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Livelihood Support Programs and Economic Well-Being of Youth in Kigezi Sub-Region, Uganda

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Abstract

In Sub-Saharan Africa and world over, the youth have been identified to play a critical role in the development and growth of their economies. Uganda is faced with a high level of unemployed youth aged 18-30 (64%) who have remained unemployed and are going through a sorry economic well-being. This study sought to assess whether livelihood support programs have an impact on economic well-being of youth in Kigezi sub-region, Uganda. Quantitative research approaches were adopted during data collection, analysis and presentation. Cross-sectional, survey and correlational designs were employed during the data collection and analysis respectively. Pearson linear coefficient correlation results (r=.601, p<.01) revealed a moderately strong positive relationship between livelihood support programs and economic well-being of youth in Kigezi sub-region. Regression results (R2 = .361) revealed that 36.1% of the changes in economic well-being of the youth was accounted for by livelihood support programs. The study concludes that livelihood support programs like provision of revolving funds, financial literacy, entrepreneurial skilling, and vocational training if well-structured, play an important role in enhancing the economic well-being of the youth.

Key Words: Economic Well-being, Youth Livelihood, Support Programs.

INTRODUCTION

Economic empowerment of the youth in Uganda remains a high development priority, especially with 75% of the population aged under 30 years old, and are faced with multiple challenges like poverty, unemployment and limited access to reproductive resources (Achiro et al., 2023). The challenges faced by youth who participate in formal employment, combined with regional difference and few livelihood options, call for strategic interventions to promote self-reliance and socio-economic welfare. Livelihood support programs like financial literacy, entrepreneurship and vocational training have been identified as potential support systems to the challenges faced by the youth, by providing them with income generation options, community development and wealth creation (Kitambo, 2021; Pantino & Maglantay, 2025).

Youth livelihood programme (YLP) in Uganda has been adopted to address challenges of youth unemployment through institutional and financial support systems. Suggestions from Lira city indicate that youth livelihood programmes have had a positive impact on self-reliance of the youth, though institutional support still remains weaker in terms of changing youth empowerment systems (Achiro et al., 2023). In the same way, related studies conducted in northern Uganda indicate that the participation of youth in youth livelihood programs is driven by the desire to meet their necessities and motivated by

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the fact that their social welfare will improve as they aspire to be economically independent (Kitambo, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of implementing programs that are driven by the needs of the youth as they aspire to improve their social and economic welfare.

Financial literacy if one of the key determinants identified to impend success of youth livelihood programs in Uganda. Beneficiaries of youth livelihood programmes testify the potential improvements in their savings, income and household welfare due to the financial education that they were receiving while implementing their initiatives and enterprises (Pantino & Maglantay, 2025). These revelations are in line with the various recommendations to incorporate financial literacy among the youth empowerment programs to ensure sustainability and enhance responsible financial behaviors (Benson Tukundane et al., 2020; Ozor Nicholas et al., 2024).

Kisoro district in Uganda has in the previous years been a host of multiple youth livelihood programs, specifically the government Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) which primarily have been helping the youth to access funding for their businesses through revolving funds, training in entrepreneurship and skilling in various areas like crafts, agriculture, services among many others. These efforts aimed at supporting and promoting youth employment in Kisoro which has been grappling with many unemployed youth and school leavers and other disadvantaged groups in the rural district of Kisoro in Kigezi sub-region, Uganda (Asiimwe Isaac Kazaara, 2024; Benson & Lydia, 2023). Despite all these efforts, there limited empirical studies in the recent times that have investigated the role that the youth livelihood programs have played in the wellbeing of the youth in Kigezi sub-region, specifically Kisoro district. This calls for more rigorous research studies to assess the role of programmes like revolving funds, training and skilling have had on the economic well-being of rural youth in Kisoro district, Uganda. The main question that this study pondered to answer was; what is the Impact of Livelihood Support Programs on the Economic Well-Being of Youth in Kigezi Sub-region, Uganda.

