2014/15 and 2020/21, Mwanza collected TZS 38.05 billion in internal revenue, disbursing TZS 1.7 billion to 592 youth groups, substantially more than Tanga (TZS 543.86 million to 435 groups) and Dodoma (TZS 817.4 million to 78 groups) (Tanga City Council, 2021; URT, 2023). Despite this investment, empirical evidence on YDF outcomes in Mwanza remains limited. Existing studies have focused on other regions: Rehema and Tefurukwa (2025) in Hai District,

Regina (2021) in Kinondoni, Magali and Mbagwa (2021) in Ilala, and Regina (2021) in Morogoro all found YDF had not achieved expected employment impacts, but offered limited insight into institutional mechanisms producing these outcomes.

This review reveals a critical research gap: while substantial literature examines YDF outcomes, limited attention has been paid to institutional arrangements shaping implementation processes. Understanding how enterprise registration, funding mechanisms, service quality, stakeholder engagement, feedback systems, and collaborations function is essential for diagnosing implementation deficits and designing effective reforms. This study therefore addresses the question: *How do institutional arrangements enable or constrain the implementation of the YDF for enterprise development and employment creation among youth in Mwanza City, Tanzania*?

Drawing on Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (RBET; Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), we examine six institutional dimensions: enterprise registration procedures, fund application mechanisms, funding distribution, service quality, stakeholder engagement, feedback mechanisms, and institutional collaborations. RBET provides analytical leverage by emphasizing that resources; financial, social, and human; are foundational for entrepreneurship, but their effective deployment depends on enabling institutional contexts (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Barney *et al.,* 2011). Within this framework, YDF resources represent financial capital, while institutional arrangements shape how youth access and leverage these resources with social and human capital (Becker, 1975; Reynolds, 1991). Recent RBET extensions incorporating institutional factors (Bruton *et al.,* 2022) further support this approach.

The study contributes theoretically by extending RBET to specify how institutional arrangements mediate resource-provision and entrepreneurial outcomes in developing countries (Bruton *et al.,* 2022; Welter *et al.,* 2019). Empirically, it provides rigorous mixed-methods evidence from a strategically selected site, identifying institutional leverage points for enhancing YDF effectiveness and contributing to Tanzania's Development Vision 2025 and African Union Agenda 2063 commitments to youth empowerment.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (RBET), originally proposed by Birger Wernerfelt (1984) and subsequently refined by Jay B. Barney (1991), Sharon A. Alvarez, and Lowell W. Busenitz (2001). The theory suggests that resources constitute the foundational cornerstone for entrepreneurship and enterprise development, enabling individuals to recognize and exploit new opportunities while assembling necessary resources for emerging ventures (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Within this framework, access to unique resources by founders serves as a key predictor of opportunity-based entrepreneurship and subsequent venture growth, with resources categorized into three principal classes: financial capital, social capital, and human capital.

The financial capital dimension, often conceptualized through liquidity theory, argues that establishing new firms becomes more feasible when individuals possess adequate financial resources. Scholars such as Blanchflower, Oswald, and Stutzer (2001) contend that those with financial capital are better positioned to acquire additional resources, thereby effectively exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities and founding enterprises (Clausen, 2006). In the context of Tanzania's YDF, this perspective illuminates how youth accessing financial capital through the program can initiate or expand enterprises for self-employment, transforming latent entrepreneurial intentions into tangible economic activities.

The social capital dimension, articulated by Reynolds (1991), suggests that stronger social ties to resource providers facilitate resource acquisition and increase the likelihood of opportunity exploitation. Coleman (1990) further emphasized that social networks function as critical conduits for information, trust, and collective action, reducing transaction costs and enhancing access to otherwise unavailable resources. This dimension proves particularly relevant to YDF beneficiaries in Tanzania, where youth typically organize into groups to access funds, leveraging collective social networks to initiate or expand enterprises. These group formations embody what Bourdieu (1986) described as social capital, the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of durable networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

The human capital entrepreneurship aspect underscores the importance of education, training, and experiential knowledge in entrepreneurial success (Becker, 1975). Schultz (1961) and Mincer (1974) established that investments in education and training yield productivity gains, which in entrepreneurial contexts translate into enhanced opportunity recognition, innovative capacity, and venture management capabilities. Kim, Aldrich, and Keister (2003) demonstrated that human capital enhances the entrepreneur's ability to recognize and exploit opportunities, leading to enterprise development. Within YDF programs, training components designed to build business management skills complement financial resources, fostering sustainable youth enterprises through improved decision-making and adaptive capacity.

The theoretical underpinnings of RBET find empirical support across diverse entrepreneurial contexts. Davidsson and Honig (2003) demonstrated that both human and social capital significantly predict nascent entrepreneurial activity and subsequent venture success. Their longitudinal study revealed that individuals with higher education levels and stronger social networks were more likely to discover and exploit business opportunities, consistent with RBET's core propositions. Similarly, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) integrated resource-based perspectives with opportunity recognition frameworks, arguing that entrepreneurial opportunities exist objectively but require specific resources and cognitive capabilities for discovery and exploitation.

Despite its robust explanatory power, RBET has attracted scholarly criticism necessitating theoretical refinement. Aldrich and Keister (2003) observed that many founders launch ventures with minimal capital, suggesting that financial resources, while crucial for growth, may not be essential for venture initiation. Hurst and Lusardi (2004) found that household wealth explained little variation in business entry rates, challenging the notion that financial constraints primarily determine entrepreneurial participation. Clausen (2006) further contended that while resource access predicts venture expansion, it does not preclude starting without substantial capital, particularly in contexts where bootstrapping, informal financing, or effectuation processes operate. These critiques highlight the theory's limitations in resource-scarce environments characteristic of developing countries like Tanzania, where youth may rely on informal networks, micro-savings, or bricolage approaches to entrepreneurship.

Contemporary scholarship has addressed these limitations through theoretical extensions and integrations. Foss, Klein, Kor, and Mahoney (2008) incorporated subjectivist perspectives, emphasizing individual perceptions and interpretations of resources as critical determinants of entrepreneurial action. This subjectivist turn reconciles RBET with Austrian economics and contemporary entrepreneurship theories, acknowledging that resource value is not inherent but constructed through entrepreneurial judgment and action. Barney, Ketchen, and Wright (2011) called for revitalizing RBET through application to new contexts, including digital entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and institutional environments, thereby extending the theory's relevance to emerging economic phenomena.

Klyver, Nielsen, and Evald (2018) advanced understanding of how entrepreneurs leverage networks to mobilize resources, grounding their analysis in exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Their work demonstrates that resource acquisition involves complex social exchanges where entrepreneurs offer value propositions in return for access to financial, intellectual, or social capital. This exchange perspective illuminates how YDF beneficiaries navigate institutional interfaces, building relationships with ward development officers, council officials, and fellow group members to secure and effectively utilize funds.

Recent theoretical developments by Bruton *et al.* (2022) integrate dynamic capabilities with RBET, explaining how entrepreneurs develop competencies to reconfigure resources in response to environmental changes. This dynamic perspective proves particularly relevant to YDF contexts where beneficiaries must adapt to market fluctuations, regulatory changes, and competitive pressures. The integration of institutional factors further recognizes that resource mobilization occurs within specific regulatory, normative, and cognitive frameworks that enable or constrain entrepreneurial action (Scott, 2014).

Applying RBET to YDF in Africa illuminates how YDFs provide critical resources to mitigate unemployment while revealing institutional arrangements that facilitate or impede resource utilization. In Tanzania's YDF context, financial injections combined with skill-building interventions address resource gaps, thereby promoting enterprise sustainability. However, the theory also exposes vulnerabilities: inadequate funding, bureaucratic procedures, and limited institutional collaborations may constrain youth from fully exploiting available entrepreneurial opportunities. As Barney *et al.* (2011) emphasized, resources alone do not guarantee competitive advantage; rather, effective resource mobilization, combination, and deployment determine entrepreneurial outcomes.

This framework proves particularly apt for examining YDF implementation in Mwanza City, as it links resource provision to institutional arrangements that facilitate youth entrepreneurship, ultimately driving employment creation. The theory's multidimensional conceptualization of resources; encompassing financial, social, and human capital; provides comprehensive analytical lenses for examining enterprise registration procedures (institutional access), funding distribution (financial resource allocation), stakeholder engagement (social capital development), and service quality (human capital enhancement). Furthermore, RBET's attention to resource heterogeneity and immobility explains why some youth groups succeed while others struggle, despite ostensibly similar access to YDF resources.

