UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Government initiatives and learner perceptions influencing agriculture as a career choice in KwaZulu-Natal

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The participation of young people in farming has been one of the key issues for the South African government. For this reason, the government has implemented several important policies and strategies to inspire the youth to participate in agriculture. Strategies include programs that promote and support smallholder agricultural businesses, particularly those owned by the youth. National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) was established with one of the objectives being to assist young people of this country to establish their own farming businesses. furthermore, the National Empowerment Fund has provided financial support to the youth with the intention of promoting their full participation in farming. Youth participation in agriculture and the promotion of agripreneurship are vital for food security and the achievement of SA economic goals, yet government efforts do not seem to have resulted in the expected outcome.

This study sought to investigate government initiatives and learner perceptions that influence the selection of agriculture as a career choice in KwaZulu-Natal. A quantitative methodology was employed with 140 questionnaires distributed by hand to the students of uMfolozi TVET Colleges (Nkandla, Eshowe, and Bhambanana/Jozini) in Kwazulu-Natal province. The findings indicate that students perceive that the agricultural industry does not provide clean jobs and that agricultural professions in general are not attractive. Students consider that resources are limited, and they lack the knowledge to utilise those that are available. The study proposes possible strategies to attract youth to careers in agriculture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Farming in South Africa, plays a critical role in the sustainable livelihood of people living in rural and urban communities. Participation of young people in agriculture is considered a the biggest challenge, as is their involvement to the economy of the country. In rural areas, farming is important for food security, poverty alleviation and employment opportunities. Being said that, youth unemployment rate is considered to be very high especially in rural and semi-rural areas. It is important to note that farming industry is transforming with technological advancement and changing consumer behaviour. Thus, understanding the government initiatives and learner perceptions that influence the selection of agriculture as a career choice is very important for the viability of the agricultural industry (Nthoesane and Teele,2024) .

The predominant unemployment rate of young people in South Africa is a major concern for everyone. The youth unemployment rate estimated at 50.32% in 2015 was reported to have stood at 55.75% in 2020 (Statista, 2020). Results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), carried out by Statistics South Africa, for quarter one of 2020 revealed a 1% increase (to 30.1%) in the official unemployment rate compared to the 4^{th} quarter of 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2020a, Statistics South Africa, 2020b). The report further showed that young South Africans between the ages of 15 and 34 represented 63.3% of the total number of people not employed. Furthermore, the unemployment rate between the youth graduated within the same age group was estimated to be 33.1% in quarter one of 2020 compared to 24.6% in quarter four of 2019 – an increase of 8.5% quarter-on-quarter (Statistics South Africa, 2020b). The fact that the rate of youth unemployment in South Africa continues to increase year-on-year, as seen above, further emphasises the need for the South African government to urgently develop and implement comprehensive strategies and coordinated responses to address this national crisis and promote youth employment.

Food security for South Africans is an integral element of the South African Bill of Rights and other sections of the Republic's Constitution. Despite these and several government efforts to ensure food security and eradicate hunger, vulnerability to hunger and food insecurity remains a national crisis (Wills et al., 2020, Statistics South Africa, 2018, Chakona and Shackleton, 2019). Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey reported that around 7.4 million South Africans experienced hunger in 2016 and was augmented by the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which noted that hungry households and those at

risk of hunger were estimated at 26% and 28.3% respectively (Oxford, 2019). In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity issues became compounded (Olivier and Hendriks, 2020, Wills et al., 2020). Several factors contribute to the perpetuation of food insecurity, especially among persons and households in townships and rural settlements, even though South Africa is a food secure country nationally. Poverty, due to unemployment, contributes significantly to food insecurity since poor citizens will not be able to procure food items even when there is ample supply. Therefore, addressing youth unemployment through strategic development, planning and implementation of employment initiatives is very important in addressing the unemployment and food insecurity(Statistics South Africa, 2019).

Young people of any state can improve the standard of living in their respective country only if the state is implementing youth programmes which are aimed at addressing the socio-economic need required by the youth. The government should implement the capacity building initiatives for the youth to ensure that youth socio-economic situation is improved. At the national and provincial levels, the South African government has developed several policies and initiatives targeted at addressing widespread unemployment through agriculture. Many of these government policies, initiatives, and interventions are targeted at the youth to encourage and boost youth participation in agriculture, thereby creating jobs and sustaining increased employment in the agricultural sector. Some of the notable youth-centred policies and initiatives include the New Growth Path, the Integrated Youth Development Strategy, Medium Term Strategic Framework, AgriBEE Charter, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, the Presidential Employment Stimulus programme, and Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (South African Government, 2020, South African Government News Agency, 2020).

Despite these and other government efforts to drive youth participation in agriculture, South African youths' involvement in agriculture and agribusinesses continues to dwindle especially in the rural and township areas. This dwindling youth interest and participation in agriculture has been attributed to several socioeconomic factors such as limited access to start-up funds and farming inputs, profitability, rural to urban migration, lack of information and communication technologies, access to land and government assistance and, very importantly, the perceptions of the youth of all the factors mentioned above. Several studies have looked at several other aspects and factors that influence the involvement of young people in agriculture. However, there are limited studies on youth perceptions and involvement in agriculture. (Twumasi et al., 2019).

1.2 Background of the study

The investigation was conducted because there is not much literature in the South African context that focuses on outlining the government initiatives and learner perceptions that influence the selection of agriculture as a career choice. The author strongly believe that one of the factors that contribute learners not selecting agriculture as the career is that agriculture is not marketed well to the youth, especially in rural areas. Radio shows like Cobelela Kufalaza of uKhozi FM, is aired every Mondays at 03h00-04h45in the morning. Who is going to listen to the radio show at this timeslot? Why is this show not aired at prime time like 19h00-20h00 where most young people are at home?