Economic marginalization combined with youth unemployment have continued to be major development challenges to Uganda, Sub-Saharan Africa and African continent as a whole. According to research, it is evident that well structured livelihood support interventions play a significant role towards youth employment, wealth creation and increased earnings (Blattman et al., 2012, 2014). The livelihood support interventions highlighted by Blattman et al., (2012, 2014, 2018) include vocational training programs, empowerment of agri-businesses, unconditional cash grants and other micro-finance initiatives. Such interventions rhythm well with economic well-being of the youth, which is a major question that needs urgent address in Kigezi sub-region-Uganda. Youth unemployment has continued to represents an economically stressed generation especially with Uganda having 64% aged 18-30, who have remained unemployed particularly in rural areas which are faced with limited skills training opportunities, start-up capital and formal employments, constraining the young people's economic expectations and well-being (Uwonda et al., 2017).

Several livelihood programs have been implemented by the government of the republic of Uganda over the last decades on a large scale. These are crucial in assessing the impact they have had on the economic well-being of the youth in Uganda. Youth Opportunities Programs (YOP) were introduced for the youth in northern Uganda during the post-conflict era to support them in vocational training and business start-ups, aimed at self-employment and job creation. Revolving fund models were also deployed as Uganda government's commitment to address unemployment and business start-up challenges (Bukenya et al., 2019; Uwonda et al., 2017). However, it remains critical for the government and its implementing partners to understand what actually works well for the youth under different conditions to be able to achieve tangible results.

Studies have continued to show that livelihood support programs are crucial in shaping the social and economic well-being of the youth and other disadvantaged groups. Livelihood interventions like savings groups, mentorship, entrepreneurial skilling and vocational training in Kampala slums were found to improve the quality of life socially, psychologically and economic well-being; improved employability, savings culture and financial literacy (Renzaho et al., 2020). According to Renzaho et al. (2020), the interventions of had minimal influence on personal independence and social relationships, showing that economic empowerment alone may not necessarily transform into larger social gains and benefits. This suggests that livelihood program targeting youth in places like Kigezi sub-region should not only focus on income generation and skills development, but also consider interventions that will improve independence and social relationships which play an important role in building community ties and personal growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study conducted to examine the impact of livelihood support on components like income generation, poultry production, crop production and consumption was conducted among the poor or the ultra-poor. Findings from secondary data revealed that promotion of livelihood was responsible for an increase food consumption income among the poor households in Bangladesh (Volpenhein et al., 2022). A similar study had earlier been conducted in six countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Pakistan, and Peru on 11,00 households, to examine whether livelihood graduation programs could help in reducing extreme poverty, sustainable employment and a lasting wellbeing. It was revealed in the study that there were significant gains on participants food security, consumption and household assets. The households in all the countries were found to have increased their incomes and revenues due to the livelihood graduation programs (Banerjee et al., 2015). Similarly, a study conducted in Philippines between 2018 to 2020, revealed that irrespective of the COVID 19 pandemic effects among the poor and vulnerable households, livelihood support programs like the graduation approach provided resilience to shock like food security, financial security and mental health. It was revealed that households which received graduation and government cash transfers performed significantly well than those that only received government cash transfers (Schelzig & Jilani, 2021).

In Niger, a study was conducted on poor women who enrolled in a cash transfer program as a livelihood support, to examine how interventions like psychosocial, savings and financial support could intervene in improving the economic well-being of the extreme poor households. Results revealed that group saving promotion, entrepreneurship training and coaching all summed together contributed significantly to economic and psychological well being of the households already enrolled in a government cash transfer program. According to previous studies, most poverty reduction strategies and policy, more often prioritize economic interventions however, it was proved that programs that not only address financial but rather social and psychological factors are more effective to extremely poor households (Bossuroy et al., 2022).