Table 1: Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory; Key Dimensions and Application to YDF

Dimension	Theoretical Foundations	Key Propositions	Application to YDF Context	Empirical Support
Financial Capital	Wernerfelt (1984); Barney (1991); Blanchflower *et al.* (2001)	Access to financial resources enables opportunity exploitation and venture establishment; liquidity facilitates resource acquisition	YDF provides startup capital; funding adequacy determines enterprise scale and sustainability	Davidsson & Honig (2003); Hurst & Lusardi (2004); Clausen (2006)
Social Capital	Bourdieu (1986); Coleman (1990); Reynolds (1991)	Social networks facilitate resource access, reduce transaction costs, and enable collective action	Youth groups leverage networks for fund access; stakeholder engagement builds trust and information flow	Klyver *et al.* (2018); Davidsson & Honig (2003); Mwangi & Shem (2012)
Human Capital	Becker (1975); Schultz (1961); Mincer (1974)	Education and training enhance opportunity recognition, innovation, and venture management	YDF training components build business skills; service quality affects capability development	Kim *et al.* (2003); Brijal & Peter (2011); Unger *et al.* (2011)
Theoretical Extensions	Foss *et al.* (2008); Barney *et al.* (2011)	Subjectivist perspectives; dynamic capabilities; institutional factors; exchange relationships	Institutional arrangements shape resource mobilization; adaptive capacity determines sustainability	Scott (2014); Shane & Venkataraman (2000); Alvarez & Busenitz (2001)

The theoretical framework adopted for this study thus provides robust analytical purchase on the institutional arrangements underpinning YDF implementation in Mwanza City. As such, by integrating classical RBET propositions with contemporary theoretical extensions, the framework accommodates both the resource-provision function of YDF and the institutional contexts within which youth mobilize, combine, and deploy those resources. This comprehensive theoretical lens enables systematic examination of enterprise registration procedures, funding application processes, resource distribution mechanisms, service quality dimensions, stakeholder engagement practices, feedback mechanisms, and institutional collaborations; the constituent elements of institutional arrangements that this study investigated. Through this theoretical grounding, the research contributes to understanding how resource-based mechanisms, mediated by institutional arrangements, translate YDF investments into sustainable youth employment outcomes in Tanzania.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mwanza City, located on the southern shore of Lake Victoria in Northern Tanzania, specifically within the Nyamagana and Ilemela administrative districts (Figure 1). Mwanza City represents one of Tanzania's fastest-growing urban centers, with a total population of 1,104,521 inhabitants (509,687 in Ilemela and 594,834 in Nyamagana) and an annual growth rate of 3% (URT, 2022). Youth aged 15–35 years constitute 41% of the city's total population, underscoring the demographic significance of this cohort for urban economic development.

As the country's second-largest city after Dar es Salaam, Mwanza functions as a major manufacturing and commercial hub, hosting substantial small and medium enterprise activities spanning beverages, textiles, wood products, and other light manufacturing sectors (URT, 2016; URT, 2020).

The purposive selection of Mwanza City was justified through multiple criteria designed to enhance the study's relevance and comparative value. First, the city's strategic alignment with Tanzania's Development Vision 2025, which prioritizes youth employment reduction, provided policy relevance. Second, Mwanza demonstrates exceptional internal revenue performance, collecting TZS 38.05 billion between 2014/15 and 2016/17, with the mandated 4% allocation to the YDF generating substantial resources for youth enterprises. Third, the city has disbursed TZS 1.7 billion to 592 youth groups, representing significantly higher investment compared to other urban centers such as Tanga (TZS 543.86 million to 435 groups) and Dodoma (TZS 817.4 million to 78 groups) (URT, 2023; Tanga City Strategic Plan, 2021–2025/26; URT, 2017/18–2020/21). Despite these substantial investments, empirical evidence examining enterprise establishment and employment outcomes remains conspicuously absent for Mwanza, whereas comparable studies exist for Dar es Salaam (Mbangwa, 2021). This research gap justified the selection of Mwanza to assess YDF contributions to youth-run enterprises and employment generation.

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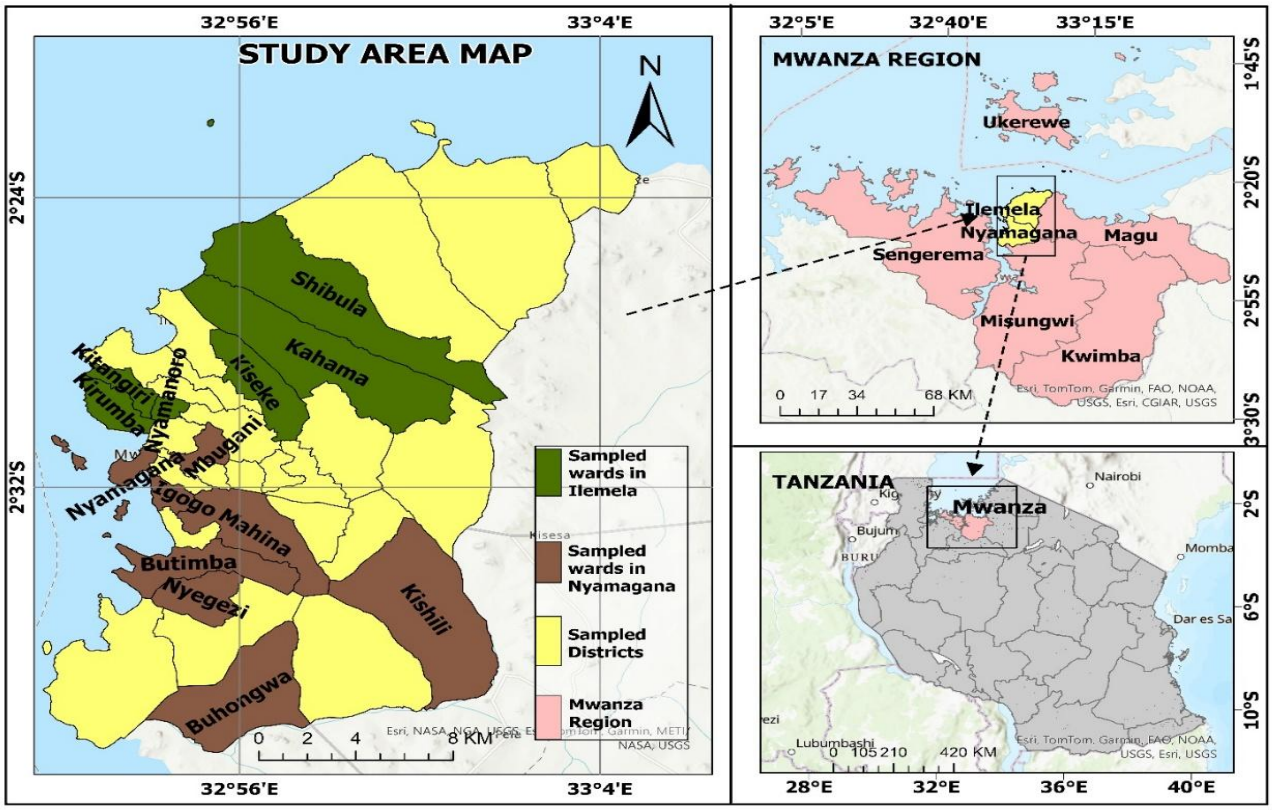
Figure 1: Map of the Study Area Showing Mwanza City and the Two Districts



3.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was adopted, enabling data collection from diverse participants at a single time point to capture snapshots of key variables (Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2009). This design offers distinct advantages for studies examining multiple variables across large samples, providing cost-effective data collection while minimizing resource requirements. The cross-sectional approach was particularly appropriate for this study's objective of assessing institutional arrangements at a specific point in YDF implementation, generating baseline evidence that can inform subsequent longitudinal investigations.

A convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative data to provide comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Yoshikawa *et al.,* 2008; Creswell & Clark, 2017). Quantitative data offered statistical insights into patterns, relationships, and magnitudes across the beneficiary population, while qualitative data provided contextual depth through participant narratives, revealing mechanisms underlying observed patterns. This methodological triangulation enhanced the validity and completeness of findings by capturing both the breadth and depth of institutional arrangements affecting YDF implementation (Denzin, 2012; Fetters *et al.,* 2013).

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The target population comprised 4,144 registered YDF beneficiaries, identified from official community development office records in both districts. The sample size of 365 participants was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- N = total population (4,144)
- e = precision level (0.05)

Substituting values: $n = 4,144 / (1 + 4,144 \times 0.05^2) = 4,144 / (1 + 4,144 \times 0.0025) = 4,144 / (1 + 10.36) = 4,144 / 11.36 =$ 365 respondents.

Proportional allocation ensured adequate representation across all wards using Pandey and Verma's (2008) formula:

$$n_h = (N_h / N) \times n$$

Where:

- n_h = subsample for each ward
- N_h = ward population of beneficiaries
- N = total population
- n = total sample size

This proportional approach ensured that wards with larger beneficiary populations contributed proportionally more

respondents, maintaining representativeness while enabling ward-level analyses (Taherdoost, 2017).