The continuous increasing population is a worldwide concern threatening employment, especially in rural area. In most African Developing countries, sixty percent of their population is under the age of thirty five years and most of them are not employed and reside in poor developed village communities (Geza *et al*., 2021). The unemployment of young people is a worldwide crises and it is estimated that 10 000 000-12 000 000 people from the youth population are looking for jobs annually. Nthoesane and Teele(2024) reported that in most rural communities, farming is the primary source of income and sustainable livelihood which improve the economy of the local community. Young people are the future of agriculture in South Africa. However, getting young people to to participate in agriculture value chains has been the biggest challenge. Youth involvement in farming has been poor even in SADEC areas like Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia etc. Nthoesane and Teele(2024) also noted that young people from Malawi, Nigeria and Tanzania are choosing not to participate in agriculture and only nine percent of Ethiopian young people interested in engaging in farming. It shows that youth are not interested in agriculture. Other studies revealed that young people view farming as an industry of last resort and low productivity, and prefer migrating to urban areas where they will receive better wage employment from other sectors like mining, construction, Information technology and other sectors (Magagula and Tsvakirai, 2020).

1.3 **Problem statement.**

The South African government acknowledges this and has actively focused on developing and implementing several policies, initiatives, and interventions, with significant fiscal support, to deal with youth unemployment through youth involvement in farming. However, this seems to have not resulted in the expected outcome. Therefore, this study aims to investigate this gap by investigating learner's perceptions of agriculture as a career. Understanding their perceptions is vital in order to influence their interest in adopting agriculture as a career(Magagula and Tsvakirai,2020) .
Moatlhodi(2020) reported that several researches has been done in the farming sector specifically on participation of young people in agriculture as well as choosing agriculture as the career of choice. In those invitations, the following factors were identified as the main cause of youth not interested in agriculture and agricultural careers. These include factors such as lack of access to land by youth, lack of access to finance by youth, luck of marketing access and lack of capacity building programmes which target youth.

The agricultural sector viewed as the important sector for job creation in developing country's economic growth. This is the only industry that ensures worldwide sustainable food security, especially in the developing countries like South Africa where agriculture is the essential and primary source of income. To ensure sustainable agricultural growth, it is vital to encourage youth to establish and engage in agricultural businesses. Young people are the important assets for most of the countries, especially South Africa (Giwu *et al*, 2024). Globally, the average commercial farmer is sixty (60) years old. According to StatSA (2025), youth unemployment (South Africa) is about 62.4% in quarter 1(Q1) of 2025, while the youth unemployment rate in SADEC countries is about 20%.

Youth participation in agriculture is vital because the ever-growing youth unemployment affects the economy of the country. The socio-economic growth and success of the local community (especially rural community) rely on the young people of the country. If young people are given an opportunity, they can contribute considerably to the growth of the country (Gaadi, 2022). Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020) reported that the contributing factors of youth unemployment could be due to poor access to production inputs, lack of funding for youth businesses, lack of capacity building, lack of extension services by the Department of Agriculture, lack of information, lack of innovation and technological advancement, lack of education, lack of career guidance in school, lack of farming skills to enter into the job market, mentorship programs, access to market, lack of infrastructure, poor service delivery by government and lack of policies to support youth initiatives.

Youth often migrate from rural areas to urban areas (big cites) to pursue other jobs which are non-related to agriculture. The low youth participation in agriculture need to be addressed to ensure that

agriculture continues to be the fundamental sector for the country and food security is secured. The is an urgent need to inspire youth to engage in agriculture through a deliberate change in policy, training, marketing and career guidance that precisely target the in school and out of school youth. The involvement of young people in farming activities has the potential to decrease and address the concerns of the aging farmers and lower the unemployment of young people. Youth serves as the pillar of every community's economy, a crucial source of ideas and innovations, the primary consumer of food and often the influencers and front-runners of community opinions and societal change (Gaadi, 2022).

1.4 **The purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the government initiatives and learner perceptions that influence the selection of agriculture as a career choice in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.2 Research questions

The following questions were posed:

i. What are the government initiatives to attract youth towards agriculture?
ii. What is the influence of career guidance on adopting agriculture as a career?
iii. What are learner's perceptions on the economic opportunities of the agricultural industry?

1.3 Research objectives

To address the research questions, the study will investigate the following objectives:

i. To identify and evaluate existing government policies, initiatives and interventions to encourage youth participation in agriculture.
ii. To determine and describe youth concerns, perceptions and significant factors shaping youth attitude towards the adoption of agriculture as a career.
iii. To determine learners perceptions on the opportunities available in the agricultural industry.

1.4 Significance of the study

Youth involvement in agriculture is a fundamental requirement for economic development and poverty alleviation. However, youth participation in agriculture remains abysmal and continues to dwindle despite several government policies, initiatives and interventions. The significance

and challenges of youth perceptions and attitudes towards a career in agriculture and how these are affected by government efforts remain poorly understood. Therefore, to address this gap, an investigation will be done to determine the impact of government and youth perceptions towards participating in agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal. Findings from this study will inform the government and its agencies of significant factors that their efforts must consider and focus on if they are to succeed in getting the youth to choose a career in agriculture. Finally, this study contributes to developing an academic understanding of the significant factors that influence youth perceptions and attitudes towards choosing a career in agriculture.

1.5 Research methodology

1.5.1 Research design

Research design can be defined as document that laid out research procedures between the decisions from assumptions and premises to data collection methods and analysis (Aggarwal and Ranganathan, 2019). This plan possess conceptual form in which a study is conducted, including data collection, analysis, interpretation methods and translating the research approach into practice (Ibrahim, 2014).This investigation was carried out using a descriptive research design. Such a study is a fact-finding investigation that explains phenomena as they exist during inquiry (Mwangangi et al., 2017). According to Sileyew (2019), a descriptive research design furnishes the researcher with a profile of relevant aspects of the phenomenon being investigated from an individual, social, industry, and organisational-oriented perspective. The researcher employed this research design because it provides a systematic and accurate description of the subject's facts and features to reveal associations or relationships between variables.