In a post-covid study to ascertain the implementation outcomes of targeted poverty alleviation policies, it was revealed that targeted poverty alleviation programs had a positive impact on households' ability to cope with unexpected economic shocks evidenced by an increase in material wealth, social capital and financial capital. Targeted poverty alleviation policies were found to also be linked to reduction in the likelihood of falling into poverty, while not relying on government subsidies, but this was not the same case for the human capital of the poor households (Li et al., 2023). This study's findings affirm past studies like Bossuroy et al., (2022); Schelzig & Jilani, (2021), that livelihood programs like targeted poverty alleviation policies play a key role in changing the wellbeing of poor households through increased household income, financial and human capital. Hadi (2024) similarly found out that when livelihood support interventions were implemented in rural Balochistan, there was an increase the beneficiaries' income levels, employment generation levels, gender equality, human capital and skills growth. The intervention strategies implemented involved income generating grans, community investment funds and skills development. Across all the studies by Bossuroy et al., (2022); Hadi, (2024); Li et al., (2023); Schelzig & Jilani, (2021) point to the fact that every time livelihood programs have been implemented, there has been a subsequent increase and improvement in the economic wellbeing of the households and communities involved through increasing their income levels, employment levels, social and economic capital. The people's wellbeing has greatly improved when skills, assets, financial services and psychosocial factors are combined.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Approach

Quantitative research approaches were deployed generally in this study to be able to achieve the purpose for which this study was conducted. Quantitative approaches were deployed in both data collection, analysis and presentation of the results. According to (Creswell, 2008, 2014) quantitative methods are in position to produce reliable, objective and generalized finding for example in this case livelihood support programs in Kigezi sub-region. This approach is suitable for stablishing the role played by livelihood support programs towards economic well-being of the youth in the region based on robust evidence which can also be used to guide future implementation and support for similar programs.

Research design

In this research study, *cross-sectional design* was adopted to ensure that quantitative data was collected at one point in time on Livelihood support programs and economic well-being among the youth in Kisoro district; cross-sectional design was also supported by *survey designs* since the population was large, and the best way to collect data that was representative was to conduct a survey. During data analysis and presentation, *correlational designs* were applied to establish relationships between the study variables, Pearson linear coefficient correlation and simple linear regression were specifically applied during the data analysis. As supported by scholars, designs that are cross-sectional, survey and correlational in nature are easy to generalize (Amin, 2005; Siedlecki, 2020); this supports the adoption of the designs for a study in the case of Kigezi sub-region.

Target population and sample

Target population in this study were the youth and youth leaders that had beneficiaries of livelihood support programs, and were engage in income generating activities and were residents in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region, Uganda. A sample of 113 youth were selected from to participated in this study. The participants in this study were purposively selected to participate based in the set prerequisites and criterion. A response rate of 71% was obtained with the researcher able to obtain 80 questionnaires that were returned and ready for analysis. According to Babbie (2010); Fincham, (2008), 71% is considered to be acceptable in survey studies and provides sufficient statistical power for reliability and analysis in alignment with standards in survey design.

Data collection, analysis and presentation

Quantitative data was collected from the participants using a structured questionnaire. Research assistants were deployed at different parishes to guide and support participants in filling out the questionnaire. The choice of questionnaire was based on the fact that structured questionnaires allow the researcher to collect a lot of data from a large population at the same time, it is also time convenient (Amin, 2005; Creswell, 2014).

The raw data that was collected from the field was entered into statistical package for social scientists (SPSS), cleaned and analyzed. Data output included majorly Pearson linear coefficient correlation and simple linear regression statistics which are presented in form of tables in the results section of this study. Correlation analysis was used to ascertain the nature and strength of the relationship between variables of youth livelihood programs and economic wellbeing among the youth in Kisoro District, Kigezi sub-region - Uganda, while regression analysis determined the degree of predictability of the independent variables. These statistics were crucial in responding to this study's main question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, key results included Pearson linear coefficient correlation which was meant to test whether the variable were related; and the second result was the simple linear regression analysis which was used to establish the impact of livelihood support and how much it influences the wellbeing of the youth. The detailed results are presented in tables 1-4 respectively and discussion follows subsequently.

RESULTS

Relationship between Livelihood Support and Economic Well-being of Youth in Kisoro District, Kigezi subregion - Uganda

To establish the relationship between livelihood support and economic well-being among the youth Pearson Linear Coefficient Correlation was used and results are presented in table one.