Multi-stage sampling procedures were implemented to ensure rigorous participant selection. First, all 21 wards across both districts were included. Second, within each ward, cluster sampling was employed by grouping beneficiaries according to enterprise type (e.g., agribusiness, trade, manufacturing, services). Third, simple random sampling using computer-generated random numbers selected individual beneficiaries from each cluster, drawing from master lists obtained from district community development departments. This approach ensured that all registered beneficiaries possessed equal selection probability while maintaining representation across enterprise categories (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Purposive sampling targeted key informants possessing specialized knowledge of YDF implementation. Selected informants included one ward community development officer from each of the 21 wards (n=21), two district program coordinators (one per district), and two department heads responsible for youth development portfolios. This purposive approach aligned with established qualitative research guidelines emphasizing information-rich cases that illuminate research questions (Patton, 2015; Palinkas *et al.,* 2015). To address potential absenteeism, three additional wards were included as backups, ensuring data completeness.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Multiple data collection methods were employed to ensure methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and completeness of findings (Flick, 2018; Natow, 2020). Each method was carefully selected to capture specific dimensions of institutional arrangements while enabling cross-verification of emerging patterns.

Surveys: Structured and semi-structured questionnaires were administered face-to-face to all 365 sampled beneficiaries between March and June 2024. The questionnaire comprised five sections: (i) demographic characteristics and enterprise profile; (ii) registration and application procedures; (iii) funding and resource distribution; (iv) service quality and stakeholder engagement; and (v) institutional collaborations and feedback mechanisms. Questions employed Likert-scale responses (1–5), multiple-choice formats, and open-ended items enabling qualitative elaboration. The instrument was pilot-tested with 30 beneficiaries from non-sample wards, leading to refinements in question wording, sequencing, and translation clarity. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.89 across sections indicated acceptable internal consistency (Taber, 2018).

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Three FGDs were conducted, each comprising six participants (total n=18), selected from randomly chosen wards (one from Ilemela, two from Nyamagana). FGD participants represented diverse enterprise types, gender balance, and varying durations of YDF participation. A semi-structured discussion guide explored perceptions of enabling environments, procedural

Table 2a: Sample Distribution Across Wards in Ilemela and Nyamagana Districts

District/Ward	Total Beneficiaries	Sample Size	Percentage of Ward Population	Enterprise Clusters Represented
Ilemela District	**1,340**	**118**	**8.8%**	
Nyamanoro	125	11	8.8%	Trade, Services
Kitangiri	261	23	8.8%	Agribusiness, Manufacturing
Kahama	284	25	8.8%	Trade, Services, Manufacturing
Kiseke	114	10	8.8%	Agribusiness, Trade
Shibula	295	26	8.8%	Services, Manufacturing
Kirumba	261	23	8.8%	Trade, Agribusiness
Nyamagana District	**2,804**	**247**	**8.8%**	
Butimba	363	32	8.8%	Trade, Services, Manufacturing
Igogo	227	20	8.8%	Agribusiness, Trade
Nyegezi	352	31	8.8%	Manufacturing, Services
Nyamagana	534	47	8.8%	Trade, Services, Manufacturing
Mahina	159	14	8.8%	Agribusiness, Trade
Buhongwa	431	38	8.8%	Trade, Services, Agribusiness
Mbugani	465	41	8.8%	Manufacturing, Trade, Services
Kishiri	276	24	8.8%	Services, Agribusiness
Total	**4,144**	**365**	**8.8%**	

challenges, service quality experiences, and recommendations for improvement. Each FGD lasted 90–120 minutes, was conducted in Kiswahili (the local language), audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim. FGDs provided rich contextual data on collective experiences and normative expectations regarding institutional arrangements (Nyumba *et al.,* 2018; Ochieng *et al.,* 2018).

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Twenty-five key informant interviews were conducted with ward community development officers (n=21), district program coordinators (n=2), and department heads (n=2). These interviews employed semi-structured guides exploring informants' perspectives on institutional arrangements, implementation challenges, resource constraints, and stakeholder dynamics. Interviews lasted 45–90 minutes, were audio-recorded where permitted, and supplemented with detailed field notes. Key informants provided insider perspectives on policy implementation realities, administrative constraints, and institutional logics shaping YDF outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Non-Participant Observations: Systematic observations were conducted at ward offices, council headquarters, and beneficiary enterprise sites to capture real-time interactions, procedural implementations, and contextual factors affecting YDF implementation. Observation checklists guided documentation of physical infrastructure, service delivery processes, staff-beneficiary interactions, and enterprise operations. Observations were recorded through detailed field notes and photographs (where permitted), providing triangulation evidence for self-reported data (Liu & Maitlis, 2010).

Documentary Reviews: Official documents were systematically reviewed, including YDF operational guidelines, district council reports, policy frameworks, monitoring and evaluation reports, and relevant legislation. Document analysis provided historical context, identified formal institutional arrangements, and enabled comparison between prescribed procedures and actual implementations (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022).

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis: Qualitative data from FGDs, KIIs, open-ended survey responses, observation notes, and documents were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis framework. This approach was particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena such as institutional arrangements, enabling systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns within qualitative data. The analysis employed both inductive and deductive strategies, allowing themes to emerge from data while maintaining alignment with the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory guiding the study (Terry *et al.,* 2017; Clarke, 2021).

The analysis process adhered to the following phases:

Phase 1: Data familiarization. The lead author repeatedly read transcripts while listening to audio recordings, noting initial observations and analytic insights in memos. This immersive engagement ensured intimate familiarity with data depth and nuance (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase 2: Systematic coding. Transcripts underwent line-by-line open coding using NVivo 14 software, identifying meaningful units capturing both semantic content and underlying meanings. Initial codes remained close to participant language while beginning to identify patterns relevant to institutional arrangements.

Phase 3: Initial theme generation. Codes were grouped into potential themes corresponding to the study's focal areas: registration procedures, funding application processes, service quality, stakeholder engagement, feedback mechanisms, and institutional collaboration. NVivo's mind-mapping functionality visualized code relationships, linking inductive codes to deductive categories derived from RBET.

Phase 4: Theme review and development. Potential themes were tested against the dataset for coherence, distinctiveness, and comprehensiveness. Themes were refined, merged, or discarded through iterative comparison with coded extracts and entire transcripts, ensuring themes accurately represented the dataset.

Table 2b: Data Collection Methods, Participants, and Rationale

Method	Participants/Sources	Sample Size	Purpose/Rationale	Tools Used
Survey	YDF beneficiaries	365	Quantify patterns in registration, funding, service quality, and engagement	Structured and semi-structured questionnaire
Focus Group Discussions	Beneficiary representatives	3 groups (n=18)	Explore collective experiences, normative expectations, and contextual dynamics	FGD guide, audio recorder
Key Informant Interviews	Ward officers, program coordinators, department heads	25	Capture insider perspectives on implementation realities and institutional constraints	KII guide, audio recorder
Non-Participant Observation	Ward offices, council HQ, enterprise sites	21 sites	Verify reported practices through direct observation	Observation checklist, field notes
Documentary Review	YDF guidelines, council reports, policies	45 documents	Establish formal arrangements and historical context	Document analysis matrix

Phase 5: Theme definition and naming. Final themes were defined with clear specifications of scope, content, and significance. Each theme received a detailed analytic description identifying its manifestation across data sources and relationship to research questions.

Phase 6: Report writing. Themes were integrated into a coherent narrative supported by vivid quotations, maintaining connection to theoretical framework and existing literature while presenting novel insights.

NVivo 14 software facilitated systematic management of the substantial qualitative dataset (approximately 450 pages of transcripts), enabling efficient coding, query execution, and visual mapping of theme relationships (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The software's query functions enabled comparison across participant categories, data sources, and districts, strengthening analytic depth.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Quantitative data from surveys were entered into IBM SPSS version 25 for statistical analysis. Data cleaning procedures identified and addressed missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) summarized respondent characteristics and response patterns across variables (Pallant, 2020).

Inferential statistical analyses examined relationships and differences central to research objectives:

- ***Chi-square tests of independence*** assessed associations between categorical variables, such as district and satisfaction levels, awareness and access to funds. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$, with effect sizes reported where appropriate (McHugh, 2013).
- ***Independent samples t-tests*** compared mean differences between requested and disbursed funds, both overall and by district. The t-test was appropriate for comparing two groups on continuous outcome variables, with Levene's test assessing homogeneity of variance assumptions (Field, 2018).
- ***Effect size calculations*** (Cohen's d) complemented significance testing by quantifying the magnitude of observed differences, addressing criticisms of sole reliance on p-values in social science research (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012).