1.5.2 Research approach

A quantitative research method was implemented for this study. This entails the use of questionnaires for data collection.

1.5.3 Study site

The study was conducted at uMfolozi TVET Colleges (Nkandla, eShowe and Bhambanana Campuses) in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5.4 Target population

In the scope of this study, the target population were learners chosen from each of the 3 uMfolozi TVET campuses. The population contained 210 students.

1.5.5 Sample size and sampling technique

The sample size of this research was determined through Krejcie and Morgan’s 1970’s sampling table. The sample required based on the target population was 140. In addition, a non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used for this investigation. This involves the selection of respondents in the sample at the discretion of the researcher. It was done using qualifying criteria that allow the maximum understanding of the topic of interest.

1.5.6 Data collection instruments

Data collection tools are significant for any investigation since the reliability and validity of data influence the conclusions' quality and authenticity. The data collection includes applying the instrument to the sample being investigated. For this investigation, questionnaires were used for data collection. The questionnaires were based on closed questions and the respondents needed to select one, most suitable answer for each question (Saunders et al., 2003, Haur et al., 2017).

1.5.7 Data analysis

The data that was collected was prepared prior before analysis through data coding, entry, editing, and transformation. Administered and filled questionnaires were coded by assigning a numerical value to each response. After coding, the data was inputted into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), the software package used to analyse the data.

1.6 Ethical considerations

As a core requirement of scientific research, this study adhered to all scientific principles and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's ethical principles. In this regard, ethical approval for this investigation was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To guarantee human dignity, the investigator requested all the respondents to sign the informed consent form, which will allow them to decide whether to take part in the study or not. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that respondents' private information was not disclosed.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This investigation used uMfolozi TVET students as subjects to understand the perceptions of youths towards participating in agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal. Generalisations made based on this investigation's outcome may not be a perfect representation of the actual status of the subject nationally.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed review of the literature and discusses youth unemployment in South Africa and the government efforts (via policies, initiatives and interventions) to address the issue of unemployment by encouraging young people to be involved in agriculture. The literature review also covers the factors that led the failure of government policies, initiatives and interventions to boost youth choice of agriculture as a career. Youth perception and attitudes towards agriculture as a career are also discussed in this chapter.

2.1.1Theoretical framework: role model and parents profession

Widhinningsih(2019) reported that close relatives such as mother, farther, uncle etc., act as facilitators in helping their kids towards career choice and achievement. This can be noticed in the farming families where parents are involved in encouraging their children to take farming as a business so that a succession plan to managed the business being recognized. It is believe that youth are often adopt many of their opinions by looking at older people in the area. Beyond that, Giwu et al(2024) argued that youth tend to recognise family or community members whose behaviors are of interest to them. Young people who have role models are more motivated to follow on their footsteps of their role models.

The role model theory and parents profession indicates how young people actions are being inclined by their role model and their parents. Young people who are following their role model's behavior like popular young agripreneurs from the local community will be beneficial as it will assist young people to obtain information and skills in farming. It is also noted that the impact of role models is stronger when the youth have an individual connection with their role models (Giwu et al,2024).

Rahim and Nataraju(2021) reported that parents engaged in farming industry represent family role model, agribusiness facilitator and promoter for youth in farming. Parents profession are stronger influencer for making a decision in career choice .

2.2 Population demography

Over the decades, the term population demography has been defined in different ways. However, population demography is "closely related to economics, sociology, psychology, geography, mathematics, genetics, and anthropology" (Sharma, 2004). We can thus define population demography as a body of knowledge that aims to understand the size, organisation and distribution of a population in an area, while describing the population's evolutionary trends and its relationship with the different aspects of social organisation as well as predict the future of such a population (Sharma, 2004).

2.2.1 South African Population Strength of the youth

Statistics South Africa reported that more than half of the population of South Africa are youth aged between 15 and 64 years, which is essentially the working population. About 69.8% of the working population are aged between 15 and 34 (StatSA, 2018), representing the bulk of the working population. This means that the youths are essentially the economy determinants in South African in terms of work force(StatSA, 2019, 25-35),

In any country, the youth population determines its strength economy-wise since the youths are the working power of a nation. It is also a well-known fact that any country that maligns its youth population is heading towards disaster. According to the October 2011 census conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatSA, 2011) which collated demographic information of the population as well as employment status of the country, there was an increase in the population of youths under twenty and the rate of migration into urban areas also increased (Collinson et al., 2016). This increase in the migration rate of youths is a cause for concern as there will be an increase in the demand for jobs in the urban areas.

2.3 Youth unemployment in South Africa

All over the world youth unemployment is a major issue post-COVID-19. South Africa, being a middle-income nation, is faced with major challenges such as high poverty rates and inequality, whilst undergoing economic, technological and social changes. The implication is that the country is in a critical state especially since the youth population is constantly increasing, whereas the rate of job creation is not (De Lannoy et al., 2020; Patel et al., 2020). The youth between the ages of 15 and 24, incidentally termed as discouraged population, make up about 67% of the population irrespective of age, gender and race (StatsSA, 2019a). Wilkinson et al. (2017) was of the opinion that the most adversely affected demography of the population is black, female and/or live in the rural areas. An analysis carried out by Banerjee et al. (2008) elucidated that about 60% of the unemployed population have never had a job before and that these people were mainly youths.

Du Toit (2003) defined unemployment in two folds, as the official or strict definition and the expanded definition. Both definitions include people aged 15 and above who are ready to work but are not employed. While the strict definition includes individuals who have at least taken previous steps to look for jobs, at least 4 weeks to a specific time; the expanded definition includes those who have loose interest and therefore have not taken any definitive ways in recent times to seek employment opportunities.