Table 1. Pearson Linear Coefficient Correlation for Livelihood Support and Economic Wellbeing of Youth in Kisoro District, Kigezi subregion - Uganda

Correlations			
		Livelihood Support	Economic wellbeing
Livelihood Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80
Economic wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.601**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 1 above revealed a moderately strong positive relationship (r=.601, p<.01) between livelihood support programs and economic wellbeing of the youth in Kigezi sub-region, Uganda. It was important for this study to test for correlation before proceeding with regression analysis, to establish the existence, the strength and strength of the relationship between livelihood support programs and economic well-being of the youth. Conducting systematic testing of relationships before proceeding with regression ensured transparency and methodological rigor as supported by Creswell & Creswell (2017)

Coefficient correlation (r=.601) between livelihood support programs and economic well-being with a moderately strong positive relationship suggests that an as livelihood support programs increase like financial literacy, access to finance, revolving funds, training in entrepreneurship and skilling in various areas like crafts, agriculture, services among many others, economic well-being of the youth in Kigezi sub-region tends to increase also. These results suggest that improvement in livelihood support programs was effective in improving the economic well-being of the youth, this is an empirical support for such interventions to improve the economic well-being among the youth.
Since correlation results indicated that livelihood support programs and youth economic well-being were sufficiently related, the study conducted a regression analysis whose results are presented in the proceeding tables.

Regression Analysis for Livelihood Support and Economic wellbeing among the Youth in Kisosro District Uganda

This study conducted a regression analysis to assess the impact of livelihood support programs on economic wellbeing of youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region. Model summary, ANOVA and coefficients table were extracted for this study's purpose. The Model Summary is presented Table 2.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.601[a]	.361	.352	.41860
a. Predictors: (Constant), Livelihood Support				

Source: Primary Data

Similar to the correlation results in table 1, R=.601 affirming the moderately strong positive relationship between livelihood support programs and the economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district. This mean that better economic well-being of the youth in Kisoro district was associated to improvement in livelihood support programs.

The R-Square = .361, this result revealed that approximately 36.1% of the changes in the economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district was accounted for by livelihood support programs to the youth in the district and Kigezi sub-region as a whole. This results however also reveal that other factors that have not been included in this model largely contributed to the economic wellbeing of the youth by contributing approximately 63.9%.

Results from the model summary demonstrate that livelihood support programs statistically have a significant impact on the economic wellbeing of the youth in Kisoro district. The strong relationship shows the role of livelihood interventions in enhancing the employment opportunities, income stability and general livelihood security of the youth. The 64% explanation by factors that were not included in this model need to be considered in future models, these may among many others involve education levels, access to credit, social networks, taxes and economic policies.

Table 3: Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.709	1	7.709	43.995	.000[b]
	Residual	13.668	78	.175		
	Total	21.377	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Economic well-being						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Livelihood Support						

Source: Primary Data

ANOVA was conducted to check for the overall significance of the regression model on the impact of livelihood support programs on economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region. An F-Statistic of 43.995 was highly significant at $p<.001$, this meant that the model provided a reliable prediction of the economic well-being of youth. Significance level of 0.000 shows that the chances that livelihood support programs explained variations in economic well-being was by chance is extremely very low, which validated the impact of livelihood support on economic well-being.
ANOVA results are in support of the earlier results from the model summary, that livelihood support programs significantly contribute to the variations in the economic well-being of youth. This confirms that livelihood support programs significantly play a great role in economic empowerment and stability of the youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.740	.360		2.056	.043
	Livelihood Support	.751	.113	.601	6.633	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Economic Well-being						

Source: Primary Data

Regression coefficient in table 4 was conducted to determine the specific contribution by livelihood support on economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region. Results on livelihood support (B=.751, Beta = .601, p=.000) revealed a positive and significant effect on the economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region, to be specific, for every unit increase in livelihood support programs, there will be a corresponding increase of approximately 0.751 units in economic well-being of youth in the sub-region. With Beta = .601 under standardized coefficients, it was revealed that livelihood support is strong in predicting economic well-being of youth by accounting for more than half of the changes explained in this model.