Quantitative results were presented in tables with integrated interpretations, while figures visualized key patterns such as funding disparities. Statistical outputs were cross-verified through manual calculations to ensure accuracy.

Data Integration and Triangulation: Integration of qualitative and quantitative data occurred at multiple levels: during data collection (through concurrent methods), analysis (through comparison of findings), and interpretation (through synthesis of insights). A joint display matrix mapped qualitative themes against quantitative variables, identifying convergent, divergent, and complementary findings (Fetters *et al.,* 2013; Guetterman *et al.,* 2015). This integration enhanced validity by cross-verifying findings across methods, with qualitative data explaining statistical patterns and quantitative data indicating the prevalence of qualitative themes.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Rigorous ethical protocols were implemented throughout the research process, adhering to established guidelines for social science research involving human participants (Resnik, 2020; Israel & Hay, 2006). Prior to data collection, the research team obtained institutional approval through an introduction letter from the Directorate of Research and Postgraduate Studies at the University of Dodoma, followed by authorization from municipal council directors in both study districts. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, with materials translated into Kiswahili to ensure comprehension. Participants were explicitly assured of voluntary participation, confidentiality protections, and freedom to withdraw without consequence, addressing potential power imbalances between researchers and beneficiaries (Karnieli-Miller *et al.,* 2009; Nijhawan *et al.,* 2013).

Stringent measures safeguarded participant confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process. All identifying information was removed from transcripts and datasets, replaced with unique participant codes, while data storage employed password-protected computers and encrypted files. Interview sessions were conducted in private locations chosen by participants, and focus group discussions occurred in neutral community spaces with minimal external interruptions. Researchers fluent in Kiswahili conducted all interactions, ensuring cultural appropriateness and comfortable participant expression. The research design minimized potential harms while maximizing benefits, with findings to be disseminated to participating communities and policymakers to potentially improve YDF implementation. All sources are explicitly acknowledged through appropriate citations, maintaining academic integrity throughout (Saunders *et al.,* 2015; Roig, 2015).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Youth Enterprise Registration Procedures

The findings revealed that all 365 respondents (100%) had registered their enterprises, confirming that registration constitutes a mandatory precondition for accessing YDF support. This universal compliance reflects effective enforcement of formalization requirements by implementing authorities, aligning with the fund's objective of promoting formal sector participation among youth entrepreneurs. Enterprise registration serves multiple functions beyond fund access: it facilitates business identification, enables tax compliance, provides legal recognition for contracting, and establishes eligibility for subsequent public and private sector opportunities.

Awareness of registration procedures was predominantly attributed to ward community development officers, with 73.7% of respondents in Ilemela and 68.8% in Nyamagana identifying these officials as primary information sources. This pattern indicates effective decentralization of responsibilities to the ward level, where community development officers function as critical intermediaries between youth beneficiaries and district-level administrative structures. The significant chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 14.48$, $p = 0.006$) confirmed a statistically meaningful relationship between awareness creation mechanisms and successful enterprise registration outcomes, underscoring the importance of localized information dissemination strategies.

However, satisfaction with registration procedures revealed considerable variation. While 57.9% of respondents expressed satisfaction, substantial proportions reported neutral (23.6%), unsatisfied (10.1%), or very unsatisfied (0.6%) perceptions. The chi-square test for satisfaction variation ($\chi^2 = 10.82$, $p = 0.029$) indicated statistically significant differences across districts, suggesting that procedural experiences may differ between Ilemela and Nyamagana despite operating under the same policy framework.

Qualitative data illuminated the sources of dissatisfaction, with participants consistently citing cumbersome documentation requirements as primary barriers. Required documents included Taxpayer Identification Numbers (TIN), National Identification (NIDA) cards, group constitutions, business licenses, project proposals, and registration fees of TZS 30,000. Focus group participants emphasized the cumulative burden of assembling multiple documents, particularly for youth with limited literacy, financial resources, or familiarity with bureaucratic processes. One participant from Nyamagana articulated these challenges:

> *"The process has many things to do when doing registration, many documents are needed, such as NIDA, TIN, the constitution, and project write-up. They also need us to start the process at the ward level, then finalize it at the council. Why? Why can't they finish registration at the ward level? We pay fare to go to the municipal office from here, and then we are required to pay 30,000 fees for registration."* (Nyamagana Enterprise Group Chairman, FGD, August 2024)

This quotation illuminates multiple dimensions of procedural burden: documentation multiplicity, geographical transaction costs, financial barriers, and frustration with multi-level processing. The reference to transportation costs highlights how seemingly minor administrative requirements can accumulate into significant barriers for youth operating at subsistence levels. Similar findings emerged from a blacksmith enterprise group chairman in Ilemela:

> *"We spent three months moving between ward and council offices. Each* time *they said one document was missing or needed correction. Some members gave up and left the group because they couldn't afford the transport or the time away from their small businesses."* (Bohari Enterprise Group Chairman, KII, August 2024)

Key informants acknowledged these procedural challenges while defending their necessity. A ward community development officer explained the rationale behind current requirements:

> *"We understand youth find these procedures difficult, but they exist for good reasons. TIN registration ensures they can transact legally and pay taxes when they grow. NIDA provides identity verification preventing fraud. The constitution forces them to think seriously about how they will work together. Without these, we would have groups collapsing due to internal conflicts or misusing funds."* (Ward Community Development Officer, Nyamagana, KII, September 2024)

This tension between administrative accountability and accessibility reflects broader debates in development finance regarding the appropriate balance between procedural safeguards and inclusive access (Karlan & Valdivia, 2021). While stringent requirements may prevent fraud and ensure preparedness, they may also exclude precisely those marginalized youth whom YDF aims to reach.

Table 3: Youth Enterprise Registration Status and Perceptions

Variable/Question	Responses	Ilemela (n=118)	Nyamagana (n=247)	Total (N=365)	χ^2 (p-value)
Registered Enterprise	Yes	118 (100%)	247 (100%)	365 (100%)	NA
	No	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Awareness of registration procedures	Not at all aware	0 (0%)	4 (1.6%)	4 (1.1%)	14.48 (0.006)
	Slightly aware	6 (5.1%)	6 (2.4%)	12 (3.3%)	
	Moderately aware	30 (25.4%)	45 (18.2%)	75 (20.5%)	
	Very aware	69 (58.5%)	182 (73.7%)	251 (68.8%)	
	Extremely aware	13 (11.0%)	10 (4.0%)	23 (6.3%)	
Satisfaction with procedures	Very unsatisfied	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.6%)	10.81 (0.029)
	Unsatisfied	9 (7.6%)	28 (11.3%)	37 (10.1%)	
	Neutral	36 (30.5%)	50 (20.2%)	86 (23.6%)	
	Satisfied	52 (44.1%)	143 (57.9%)	195 (53.4%)	
	Very satisfied	20 (17.0%)	25 (10.1%)	45 (12.3%)	

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

These findings align with comparative evidence from other African contexts. Kitheka (2013) documented similar challenges in Kenya, where lengthy registration procedures led to business slowdowns and member dropouts among youth groups accessing enterprise funds. Recent International Labour Organization data (ILO, 2024) indicate that bureaucratic hurdles continue to exacerbate youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa, where unemployment rates dropped to 8.9% in 2023 but remain elevated due to underemployment and barriers to formal sector entry. The contrast with developed countries is stark: Degsew and Bayere (2022) reported that streamlined regulations, including online registration systems, reduced startup days from 17.5 to 3 in several European contexts, dramatically lowering entry barriers.

From a Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory perspective, these procedural burdens represent institutional inefficiencies that impede the conversion of financial resources into productive entrepreneurial activity. While YDF provides essential financial capital, cumbersome registration procedures may deplete the very resources, time, money, motivation, that youth need for successful enterprise establishment. As Barney (1991) emphasized, resource value depends not only on resource possession but on the institutional context enabling resource deployment. These findings suggest that current registration arrangements may inadvertently undermine the value of YDF financial resources by imposing transaction costs that exceed benefits for marginal youth.

4.1.1 Implications for Enterprise Formalization

The universal registration compliance alongside substantial dissatisfaction presents a paradox requiring explanation. Several interpretations emerge from triangulated data. First, the mandatory nature of registration for fund access creates compliance regardless of satisfaction, youth register because must, not because procedures are optimal. Second, the high awareness levels (94.2% very or moderately aware) indicate effective communication, yet awareness of burdensome procedures does not necessarily translate into satisfaction. Third, the significant variation in satisfaction between districts (p=0.029) suggests that procedural implementation quality may differ across administrative units, pointing to the importance of frontline officer discretion and capacity.