Due to the apartheid legacy, evidence has shown that the majority of the previously disadvantage youths in this country find it difficult transitioning to and from the labour market, with only about 40% being able to hold down a job before age 24 (Patel et al., 2020). Patel et al. (2020) also noted that most of the jobs available to these youths are short-term in nature which points to the fact that majority of the people in South Africa are either unemployed or underemployed. Wilkinson et al. (2017) reported that high unemployment rate in South Africa is constantly increasing and is becoming the biggest social and economic challenge.

The issue of unemployment in South Africa is not a new thing. After the transition to democracy, there was influx of females into the work population which increased the number of unemployed youths (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Before 2000, there was no reliable record of unemployment rate in the country, but after that period, there was a substantial decrease in unemployment. However, after the global economic downturn in 2009, the rate of unemployment increased again and has not recovered since then despite the economic recovery (De Lannoy et al., 2020). This may be explained by the low rate of job creation as well as low

absorption of workers into the work force (Bernstein, 2014; Burger & Von Fintel, 2009; De Lannoy et al., 2020; Kraak, 2013). Some researchers have argued that the high unemployment rate of youth is often caused by the increase number of youths who are not employed due to no job opportunities (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009).

2.4 Factors contributing to youth unemployment

Many factors have been identified as factors that have contributed to youth unemployment in South Africa. In this section, these factors and their implications will be elucidated.

2.4.1 Skill acquisition versus formal education

In an investigation that was conducted in rural areas of Mpumalanga by Wilkinson et al. (2017), the authors observed that women were more likely to further their education than males, thereby making the male population more practically skilled and hence qualified for certain kinds of jobs than females. As a result, the men were more employed than the females in the area. It should be noted that most of the jobs in the rural areas are practical skill oriented. Thus, the observations made from the study of Wilkinson et al. (2017) may be more generally relevant. This kind of phenomenon could be due to the fact that skill-oriented jobs are usually considered to be gender oriented, e.g., construction, which is more male-dominated while the white-collar jobs were considered feminine thus resulting in the women pursuing higher education in other to be qualified for those jobs (Wilkinson et al., 2017). After the apartheid period, there was an increase in women employment and this saw an increase of the rate of unemployment from 13% before democratic transitioning to about 30% a decade after (Banerjee et al., 2008).

The South African government, through the auspices of the Council on Higher Education (Education, 2016; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016), promoted the use of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and to universities. The fact that most youths aged 15-24 never make it into higher education, or worse, drop out before completion attests to the reason why many of the high-school graduates are not skilled enough for the jobs that should have been available to them. However, not all the blame can be laid on the doorstep of these youths. Most of the universities offering the TVET courses have a poor quality of teachers and training facilities which could have been used to attract this categories of youths to further their studies (De Lannoy et al., 2020; Perold et al., 2012). Many youths aspire to obtain higher education, not because of anything other than the perceived higher social standing of the people with university degrees. This has inadvertently contributed to the stigmatisation of the TVET

program (De Lannoy et al., 2020), and in combination with the inadequacy of the trainers and training facilities is a major detractor for these youths.

2.4.2 Job availability and absorption rate

Another interesting fact is that even though the number of employees increased by at least 57% post-apartheid, there was only about a 1.7% job opportunity increment per year (Banerjee et al., 2008). This signifies that, each year, there would be excess of over 55% of the employable population going without a job. According to the study of Wilkinson et al. (2017), there is high tendency for layoffs because of the ever-changing labour law which also means that more people are laid off than are employed.

2.4.3 Early school leaving versus advanced learning and race discrimination

Early school leaving is another factor that has contributed to the high unemployment rate in South Africa (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). It has been established that the youths are more educated than their parents and that there is a higher number of educated youths with at least a high-school degree because of the shift in the South African job market towards skill development. This is because most entry-level jobs only require some level of literacy and thus provide the illusion that higher education is not compulsory (De Lannoy et al., 2020). However, due to the fact that early school-leavers stop at high school, they are more prone to be unemployed for a longer period and slip into discouragement faster than their counterparts that go on to attain higher degrees (De Lannoy et al., 2020). The youths with higher degrees are more likely to get better and higher paying jobs.

Also, because of the tendency of Black and Coloured youths to transition into discouraged workers faster than Indians and Whites, it is no wonder that these groups of the unemployed population often remain unemployed for a prolonged period of time (Banerjee et al., 2008). This may be because of the ingrained conception of the apartheid nation that the system favours the Whites than the Blacks even though the Blacks are the majority. However, research has shown that less than 2% of the White youths in South Africa does not go past the primary school education whereas about 45% of their Black counterparts belong to this category (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). It is therefore no wonder there are more unemployed Black youths than White in the country. Also, those that eventually have post-secondary education study courses that are not in high demand, hence, they end up being jobless for a long period of time, despite their educational status (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). Mlatsheni and Rospabé

(2002) claim that, even with a higher qualification and studying a high demand course, Black South Africans still stand less than half a chance of being employed.

Another opinion is that some employers discriminate against black youths or youths that attended black oriented universities (Isdale et al., 2016). It was earlier established by Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) that the apartheid nature of South Africa before democracy had contributed to the reality that blacks do not have access to the same kind of education that whites have. Hence, female blacks are more likely to have no job than their white counterparts.

2.4.4 Wage expectation and reality

Another interesting factor that contributes to youth unemployment, even though minimally, is the expectation and actual reality of wages for educated and non-educated workers. There is a perception that when you have a certain level of education, the pay should be high which is in sharp contrast with the reality in the job market (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that youths from the lower rung of the societal ladder have the tendency to accept jobs with wages lower than the government approved standard because of the understanding that they need job experience to secure better jobs that pay more (Newman & De Lannoy, 2014; Odora & Naong, 2014). Whereas, their counterparts in the urban centres, belonging to the middle and upper classes of society, have higher expectation of what they should earn which does not necessarily correlate with their level of education (De Lannoy et al., 2020). In other words, youths from the middle class have an illusion of what they should earn and what they are worth.

