

## ABSTRACT

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) was launched in 2006 by the Kenyan government with the aim of improving the lives of young people and providing financial loans for youth groups and individuals for the creation of small businesses and entrepreneurship. Although Isiolo County is one of the counties in Kenya with a high number of YEDF beneficiaries, there is still a high degree of economic disempowerment among them. Previously conducted studies related to YEDF focus on accessibility, suitability, and impact of YEDF rather than its utilization. Therefore, the study sought to fill this research gap by assessing the socio-cultural dynamics and the effective utilization of YEDF in Isiolo County, Kenya. This study had four objectives; an investigation of the relationship between social institutions, social networks, workplace values and effective utilization of YEDF, and a determination of the relationship between cultural values and effective utilization of YEDF in Isiolo County, Kenya. Both descriptive and correlational study designs were used. The target population for the study was the YEDF beneficiaries, their relatives, and YEDF officials in Isiolo County. The study population was 9,602 persons in which 1,919 were YEDF beneficiaries, 7,676 were their relatives and 7 were YEDF officials. A sample of 384 respondents was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan's formulae for definite population while the number of respondents in each category was obtained using stratified and simple random sampling methods both proportionately and purposively. The sample was composed of 277 YEDF beneficiaries, 100 mature relatives, and 7 YEDF officials. Data collection tools were questionnaires and interview schedules. The theories used included the theory of social capital, the theory of planned behaviour, and the sociological theory of entrepreneurship. University experts gave proper advice to ensure quality assurance of research instruments. In order to ensure validity of the instruments, face validity, construct validity, and content validity were conducted. Reliability of research instruments was established through a piloting study in Tharaka Nithi County. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to estimate reliability of research instruments. The average reliability coefficient index for both youth and relatives' questionnaires was 0.861 deemed reliable as compared to the threshold set at 0.7 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Index. Data analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive

statistics used included mean, mode and percentages. Inferential statistics used included standard deviation and linear regression. Qualitatively, thematic analysis was used. Data presentation was done using tables and charts. Tests done during analysis included reliability, normality, multicollinearity, homogeneity, and both simple and multiple linear regression analysis. Findings from simple linear regression revealed a high degree of correlation (R) between each independent variable and the dependent variable. Therefore, each independent variable was found to have a significant effect on effective utilization of YEDF (p or sig value < 0.05 and  $t > 2$  for all the independent variables). All the four null hypotheses ( $H_{01, 2, 3, \text{ and } 4}$ ) were thus rejected. Findings from multiple linear regression revealed social networks, social institutions, workplace values, and cultural values as having the highest to the lowest influence on effective utilization of YEDF in that order. Some of the study recommendations were that family members, religious institutions and peers ought to be sensitized and trained on their roles. Information Technology and online application of the fund should also be prioritized. Findings and recommendations of this study could be used as a guide for policy makers and future research based on this or any other related enterprise fund.