These findings resonate with Degsew and Bayere's (2022) observation that institutional arrangements constitute critical determinants of enterprise growth and entrepreneurship. When registration procedures impose excessive burdens, they may discourage formalization among marginal entrepreneurs, pushing them toward informal operations that limit growth potential and access to subsequent support. The World Bank's Doing Business reports have consistently documented that, registration procedures correlate with increased formal sector participation and subsequent enterprise growth (World Bank, 2020).

4.2 Fund Application Procedures

The study revealed high awareness levels regarding fund application procedures, with 94.2% of respondents reporting awareness (combining moderately aware, very aware, and extremely aware categories). This widespread awareness reflects effective information dissemination by council ward officers, who conduct regular sensitization meetings and maintain open-door policies for applicant inquiries. The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 11.71$, $p = 0.019$) confirmed a statistically significant relationship between procedural awareness and successful fund access, indicating that knowledge of application requirements constitutes an important determinant of YDF utilization.

Regarding the user-friendliness of application procedures, 70.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that

procedures were "good and friendly to beneficiaries." The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 23.78$, $p < 0.0001$) revealed a strongly significant relationship between perceived user-friendliness and ease of fund application, suggesting that procedural design substantially affects applicant experiences and outcomes.

Despite generally positive assessments, qualitative data revealed persistent concerns about documentation burdens. Focus group discussions illuminated the tension between institutional accountability requirements and applicant accessibility:

> *"The process requires many things when applying for the fund, many documents are needed such as NIDA, TIN, constitution and project write up, and some movements to and from ward to headquarter. We pay fare to go to municipal office from here to council, we waste so much time."* (Bohari Enterprise Group Chairman, FGD, Ilemela, August 2024)

Another participant elaborated on how documentation requirements interact with other barriers:

> *"Writing the project proposal is the hardest part. We know our business ideas, but putting them on paper with budgets, timelines, and expected outcomes, this requires skills we don't have. Some groups pay someone to write for them, but that costs money. Others just give up."* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

This quotation highlights the human capital dimension of application procedures, resonating with RBET's emphasis on education and training in entrepreneurial success (Becker, 1975). When procedures assume literacy, numeracy, and business planning skills that applicants may lack, they create de facto barriers that selectively exclude less-educated youth from fund access.

Key informants provided institutional perspectives on application requirements:

> *"We know youth complain about documents, but we have to protect public funds. Without proper identification, how do we know who we are giving money to? Without business plans, how do we know they'll use funds productively? The challenge is balancing accountability with accessibility."* (District Program Coordinator, Ilemela, KII, September 2024)
>
> *"We have tried to simplify where possible. We hold workshops to help groups write proposals. We explain requirements multiple times. But some requirements come from national laws, TIN from TRA, NIDA from the registration authority, we cannot waive these even if we want to."* (Ward Community Development Officer, Nyamagana, KII, August 2024)

These institutional perspectives reveal that application procedures are not merely local administrative choices but reflect multi-level governance requirements. TIN registration, for example, is mandated by the Tanzania Revenue Authority under national tax legislation, while NIDA requirements stem from the National Identification Authority Act. Local officials thus operate within constrained discretion, implementing procedures determined at higher governance levels.

The findings resonate with Sebure *et al.'s* (2011) observations in Nigeria, where lengthy application processes impeded youth access to enterprise funds, and with Rejender's (2012) study in Ghana documenting decreased fund uptake associated with procedural complexity. In line with Tanzania's National Youth Development Policy (2020), which encourages collaborative implementation, these findings suggest that procedural complexities may discourage potential applicants despite good intentions. USAID's Youth Empowerment programs have demonstrated that digital application platforms can significantly reduce barriers while maintaining accountability (USAID, 2022).

Table 4: Fund Application Procedures Awareness and Perceptions

Variable	Responses	Ilemela (n=118)	Nyamagana (n=247)	Total (N=365)	χ^2 (p-value)
Awareness of procedures for accessing YDF	Not at all aware	1 (0.9%)	2 (0.8%)	3 (0.8%)	11.71 (0.019)
	Slightly aware	9 (7.6%)	9 (3.6%)	18 (4.9%)	
	Moderately aware	33 (28.0%)	54 (21.9%)	87 (23.8%)	
	Very aware	60 (50.9%)	167 (67.6%)	227 (62.2%)	
	Extremely aware	15 (12.7%)	15 (6.1%)	30 (8.2%)	
Good and friendly to beneficiaries	Strongly Disagree	5 (4.2%)	1 (0.4%)	6 (1.7%)	23.78 (0.0001)
	Disagree	2 (1.7%)	19 (7.7%)	21 (5.8%)	
	Neutral	39 (33.1%)	42 (17.1%)	81 (22.3%)	
	Agree	55 (46.6%)	147 (59.8%)	202 (55.5%)	
	Strongly Agree	17 (14.4%)	37 (15.0%)	54 (14.8%)	

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

4.2.1 Balancing Accountability and Accessibility

The mixed reactions to application procedures, majority positive assessment alongside persistent complaints, suggest the need for nuanced interventions that maintain essential safeguards while reducing unnecessary burdens. Several approaches emerge from participant suggestions and comparative evidence:

First, digitalizing application processes could reduce transportation costs, enable remote submission, and provide tracking mechanisms. Tanzania's expanding e-government infrastructure offers opportunities for integrating YDF applications into broader digital platforms (Lucton, Jesse & Nyamhanga, 2025).

Second, providing application support through trained community development officers could address human capital constraints without compromising accountability. Mentorship models piloted in Kenya's Youth Enterprise Development Fund reduced application abandonment rates by providing guided assistance through procedural requirements (Mwangi & Shem, 2022).

Third, differentiating requirements based on loan size or applicant characteristics could maintain rigorous oversight for larger disbursements while simplifying access for smaller, pilot-stage funding. Such tiered approaches have proven effective in microfinance contexts (Armendáriz & Morduch, 2020).

From RBET perspective, these procedural interventions represent investments in human capital development that complement financial resource provision. When youth receive support navigating application procedures, they simultaneously acquire skills, proposal writing, financial planning, regulatory navigation, that enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities beyond the immediate funding objective (Kim, Aldrich & Keister, 2003).

4.3 Institutional Performance on Quality of Services

Service quality assessment revealed predominantly positive evaluations, with 72.3% of respondents rating institutional performance as meeting or exceeding expectations (combining "expected good," "above expectations," and "far above expectations" categories). This substantial majority suggests that implementing institutions demonstrate reasonable preparedness and commitment to customer care, with frontline officers generally providing adequate service to youth beneficiaries.

However, 27.7% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, citing delays in service provision, registration fees, and unprofessional communication, including rude language. This minority, while not numerically dominant, represents a significant concern given the voluntary nature of program participation and the availability of alternative livelihood strategies for youth. Negative service experiences may discourage continued engagement and generate negative word-of-mouth affecting potential applicants.

Table 5: Institutional Performance on Service Quality

Variable	Responses	Ilemela (n=118)	Nyamagana (n=247)	Total (N=365)
Customer care and services	Far below expectations	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.6%)
	Below expectations	37 (31.4%)	62 (25.2%)	99 (27.1%)
	Expected good	67 (56.8%)	133 (54.1%)	200 (55.0%)
	Above expectations	11 (9.3%)	41 (16.7%)	52 (14.3%)
	Far above expectations	2 (1.7%)	9 (3.7%)	12 (3.0%)

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Focus group discussions uncovered more troubling allegations of misconduct:

> *"Some officers ask for extra money to process applications quickly. They say the 30,000 is government fee, but then they want more for themselves to 'push the file.' If you don't pay, your application sits for months""* (FGD Participant, Ilemela, August 2024)

> *"The way they talk to us, like we are children begging for something. One officer shouted at our group representative, asking if we thought government money was free. We felt humiliated."* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

These allegations, while not systematically verified, suggest that informal payments and disrespectful treatment may undermine trust in implementing institutions. Such practices, if widespread, represent not merely service quality failures but fundamental breaches of procedural integrity that compromise program legitimacy.

Key informants acknowledged complaints while defending institutional integrity:

> *"We hear complaints about processing fees and delays. The registration fee is official government revenue, it goes to the treasury, not individuals. But we take seriously any allegations of officers demanding extra payments. We will investigate and take disciplinary action if evidence is found."* (Department Head, Nyamagana, KII, September 2024)

> *"Delays happen because resources are limited, not because officers are lazy or corrupt. The available resources determine money released to each group. If resources are few, we wait to collect more, then divide among all applicants so everyone gets something to start."* (Program Coordinator, Ilemela, KII, August 2024)

This explanation regarding resource constraints and fund distribution practices provides important context for understanding delays. The practice of accumulating applications until sufficient funds exist, then distributing proportionally across all qualified applicants, represents an equity-oriented approach but may generate perceptions of arbitrary delay among individual applicants unaware of systemic constraints.