2.4.5 Access to information

Access to information is very important in every area of life. Studies over time have shown that South African youth, especially those with a low socio-economic background have limited or no access to proper information that would have helped to position them appropriately for desired jobs and have access to such jobs (Branson et al., 2015; Kraak, 2015; Marock, 2008). Foremost of the problem of access to information is regrettably foundational. In developed countries, secondary school students have enough exposure and information provided to them by the secondary educational system, so that they are more prepared for life after secondary school. Unfortunately, many youths in South Africa are unaware of which subjects to take in secondary schools in order to be qualified for their desired jobs. Some authors (Branson et al., 2015; Kraak, 2015; Marock, 2008) are of the opinion that local NGOs may help to fulfil this role of properly orientating youths for the job market. However, the argument that the

unwillingness of the youths to actually seek out the help of these NGOs defeats that expectation and thus they are equipped with the necessary information on how to fill out CVs and apply for jobs etc. by schoolteachers. Also, many young people depend on their network of friends to learn about job opportunities and this is a disadvantage to the youths in the lower socio-economic groups who have a limited circle of connections or social network (De Lannoy et al., 2020).

2.4.6 Mental health

There is also the issue of discouragement, depression and mental health which brings about being discriminated against by employers (De Lannoy et al., 2020). A report in the *South African Child Guage* (Shung-King et al., 2019) surmised that a "person who has a mental health condition may be discriminated against and be excluded from employment opportunities, which will eventually lead to financial stress".

2.4.7 Proximity of job locations

Proximity to the areas where there are jobs also is an important factor that has put the rate of unemployment on the increase in South Africa. Many of the youths from poor backgrounds typically reside on rural or areas which are undeveloped. With limited or unreliable modes of transportation and higher costs of job seeking, the youths rather stay where they are and make do with the limited job options or take the risk of migrating to urban areas to search for job opportunities. The high transport cost limit their eventual income at the end of the month (De Lannoy et al., 2020; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Data has shown that most of the affected youths come from low-income families who may have to borrow money from their friends to be able to look for jobs (Ardington & Hofmeyr, 2014; Blalock, 2014; Graham et al., 2016; Porter et al., 2016). Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) had earlier made an observation that most of these youths from the rural areas would be better off seeking employment in their undeveloped areas than moving to big cities anyway, due to the fact that they stand a better chance of finding secure and respectable employment posts like teaching and administrative jobs. However, they noted that a few of these youths are more suited to jobs in the urban centres.

2.4.8 Job experience

Furthermore, many young people are turned down from some jobs because of the lack of experience. Using microeconomic determinants, Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) determined that the major reason why there is higher population of unemployed youth of between 15 and

35 years of age than those from 36 to 65 is job experience. Research has shown that youths that had some form of jobs during their high school education tend to get jobs faster than those who do not (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Hence, Lekena (2006) indicated that job experience is becoming more important than actual education for most youths.

2.4.9 Employer behaviour

Hiring preference and employers' behaviour is also of high significance to the unemployment rate in this country(Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). Although there is little evidence to support this assumption, there is a wide assumption that employers generally find it difficult to employ youths (Bernstein, 2014), or when they lay off staff when there is economic decline, they are reluctant to re-hire more people when there is an upswing in the economy (Burger & Von Fintel, 2009). While some employers generally require soft skills, like the ability of their employees to communicate in English, there is also the fact that the requirements for employability vary widely and thus contributes to the uncertainty of the youths when determining what skills are required in the job market (De Lannoy et al., 2020).

2.5 Effects of unemployment on the society

In 1968, Becker developed a theory which he dubbed 'Economic Theory of Crime'. This theory surmised that delinquency and wealth can be a catalyst for an increase in crime rate in the community(Becker, 1968). A study by Ajaegbu (2012) in Nigeria supported this claim that an increase in the rate of unemployment increases the rate of gender-based violence(GBV), crime like murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism. This researcher was of the opinion that youth unemployment creates a feeling of deprivation and frustration which ultimately leads to finding alternatives that often lead to a life of crime. Another study conducted in France by Fougère et al. (2009) to understand the influence of unemployment on home and violent crimes for the period 1990 to 2000 came to the same conclusion the prior two authors did. Fougère et al. (2009) thus suggested that one of the major ways to combat crime is to design strategies by which youth unemployment can be brought under control. This was corroborated by a study carried out in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, where Mazorodze and Nsiah (2020) found that youth unemployment is a catalyst for an increasing crime rate in the area. Evidence from their research confirmed that a 0.1% increase in youth unemployment increases crime rates by 1.6 times which agrees with Becker's theory that unemployment is directly correlated with crime rate.

One major finding of Mazorodze and Nsiah (2020) is that the youths involved in violent crimes are more male than female and this lends to the assertion of Becker (1968) that due to their social positioning, both men and women have differing resources available to them and this affects the ways by which they each cope with unemployment. In other words, the genders cope with unemployment differently. A key policy implication arising from the study of Mazorodze and Nsiah (2020) is that job creation for youth can be an alternative mechanism by which policymakers can reduce crime rates in KwaZulu-Natal. Since this is a locality in South Africa, it therefore goes to mean that the same conclusion may apply to the whole country at large. Although, more research needs to be carried out in other areas of the country in other to confirm this assumption.

2.6 Efforts of the government towards alleviating the impact of youth unemployment

This section outlines various ways in which the South African government is making efforts to mitigate youth unemployment.

2.6.1 Skill acquisition programmes

Governments all over the world have been using different methods to solve the problem of unemployment among the youth. One of the novel ways by which they are beginning to help combat unemployment is by encouraging entrepreneurship. Developing countries like South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana are not left out of this train as their lawmakers are beginning to discuss the importance of small businesses in creating jobs(Alarape, 2009,25-27). As earlier mentioned, the establishment of the TVET programme in universities was to help youths develop skills that would at least give them a chance to access entry level jobs in the small businesses in South Africa (De Lannoy et al., 2020). In addition to the TVET programme, there have also been establishment of CET colleges. These were established with the aim of catering for the needs of youth and adults who did not complete their school education up to grade 12 or those that never had the opportunity to attend school (Branson et al., 2020). In 2020, a national website called Siyaphambili was being developed (Branson et al., 2020). This website was developed with the aim of using available data to project and predict how inequality in income among races and individuals with higher educational attainment can be measured and mitigated to lower the unemployment rate of young people.