The coefficients analysis emphasizes the impact of livelihood support on improving the economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district. It emphasizes that programs like skilling, access to finance and training in basic training in entrepreneurship account for health and sustainable economic well-being in Kisoro district.

Overall, the findings from regression indicated that livelihood support programs is critical in improving the well-being of youth in Kigezi sub-region, specifically in Kisoro district. The findings highlight that as much as livelihood support programs enhance the economic well-being, there are other factors which were not included in this model but also play a crucial role, among many others may include infrastructure, taxation, education and social networks. Future models can probably integrate such factors to support government and its agencies to improve the economic well-being of the youth.

DISCUSSION

According to research, diversifying sources of income is crucial for households by increasing short-term consumption, but at the same time supporting accumulation of wealth in the long run. This dual benefit highlights the important role played by livelihood diversification towards improving the economic well-being of households. It is recommended that supplementary sources of income should be prioritized by vulnerable household to minimize dependency on one source of income to increase economic sustainability (Mahama & Nkegbe, 2021). Finding from this study are in agreement with Mahama & Nkegbe (2021), by revealing that livelihood support programs largely contribute to the economic well-being of the youth in Kigezi sub-region. For-example, it was similarly revealed in this study that livelihood support programs are positively and strongly related with economic well-being of youth, further supported by regression results where it was noted that approximately 36% of the changes in economic well-being was accounted for by youth livelihood support programs in Kigezi sub-region. Evidence from this study revealed that the youth had significantly improved their economic well-being due to diversified livelihood support programs.

Supporting sustainable household income generating activities was found to provide promising results in enhancing livelihoods in rural areas, especially those initiated by women and youth. Households that engaged in sustainable income generating activities witnessed increased grain production and household income, thus an improved economic well-being. Farmers were being supported with livelihood programs like proper resource management practices which were crucial in increasing the farmers yields subsequently leading to an increase in their monthly and seasonal incomes (Kebebe & Shibru, 2017; Oleru Huda et al., 2023). The findings according to their study are in agreement with this current study's findings, collectively both studies agree that provision of alternative livelihood support will yield promising results in improving the economic well-being of the women and youth under study respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study assessed whether livelihood support programs have an impact on the economic well-being of youth in Kisoro district, Kigezi sub-region. Results revealed a moderately strong and positive relationship between livelihood support programs and economic well-fare of the youth ($r=.601$, $p<.01$). Regression results revealed that 36.1% of the changes in economic well-fare of the youth was attributed to livelihood support programs in Kisoro district. These finding show that livelihood programs like vocational training, entrepreneurial skilling, revolving fund projects and financial literacy programs play an important role in improving household incomes, creation of jobs and the overall economic well being among the youth.

These findings affirm that livelihood support programs do not only improve the economic well-being of the youth, but also promote resilience and self-reliance among the young people. Nonetheless, it is important to note that though livelihood support programs played a critical role in the economic well-being of youth, there were also other factors (63.9%) which were not included in this model, but also contribute to the economic well-being of youth. The other factors among many others may involve taxation, education level, infrastructure, social networks and access to credit facilities. Therefore, despite the fact that livelihood support programs are critical in improving economic well-being of the youth, they must be complemented with other structure and policy interventions to achieve sustainable youth economic well-being.

This study recommends to the government and its partners to commit more funds into projects that are related to livelihood support. These may include Livelihood support services for the youth involving government efforts towards improvement of the lives of the youth, support to start self-help projects like agriculture and trade, improvement in the standards of the youth, revolving fund initiatives, awareness and sensitization about government projects, support training programs, job creation among many other services.

Though livelihood support programs enhance the economic well-being of the youth, there are other factors that when combined with livelihood support programs may yield better results economically and socially. These complementary factors ensure that young people not only gain income opportunities but also develop resilience, independence, and long-term growth potential. This will help the youth to contribute meaningfully to the development and long-term growth of the economy.

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There is no conflict of Interest

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