The findings align with Rehema and Tefurukwa's (2025) observation that comprehensive training and capacity building programs for staff are essential to equip them with dual responsibilities of financial management and client service. From RBET perspective, human capital investments in service providers are as important as investments in beneficiaries. When frontline officers lack training in customer service, ethical conduct, and efficient processing, they cannot effectively facilitate the resource conversion processes that RBET identifies as central to entrepreneurial success (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001).

Comparative evidence from African contexts reveals similar patterns. In Zambia's YDF, Mwansa (2020) documented complaints about officer attitudes and processing delays, recommending comprehensive customer service training and accountability mechanisms. The African Development Bank's youth employment programming increasingly emphasizes institutional capacity building alongside direct financial support, recognizing that program outcomes depend critically on implementation quality (AfDB, 2023).

4.3.1 Implications for Program Trust and Participation

The presence of both positive majority assessments and concerning minority experiences suggests that institutional performance, while generally adequate, contains vulnerabilities requiring targeted intervention. Several implications emerge:

First, the concentration of dissatisfaction (27.1% below expectations) represents a substantial minority whose negative experiences may undermine program reputation and discourage peer participation. Given youth populations' dense social networks, negative experiences propagate rapidly, potentially deterring eligible youth from applying.

Second, allegations of informal payments, even if isolated, threaten program integrity and public trust. Research on development programs consistently demonstrates that perceptions of corruption reduce participation, undermine legitimacy, and generate cynicism about government interventions (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Third, the disconnect between institutional explanations (resource constraints) and beneficiary experiences (delay perceptions) indicates communication gaps requiring attention. When beneficiaries lack understanding of systemic constraints, they attribute delays to officer discretion or incompetence, generating frustration that might be mitigated through transparent communication about funding cycles and allocation principles.

Aligning with youth-centered approaches advocated by ILO (2020) and the African Union Commission's Agenda 2063 (AUC, 2015), which both prioritize youth at development's center, implementing comprehensive ethics and customer service training for personnel would enhance professionalism and responsiveness. As Rehema and Tefurukwa (2025) observed, governments must mandate comprehensive training and capacity building programs for all staff to equip them with dual responsibilities of financial stewardship and client service. This perspective aligns with RBET's emphasis on training as the cornerstone for enterprise growth and sustainability, applying equally to program implementers and beneficiaries.

4.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

A significant majority of respondents (86.3%) reported active participation in decision-making processes related to YDF implementation. Furthermore, qualitative data indicated that 96.05% of participants were engaged at key stages, including initial meetings and project assessments, highlighting extensive stakeholder involvement throughout the project lifecycle. Notably, 57.1% of participants engaged through representation mechanisms, ensuring inclusive approaches to decision-making.

Table 6: Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

Participation	Ilemela (n=117)	Nyamagana (n=248)	Total (N=365)
Yes	105 (89.7%)	210 (84.7%)	315 (86.3%)
No	12 (10.3%)	38 (15.3%)	50 (13.7%)

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Transparency in decision-making processes was reinforced through structured mechanisms, including ward development committees, council reviews, and regular audits. Key informant interviews confirmed the robustness of participatory processes extending from ward level to full council:

> *"The process of decision making is very open and transparent. Participatory project evaluation starts at ward level with YDF beneficiaries, then discussed in the Ward Development Committee with their representatives and later forwarded to the office of district council director. All matters are discussed in the full Council which involves representatives of YDF beneficiaries."* (Program Coordinator, Nyamagana, KII, September 2024)

This systematic engagement structure reflects institutional design features that deliberately incorporate beneficiary voice across multiple governance levels. The inclusion of beneficiary representatives in full council meetings represents particularly meaningful participation, as these forums exercise final approval authority over budgets, allocations, and program modifications.

Focus group participants validated these institutional accounts:

> *"When they evaluate our projects, we sit together with ward officers. They ask what's working, what's not, what we need. Our representative takes these discussions to the ward committee and then to the council. We hear back what was decided."* (FGD Participant, Ilemela, August 2024)

> *"Last year when funds were delayed, we raised this at the ward meeting. Our representative took it to council. They explained about revenue collection problems and gave timeline for when funds would come. At least we knew what was happening instead of just waiting."* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

These quotations illustrate how participation mechanisms serve both instrumental and expressive functions. Instrumentally, they enable beneficiary concerns to influence decisions. Expressively, they provide information and acknowledgment that reduce uncertainty and enhance perceived fairness even when outcomes (like delayed funds) remain suboptimal.

The participatory approach aligns with Truphena Ndunge's (2022) insights emphasizing that active stakeholder involvement enhances project outcomes. When stakeholders feel their voices are heard and valued, they invest more in initiative success. Tanzania's Restless Development strategy (2022–2030) further embeds youth-led solutions within sustainability frameworks, affirming the importance of integrating young people's perspectives and leadership into decision-making.

From RBET perspective, stakeholder engagement represents social capital development, the cultivation of networks, trust, and reciprocal relationships that facilitate resource mobilization and collective action (Reynolds, 1991; Coleman, 1990). When youth participate in decision-making, they build relationships with officials and among themselves that extend beyond immediate program interactions. These relationships become resources for subsequent entrepreneurial activities, providing information access, informal support, and collective problem-solving capacity.

Comparative research supports these findings. Mansuri and Rao (2013), in their comprehensive review of participatory development, found that well-designed participation mechanisms improve project outcomes, enhance sustainability, and build local institutional capacity. However, they caution that participation must be meaningful rather than tokenistic, mere consultation without influence may generate cynicism rather than empowerment. Mwanza case appears to feature meaningful participation, with beneficiary representation extending to final decision-making bodies.

4.4.1 Mechanisms and Quality of Participation

The study identified specific participation mechanisms operating across governance levels:

Ward Level: Regular meetings where beneficiaries discuss project progress, challenges, and recommendations with community development officers. These meetings elect representatives to ward development committees.

Ward Development Committee: Comprising elected representatives, ward officers, and appointed members, these committees review project reports, consolidate recommendations, and prepare submissions to district councils.

Full Council: The highest local government decision-making body, including beneficiary representatives alongside councilors and technical officers. Full councils approve budgets, allocations, and policy interpretations affecting YDF implementation.

This multi-level structure creates multiple accountability interfaces and ensures beneficiary voice penetrates progressively higher decision-making levels. However, questions arise about representational quality: whether elected representatives effectively communicate constituent views, whether they possess technical capacity to engage in complex budgetary discussions, and whether feedback loops ensure decisions are communicated back to grassroots beneficiaries.

A key informant addressed these concerns:

> *"We train representatives before council meetings, explaining budgets, allocation formulas, what decisions will be made. After meetings, they report back to their wards. It's not perfect, some representatives are more active than others, but the system works reasonably well."* (Department Head, Ilemela, KII, September 2024)

The absence of systematic monitoring of representational quality represents a potential weakness. While structures exist, their effectiveness depends on representative capacity, motivation, and accountability to constituents. Future program strengthening might include representative training,

feedback mechanism audits, and beneficiary satisfaction surveys regarding participation quality.

4.5 Mechanisms for Timely Feedback

The majority of respondents (82.4%) reported receiving feedback on time through their ward community development officers, while 24.2% accessed information via notice boards (percentages exceed 100 due to multiple response options). These findings demonstrate commitment to good governance practices within participating institutions, with communication primarily depending on local structures rather than mass media.

Table 7: Mechanisms for Feedback

Mechanism	Ilemela (n=97)	Nyamagana (n=209)	Total (N=306)
Through WCDO	80 (82.5%)	172 (82.3%)	252 (82.4%)
Notice boards	28 (28.9%)	46 (22.0%)	74 (24.2%)
Radio	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other sources	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

The reliance on ward community development officers as primary feedback channels reflects the decentralized implementation structure and the trust relationships these officers have cultivated with beneficiary groups. This approach leverages existing relationships and ensures feedback is delivered through familiar, accessible intermediaries who can provide explanation and context alongside information.

Notice boards, while reaching fewer beneficiaries, provide supplementary information access for those who may miss direct communications or seek written documentation. The absence of radio or other mass media channels suggests that feedback remains personalized and localized rather than broadcast, consistent with the program's community-based orientation.

Focus group participants appreciated the accessibility of feedback mechanisms:

> *"Our ward officer knows us by name. When we have questions, we go to her office or meet her at the market. She tells us directly what's happening. It's better than waiting for announcements."* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

> *"They post lists of approved groups on the ward notice board. We check there to see if our name appears. It's transparent, everyone can see who got what."* (FGD Participant, Ilemela, August 2024)

However, some participants noted limitations:

> *"The feedback is usually about approvals or rejections. We don't get feedback on why proposals were rejected or how to improve. Just 'not approved.' How do we learn from that?"* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

This observation identifies an important gap: feedback mechanisms focus on outcomes rather than developmental learning. While beneficiaries receive information about decisions, they lack diagnostic feedback that could enhance future applications or improve enterprise management. From RBET perspective, this represents missed opportunity for human capital development, as feedback on proposal deficiencies could build skills applicable beyond YDF applications.