2.6.2 Wage subsidy

Wage subsidy, which is essentially an intervention by the government to either the worker to be employed or the firm that would employ workers, is another tool being employed by the

South African government (Burns et al., 2010). This was introduced to alleviate firms' burdens in terms of funds necessary to pay the wages of the workers they employ. Burns et al. (2010) suggested that targeting the unemployed youths for this scheme would yield better results since they are the most affected by unemployment. Also, if the scheme was temporary, it would draw more young people into employment where they can gain some experience that would be to their benefit in future endeavours.

Furthermore, Lloyd (2002) emphasised that small scale enterprises in South Africa represent 97.5% of all businesses in the country. They contribute about 35% to the nation's GDP, employ approximately 55% of the country's labour force and contribute about 42% to the total remuneration of the nation's workforce.

2.6.3 Acts and policies

To reduce discrimination and education inequality, the government passed the *Employment Equity Act 1998* which aims to ensure that the best people are employed irrespective of their race or gender (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). This act and the *Skills and Development Act 1998* were expected to make sure that less privileged youths can have access to training in order to hone their skills. However, there is a deeply ingrained mentality from the Apartheid era in the average South African and this may not help in yielding the desired outcome the government hoped for.

From the literature reviewed so far, it is worthy of note that many of the intervention programmes employed by the government are skill acquisition oriented (Lannoy et al., 2018). Not much attention has been given to the impact of agriculture on potentially reducing unemployment in the country.

2.7 Government policies on agriculture

Agriculture is considered an emerging asset (Ducastel & Anseeuw, 2016), because of its strong long-term macroeconomic fundamentals, attractive historical returns on land investment, a mix of current income and capital appreciation, uncorrelated returns with the equities market, and a strong hedge against inflation (Ducastel & Anseeuw, 2016). According to (Khwidzhili & Worth, 2017), a sustainable agricultural policy must be one that was not developed by farmers but that rather addresses the need for private sector development as well as ensures that education, transportation and communication infrastructures be put in place.

Also, due to the fact that most developing countries have a high percentage of people living in poverty, many of whom are living in marginal rural areas, Ahmadzai et al. (2021) were of the opinion that policy approaches towards agriculture have been conducive to favourable areas while neglecting marginal areas. Since these marginal lands make up about 21% of the total lands available for farming, Ahmadzai et al. (2021) proposed that future policies all over the world should address the food security within marginal environments and must evolve around a framework that is all-inclusive but context-specific.

2.7.1 South African government's agricultural policies

An analysis carried out by StatSA (2019b) showed that Agriculture plays a major role in creating job opportunities for the South African population (Table 1). The increase employment was observed in the formal sector (43,000), followed by the Agriculture and Private household sectors with 38,000 and 35,000 respectively in the third quarter of 2019. The analysis further pointed out that the number of people who have lose interest in looking for jobs increased by 44 000 while the number of people who were not economically active for reasons other than discouragement decreased by 35 000 between the second and the third quarters of 2019, resulting in a net increase of 9 000 in the not economically active population.

According to Khwidzhili and Worth (2017), there is no approved policy on sustainable agriculture in South Africa. However, there is a working document on agriculture in sustainable development and several draft policies and guideline documents delineating South Africa's intentions regarding sustainable agriculture. This is because building a sustainable agricultural sector in terms of economic, ecological, and environmental adaptability may not be realistic.

In terms of job creation, the South African government (GovernmentSA, 2012) recognised that there is still limited job creation in the agricultural sector and therefore proposed a multifaceted approach in the National Development Plan.

In the NDP 2030, the government proposed that through economy and employment development, they should be able to reduce unemployment to 14% by 2020 and 6% by 2030. One of the ways by which they aimed to achieve this is by making available clean water that

Table 2.1: Key labour market indicators

	Jul-Sep 2018	Apr-Jun 2019	Jul-Sep 2019	Qtr-to-Qtr change	Year-on year change	Qtr-to-Qtr change	Year-on year change
	Thousand			**Per cent**			
Population 15–64 yrs	**37,985**	**38,433**	**38,582**	**149**	**597**	**0.4**	**1.6**
Labour force	**22,589**	**22,968**	**23,109**	**141**	**519**	**0.6**	**2.3**
Employed	**16,380**	**16,313**	**16 375**	**62**	**-5**	**0.4**	**0.0**
Formal sector (non-agricultural)	11,255	11,172	11,214	43	-41	0.4	-0.4
Informal sector (non-agricultural)	3,017	3,048	2,995	-53	-22	-1.7	-0.7
Agriculture	842	842	880	38	38	4.5	4.5
Private households	1,267	1,251	1,286	35	20	2,8	1.5
Unemployed	**6,209**	**6,655**	**6,734**	**78**	**524**	**1.2**	**8.4**
Not economically active	**15,395**	**15,465**	**15,474**	**9**	**78**	**0.1**	**0.5**
Discouraged work-seekers	2,733	2,749	2,793	44	60	1.6	2.2
Other (not economically active)	12,662	12,716	12,681	-35	18	-0.3	0.1
Rates (%)							
Unemployment rate	27.5	29.0	29.1	0.1	1.6		
Employed/population ratio (absorption)	43.1	42.4	42.4	0.0	-0.7		
Labour force participation rate	59.5	59.8	59.9	0.1	0.4		

Source: Statistics South Africa (2019).

is adequate for agricultural uses. Another objective of the NDP 2030 was to improve environmental sustainability and resilience. This was to be achieved by increasing investment

in technology, research and the development of adaptation strategies for the protection of rural livelihoods and expansion of commercial agriculture. It was also proposed that the leadership should invest in research, new agricultural technologies for commercial farming, as well as for the development of adaptation strategies and support services for back farmers in rural areas. With all these, the government aimed to have 643,000 direct jobs and 326,000 indirect jobs in the agriculture, agro-processing and related sectors by 2030.