4.5.1 Funding Discrepancies: *Requested Versus Disbursed Amounts*

Despite generally positive feedback mechanisms, a substantial discrepancy emerged between funds requested by beneficiaries and amounts actually received. In Ilemela District, the mean requested amount was TZS 24.17 million (SD: 29.73), while mean received amount was TZS 14.72 million (SD: 12.94), resulting in an average shortfall of TZS 9.45 million. In Nyamagana District, mean requested amount was TZS 22.17 million (SD: 20.41), mean received amount was TZS 13.33 million (SD: 10.13), with an average shortfall of TZS 8.84 million.

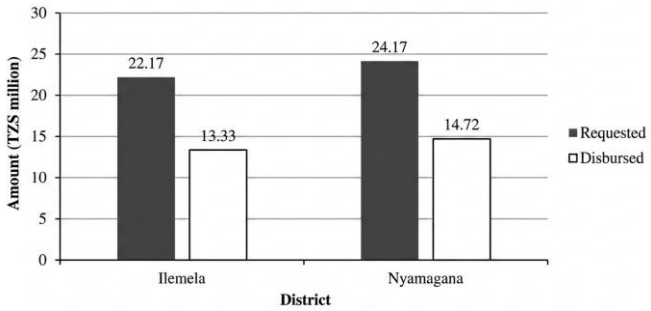
Table 8: Comparison of Requested and Disbursed Funds by District

District	Requested Amount (TZS million)	Disbursed Amount (TZS million)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Ilemela	24.17 (SD: 29.73)	14.72 (SD: 12.94)	9.45	3.1655	0.0009
Nyamagana	22.17 (SD: 20.41)	13.33 (SD: 10.13)	8.84	6.0952	<0.001
Combined	22.87 (SD: 23.47)	13.79 (SD: 11.11)	9.04	6.5706	<0.001

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Independent t-tests confirmed these disparities as statistically significant across both districts and combined sample (combined $t = 6.5706$, $p < 0.001$). The consistency of findings across districts strengthens confidence that funding shortfalls represent systemic patterns rather than local anomalies.

Figure 2: Bar chart showing mean requested versus mean disbursed funds across districts, illustrating substantial funding gaps in both locations



Several factors contribute to this funding gap, including limited local government revenue streams, the rigor of technical evaluations, and substandard project proposals from YDF beneficiaries. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2011) noted that many projects submitted by youth groups may not be thoroughly vetted, leading to underfunding that fails to align with resource requirements outlined in business plans. This may result from insufficient capacity building from funding authorities on project proposal preparation.

Focus group discussions revealed how underfunding disrupts beneficiary plans and discourages youth:

> *"They pass through our streets advertising that the government will provide all money requested by the group to enable us to do business. But when we applied, we were given half the amount requested. This discouraged all members within the group and eventually led us to do unintended business, smaller scale, less profitable than we planned."* (Mbogamboga Enterprise Leader, Buswelu ward, FGD, August 2024)

> *"We planned to buy a maize milling machine costing 8 million. They gave us 4 million. You can't buy half a milling machine. So, we bought maize and resold it, trading instead of manufacturing. Not what we wanted, not as profitable."* (FGD Participant, Ilemela, August 2024)

These quotations illuminate the real-world consequences of funding shortfalls. When enterprises receive substantially less than requested, they cannot execute planned business models, forcing adaptation to less ambitious or qualitatively different activities. This "underfunding trap" may perpetuate subsistence-level operations rather than enabling transformative enterprise growth.

Key informants explained the institutional logic behind funding practices:

> *"We have many applicants but limited funds. If we fully funded some groups and gave nothing to others, many would get nothing. Instead, we give something to everyone who qualifies. Everyone gets at least a start, even if not what they requested."* (Program Coordinator, Ilemela, KII, August 2024)

> *"The evaluation process assesses whether proposed budgets are realistic. Sometimes groups request too much, inflated equipment costs, unrealistic projections. We adjust to what we think they can reasonably use."* (Ward Community Development Officer, Nyamagana, KII, September 2024)

This reveals a fundamental policy dilemma: distributing limited funds across all applicants ensures wider reach but compromises enterprise viability, creating tension between horizontal and vertical equity. The underfunding challenge, consistent with Kenya (Kitheka, 2013) and Uganda's 66% budget fulfillment, is particularly concerning given African youth face double the adult unemployment rate (AfDB, 2024). From a Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory perspective, without sufficient and consistent disbursement enabling effective opportunity exploitation (Mitrofanova *et al.,* 2022), funding shortfalls prevent youth from assembling necessary resource bundles, fundamentally undermining program design.

4.6 Institutional Collaboration

The study revealed a notable absence of international collaborations among implementing institutions, significantly limiting access to crucial financial and technical support. This partnership gap constrains potential funding sources and restricts knowledge sharing, best practices, and innovative approaches essential for enhancing program effectiveness.

Key informant interviews highlighted concerns about this collaboration deficit:

> *"We operate solely on local government revenue and occasional central government top-ups. We have no partnerships with international NGOs, no development partner funding, no technical assistance from outside. This limits what we can do."* (Department Head, Ilemela, KII, September 2024)

> *"We hear about programs in other countries, mentorship schemes,* business *incubation, digital platforms, that could help our youth. But we have no connections to bring those ideas here. We are isolated."* (Program Coordinator, Nyamagana, KII, August 2024)

These quotations reflect institutional awareness of collaboration deficits and their consequences. Without external partnerships, programs cannot access the specialized expertise, innovation technology, and additional financial resources that international organizations could provide. As Kitheka (2013) noted, international organizations possess vast financial and human resources that could allow YDF to

scale up programs and reach more youth. Mwansa (2020) emphasized that such partners also offer specialized experts in innovation and technology who could holistically support beyond funding, providing business training, mentorship, incubation, and marketing that enhance funded project success.

The absence of external collaboration reflects both policy constraints and institutional barriers common in African contexts. Clear frameworks for collaboration and standardized regulatory mechanisms for international organizations to co-fund or integrate with specific YDF mechanisms may be lacking or underutilized. Bureaucratic hurdles during application and approval processes, complex paperwork, lengthy delays, can conflict with international partners' operational timelines and administrative frameworks. Furthermore, international organizations often provide project-based funding with specific conditions and priorities that may not align perfectly with government-mandated YDF structures as revolving loan funds sourced from local government revenue.

A key informant elaborated on these challenges:

> *"We tried to partner with an international NGO last year. They wanted to fund business training alongside our loans. But their requirements, separate accounting, quarterly reports in their format, specific training curriculum, clashed with our procedures. The partnership didn't materialize."* (Department Head, Nyamagana, KII, September 2024)

This experience illustrates the transaction costs and compatibility challenges that can derail potential collaborations even when both parties share broad objectives. Without institutional mechanisms to negotiate and accommodate partner requirements, promising collaborations may fail to materialize.

The contrast with developed countries is instructive. Kernstone *et al.* (2020) documented how regulatory environment reforms, good governance, and regulatory simplifications in European countries target youth-run enterprises and entrepreneurs, including reduced social security contributions for 30 months at declining rates from 80% to 30%. These strategies guide policy actions at national, regional, and local levels, encouraging and fostering national and international organization collaborations (European Commission, 2013).

The need for collaboration is further underscored by recommendations from the Southern African Institute of Fundraising and Innovation in Africa (SAIAA, 2024), advocating enhanced partnerships to foster innovation in Tanzania. As such, by engaging with international organizations and other stakeholders, local institutions could tap into wealth of resources, training opportunities, and technology, strengthening capacity to address youth unemployment and promote economic growth.

Focus group participants expressed awareness of collaboration gaps:

> *"We see programs on television, youth in Kenya getting training from international groups, youth in Uganda with mentors from Europe. Why not us? Why only government money and no other support?"* (FGD Participant, Nyamagana, September 2024)

> *"If international organizations came here, they could teach us new skills, connect us to markets, show us what works elsewhere. We need more than money, we need knowledge."* (FGD Participant, Ilemela, August 2024)

These perspectives align with RBET's social capital dimension, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder collaboration through networks leading to improved program outcomes (Reynolds, 1991). International partnerships could establish more strong networks, promoting shared knowledge, skills, and effective resource utilization for enterprise growth and sustainability.