According to Moolla (2024), the strategies aimed at supporting farming communities have not changed since their implementation. Most of the strategies still focus on smallholder farmers. However, the state still assists with soft loans for production inputs to the new farmers who have acquired land though a restitution programme. The Government initiatives such as Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), which aimed at supporting and developing new farmers with infrastructure, empowerment, access to market, extension services and machinery. The main focus of this programme is to ensure that smallholder farmers are being developed into commercial farmers.

2.8 Attitude of the youth to entrepreneurship

Studies have shown that African youths generally have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. A survey carried out by Adebayo and Kavoos (2016) affirmed this. The study noted that, despite popular opinion, many youths would love to own their own business, especially since it would mean that they get to be their own bosses and do what they love rather than being other people's employees and earning money just for the sake of survival. In their study however, they noted that African youths in the diaspora are often discouraged from establishing businesses back at home because of lack of trust in the abilities of their relatives back at home to handle such businesses well in their absence.

2.8.1 Attitude of South African youths towards entrepreneurship in general

In 2010, (Musengi-Ajulu) carried out a pilot study to understand the attitudes of youths towards business activity, the perceptions of how the community values business management, self-assessment of the business owner's skills, knowledge about funding opportunities for small-scale farmers and entrepreneurial objectives. The results from that study highlighted the following:

a. More than half of the respondents were open to the idea of entrepreneurship,
b. Males are more open to the idea than females,

c. The respondents were of mixed opinions about the acceptability of their immediate relatives to the idea of them becoming entrepreneurs,
d. More than 75% of the respondents believed they had the skill set required to become entrepreneurs,
e. Only about 16% of the respondents were aware of capital sources for their business if they were to become entrepreneurs and only about 15% had knowledge of special training for young entrepreneurs,
f. About 23% of the respondents would love to be entrepreneurs on a large scale, and
g. The majority of the respondents relished the idea of being entrepreneurs because it enables them to actually do what they love.

The above elucidation only points to the fact that, there is a form of readiness in the youths for becoming business owners as it will enable them to do what they love. However, lacking knowledge of the sources of funding or adequate training for business ownership would be a major barrier in this regard.

Another study by Steenekamp et al. (2011) supported the result obtained by Musengi-Ajulu (2010) in that youth of South Africa have a mindset shift towards entrepreneurship. However, Steenekamp et al. (2011) noted that these youths may have an unrealistic expectation with regard to formal academic qualifications and less interest than would be expected in starting their own businesses. They believed this resulted from the fact that entrepreneurship education was inadequate in the secondary schools they sampled. This was supported by the research carried out by Adebayo and Kavoos (2016) that African youths generally have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and are ready to venture into it provided they have an adequate independent attitude and proper entrepreneurship training. Incidentally, a study carried out in Yemen also drew this conclusion suggesting that the attitude of youths to entrepreneurship may not necessarily be geographical but rather universal (Al-Qadasi et al., 2021). Steenekamp et al. (2011), in their study, learnt that the students whose parents or close relatives were entrepreneurs tend to not want to venture into entrepreneurship themselves. The reason for this needs further investigation.

A more recent study by Radebe (2019) supports the opinions of the above authors in that the lack of entrepreneurial awareness, community's attitude towards business owned by youth, lack of access to funding, regulations red-tape, high labour costs and lack of capacity building support are the barriers that prevent young people from starting their own businesses. Therefore, this researcher advocates government policies that will address these issues.

2.8.2 Towards entrepreneurship in agriculture

A study carried out in Nkonkobe Municipality of South Africa (Cheteni, 2016) on youths' participation in agriculture showed that youths participating in agriculture were more interested in shorter-term profit. Hence, they prefer to go into crop production rather than livestock production since the turnaround period is shorter. The study further revealed that most young people in the area perceived farming as a bad career since they would be toiling on the farm while their siblings or friends hold 'better' jobs in the city. In other words, they see a career in agriculture as demeaning and not good for social standing. Cheteni (2016) concluded that some form of incentives might increase the interests of youths to choose agriculture as a career.

In another study by Metelerkamp et al. (2019) in the KwaZuluNatal, Limpopo and Western Cape provinces of South Africa, using SenseMaker® as a narrative collection and a significant framework, there was indication that the youths in this area had mixed reactions to a career in agriculture. The study analysed the real-life narratives of the youths towards their opinions about a future in agriculture as a career. Interestingly, most of these reactions were focused on the social stigma that the youths involved in agriculture were faced with. Many of the respondents would have gone to study agriculture related courses in universities but for the insistence of their parents that they would either be cut off financially or disowned. This supported the results obtained by Cheteni (2016) that social stigma and the perception that farming is for old people is a major barrier to youths engaging in agricultural activities.

Also, even though about one-third of the respondents in the study of Metelerkamp et al. (2019) have high expectations and opinions about careers in agriculture, the fact that the commercial agricultural sector of South Africa is dominated by whites and that available jobs are mostly low-skilled minimum wage positions is a major discouragement. This leads to the assumption that a career in agriculture is a form of 'slave labour' and thus causes the interest of the youth to wane with time. This also means that the downward trend of unemployment will continue if nothing is done to capture the interests of these youths promptly. In other words, it seems as if the youth are ready for a career in agriculture but the present system in the country is not compatible with their high aspirations in this sector (Metelerkamp et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discusses youth unemployment in South Africa. The chapter presents a review of literature on government efforts through policies, initiatives, and interventions to address youth unemployment via youth participation in agriculture. The literature review also covers the factors that have contributed to the failure of government policies, initiatives and interventions at boosting youth choice of agriculture as a career. In this chapter, the methodology by which the study was conducted to achieve the study's objective is presented. This entails the research design, approach, sampling techniques and the target population. According to Nayak and Singh (2021), the research methodology forms an integral aspect of a research project therefore the decision on the choice of the methodology should be carefully made.