4.6.1 Potential Collaboration Models

Comparative evidence suggests several collaboration models that could benefit YDF implementation:

Technical Assistance Partnerships: International organizations could provide training, mentorship, and capacity building without direct financial involvement, avoiding complex fund alignment issues. Organizations like TechnoServe and the International Youth Foundation have extensive experience delivering such technical support in African contexts (TechnoServe, 2023).

Co-Financing Arrangements: Development partners could supplement YDF resources through parallel funding mechanisms that maintain separate accounting while aligning programmatic objectives. The African Development Bank's youth entrepreneurship programs offer models for such arrangements (AfDB, 2023).

Knowledge Exchange Networks: Partnerships focused on learning and innovation could expose Tanzanian practitioners to international best practices while adapting them to local contexts. South-South cooperation mechanisms, particularly with countries like Kenya, Ghana, and Rwanda facing similar challenges, could prove especially valuable (UNDP, 2022).

Digital Platform Partnerships: Collaborations with technology organizations could develop digital application, tracking, and feedback systems that reduce transaction costs and enhance transparency. USAID's

Digital Development approach offers guidance for such partnerships (USAID, 2022).

The absence of international collaborations represents a significant missed opportunity. As Mwansa (2020) argued, fostering international collaborations is not merely beneficial but imperative for the success and sustainability of youth development initiatives. Such partnerships could pave the way for more effective program implementation, ensuring youth needs are adequately met and resources used efficiently.

4.7 Synopsis Across Institutional Arrangement Dimensions

The results of this study reveal a complex picture of institutional arrangements for YDF implementation in Mwanza City, characterized by both strengths and significant challenges. Table 9 summarizes the key findings across the six dimensions examined.

Table 9: Summary Across the Six Institutional Arrangement Dimensions

Dimension	Strengths	Challenges	Statistical Evidence
Enterprise Registration	Universal compliance (100%); High awareness (94.2%)	Cumbersome requirements; Multiple trips; Costs (TZS 30,000)	$\chi^2 = 14.48$, $p = 0.006$ (awareness) $\chi^2 = 10.82$, $p = 0.029$ (satisfaction)
Fund Application	High awareness (94.2%); 70.3% find procedures user-friendly	Excessive documentation; Transportation costs; Proposal writing difficulties	$\chi^2 = 23.78$, $p < 0.0001$ (user-friendliness)
Service Quality	72.3% meeting/exceeding expectations	27.7% dissatisfied; Delay complaints; Alleged misconduct	Descriptive statistics only
Stakeholder Engagement	86.3% active participation; Multi-level structures	Representational quality concerns; Feedback loop effectiveness	Descriptive statistics only
Feedback Mechanisms	82.4% receive timely feedback via officers	Outcome-only feedback; Limited diagnostic information	Funding gap: $t = 6.5706$, $p < 0.001$
Institutional Collaboration	None identified	Complete absence of international partnerships	Qualitative evidence only

Source: Synthesized from field data (2024)

The findings reveal that while YDF institutions have established formal procedures ensuring basic compliance, significant inefficiencies undermine program effectiveness: universal registration coexists with procedural dissatisfaction, participatory mechanisms coexist with funding gaps exceeding 40% of requested amounts, and strong local engagement coexists with complete absence of international collaboration. From a Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory perspective, institutional arrangements critically mediate between resource provision and entrepreneurial outcomes; although YDF successfully provides financial resources, institutional inefficiencies; cumbersome procedures, funding shortfalls, and collaboration gaps; limit beneficiaries' ability to exploit opportunities effectively. As Barney *et al.* (2011) emphasized, resources alone do not guarantee competitive advantage; effective mobilization and deployment through supportive institutional arrangements ultimately determine entrepreneurial outcomes.

4.8 Institutional Arrangements and Youth Enterprise Development

The findings of this study contribute to growing literature on institutional arrangements for youth enterprise development in African contexts. Several themes warrant extended discussion.

4.8.1 The Paradox of Formalization

The universal enterprise registration achieved by YDF beneficiaries represents a significant formalization achievement. However, the dissatisfaction accompanying this achievement suggests a paradox: formalization pursued through burdensome procedures may achieve compliance while undermining the very enterprise development it aims to promote. When youth invest substantial time, money, and effort navigating registration requirements, they deplete resources that could otherwise support enterprise establishment and growth.

This paradox resonates with Barney's *et al.* (2011) observation that formalization policies often impose costs exceeding benefits for marginal enterprises, particularly when procedures are designed for larger firms rather than micro-enterprises typical of youth entrepreneurs. The World Bank's (2020) Doing Business research consistently finds that registration simplification correlates with increased formal sector participation, suggesting that the Mwanza case's procedural burdens may actually discourage formalization among potential entrants who observe current beneficiaries' struggles.

From RBET perspective, the transaction costs imposed by registration procedures represent resource depletion that reduces the net resource gain from YDF participation. If youth expend TZS 30,000 in fees plus transportation costs

and time equivalent to additional thousands in opportunity costs, the effective resource transfer is substantially less than nominal disbursement amounts. This erosion of resource value through procedural transaction costs may partially explain why enterprise outcomes lag expectations despite substantial fund allocations.

4.8.2 The Depth-Breadth Trade-off in Funding Allocation

The systematic funding shortfall reflects a fundamental tension between breadth (reaching many beneficiaries) and depth (providing sufficient resources for meaningful impact). Microfinance literature documents that very small loans often fail to generate transformative returns (Armendáriz & Morduch, 2020), with grants requiring minimum thresholds for sustainable enterprise development (Banerjee et al., 2015). Mwanza case suggests YDF operates below this threshold for many beneficiaries; while officials justify partial funding as equitable, developmental logic requires adequate capitalization. As RBET emphasizes, financial resources must suffice to acquire complementary resources enabling opportunity exploitation (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001), partial funding forces adaptation to less ambitious activities perpetuating marginality.

4.8.3 Participation Without Power?

Extensive stakeholder engagement, including beneficiary representation in council meetings, exceeds participatory standards of many programs. However, Gaventa's (2006) power cube framework suggests Mwanza's participation operates primarily in "invited spaces" where officials set agendas, raising questions about influence over substantive decisions. The persistence of procedural burdens and funding shortfalls despite participatory mechanisms suggests participation may function as legitimation rather than empowerment (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). From RBET perspective, participation represents social capital development that should enhance resource mobilization; however, without institutional responsiveness, it may deplete rather than build social capital, undermining participatory governance sustainability.

4.8.4 The Collaboration Deficit in Context

The complete absence of international collaborations represents a significant missed opportunity given the proliferation of youth employment initiatives across Africa. This deficit may stem from Tanzania's restrictive regulatory environment for international NGOs (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2023), misalignment between YDF's locally-funded revolving loan design and partners' grant-based preferences, and limited institutional capacity for partnership development. Beyond resource mobilization, international partnerships could provide technical assistance, knowledge exchange, and innovation preventing institutional stagnation. As RBET emphasizes, social capital development through networks enhances resource access and opportunity exploitation (Reynolds, 1991), their absence limits not only current resources but future learning and adaptation capacity.

4.9 Theoretical Implications

This study extends RBET by demonstrating that institutional arrangements critically mediate between resource provision and entrepreneurial outcomes, showing that cumbersome procedures and funding shortfalls can undermine resource value regardless of resource attributes (Barney, 1991). It advances RBET's social capital dimension to the institutional level, revealing that inter-organizational relationships significantly affect program effectiveness (Davidsson & Honig, 2003), with the collaboration deficit representing a consequential institutional social capital gap. The findings also contribute to RBET's human capital dimension by revealing how procedural complexity interacts with beneficiary capabilities, application requirements assuming human capital that many youth lack effectively exclude the less educated, necessitating attention to capability matching in resource acquisition. Finally, these findings support recent RBET extensions incorporating institutional factors (Bruton *et al.,* 2022), demonstrating that registration procedures, feedback mechanisms, and collaboration patterns substantively shape entrepreneurial outcomes, requiring systematic integration of institutional analysis in future theoretical development.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reveals that while Mwanza City has established functional YDF institutional arrangements; evidenced by universal registration, high awareness, stakeholder engagement, and feedback mechanisms; significant gaps in procedural efficiency, funding adequacy, and international collaboration constrain sustainable youth employment outcomes, manifested by substantial funding shortfalls (mean difference TZS 9.04 million, $p<0.001$) and beneficiary dissatisfaction with cumbersome requirements. Drawing on RBET, we recommend: (i) digitizing and streamlining registration with ward-level finalization; (ii) enforcing strict 4% revenue allocation with central government subsidies; (iii) pursuing international partnerships for technical and financial supplementation; and (iv) implementing mandatory ethics training for frontline officers. Future research should employ longitudinal designs across Tanzanian regions to inform scalable interventions throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

We hereby declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the research and findings presented in this paper.

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