3.2 Research design

Research design according to Goddard and Melville (2004) describes the general plans an investigator employs to conduct the study and achieve the study's objectives. This plan entails the unit of analysis, method of data collection and how this aligns with the study's objectives. Following Yin (2003) a research design can be descriptive, explanatory or exploratory.

The *descriptive design (Kothari, 2004)* is employed for a study that seeks to provide a detailed description of a phenomenon. It describes the associating characteristics of the various variables that support a study. Studies which employed this research design are typically guided by "what" questions (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

Explanatory research design is employed in order to explain a phenomenon of interest and to find a solution to remedy certain problems (Bhattacherjee, 2012). It is important to find explanations for why such issues occur. This research design enables an investigator to have answers to the "what" "where" questions associated with the study of interest. This type of research design is applicable to a research project which seeks to investigate causes, effect as well as an outcome.

An *exploratory research design* is employed when there is no preliminary knowledge of a phenomenon, in other words, it is adopted when nothing is known about the study of interest (Ketchen & Bergh, 2006). This research design is used to collect data about a phenomenon that

has not been studied (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Studies which employ such designs are generally conducted to generate a preliminary idea of a phenomenon of interest.

In this study, the investigator had no control over the variables that underpin the study, therefore the investigator implemented a descriptive research design. This was considered in other to enable the researcher to get better understanding about the youth perceptions. In addition, the design enables the investigator to provide explanations that would influence the interest of youths towards agriculture as career.

3.3 Research approaches

The common research approaches in social science according to Bhattacherjee (2012) are quantitative and qualitative methods. The *quantitative approach* uses numerical analysis of data to explain a phenomenon of interest. This approach is generally employed to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviours and other defined variables (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The data collection techniques for a quantitative approach entails questionnaires, surveys and polls. The qualitative approach uses qualitative data collected through different methods such as observations and interviews to gain an in-depth knowledge of and explain a social phenomenon (Goddard & Melville, 2004). On the other hand, both quantitative and qualitative can be employed for a research project in a process called *mixed methodologies (Yin, 2003).* For this study, a quantitative method was implemented. According to (Ketchen & Bergh, 2006), this method is vital and applicable to a study that seeks to investigate the relationships existing between the variables that underpin a study of interest. This method was adopted to enable the investigator to quantify the identified variables, which will help to answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives

3.4 Study site

This refers to an area where the investigation will be conducted with the aim of collecting the required data (Nayak & Singh, 2021). This study was conducted with students at Nkandla, Eshowe and Bhambanana.

3.5 Target population

Refers to the whole set of units or components for which the data are to be collected in making inferences (Nayak & Singh, 2021). The investigation scope of the target population was the learners from each of the 3 uMfolozi TVET colleges i.e Nkandla, Bhambanana and eShowe campuses. The population contained 210 students.

3.6 Sampling process and techniques

The sampling process describes the procedures an investigator employs to select the sample for a research study. The sampling process according to Nayak and Singh (2021) strengthens the judgment and decision about the sample selection. In this study, the selected sampling technique was non-probability sampling. The non-probability sampling refers to the sampling type whereby each unit is selected in such a way that the chance of selection of each unit in the population is unknown (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). In this study, a non-probability purposive technique was implemented. Therefore, selection of respondents in the sample was made at the discretion of the researcher. This was done using qualifying criteria that allow the maximum understanding of the factor that may influence student perceptions towards agriculture as a career. The researcher selected students across the target population (Nkandla, Bhambanana and Eshowe campus) based on their subject, age, and their background.

3.7 Sample size

A sample size according to Mohajan (2018) defines the units, individuals or components from which the survey outcomes are to be generalised. Essentially, it is the overall number of participants which the researcher intends to gather data from in order to achieve the objectives of the investigation. The sample size for the study was determined through Krejcie and Morgan's 1970's sampling table. The study utilised a random sampling procedure to manage a sample of 140 respondents. Furthermore, this study was a coursework study. the sample required, based on the target population of 210, was 137.

3.8 Data collection method and instruments

The data collection tools according to Yin (2003) are vital to any research project. This is because both validity and reliability of the data determines the quality of the results. The data collection method entails applying the instrument to the sample cases under investigation. In this study, questionnaires were used for data collection. Questionnaires, as an instrument of data collection, mainly consist of closed questions in which respondents are asked to select only one of the most suitable answer for each questions (Haur, Khatibi, & FerdousAzam, 2017; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, & Bristow, 2003). According to Kothari (2004) a questionnaire is an integral part of a quantitative study, therefore, it must be carefully designed. The questionnaire was considered for this study because it enables the researcher to reach a large sample since it is not feasible to engage each member of the population which formed the sample.

3.9 Questionnaire structure

The questionnaire for this study contained four sections (Section A – D) with the following headings:

- Section A focused on the demographic information. It presents questions relating to participant's gender, age, level of education and place of domicile.
- Section B (Individual perceptions): The section was aimed at understanding youth perception of agriculture.
- Section C (economic perception): The section was aimed at understanding youth economic perceptions of agriculture.
- Section D: (Socio Cultural Perception): the section was aimed at understanding youth socio cultural perception of agriculture as a career.

3.10 Questionnaire pretesting (Pilot testing)

While it takes a significant amount of time to design a data collection instrument, it is crucial to pre-test this instrument before handing it out to the respondents (Nayak & Singh, 2021). The process of testing the research instrument by administering it to a small number of respondents from the same population to be used for a study is referred to as pre-testing. In this study, ten students were employed in the pilot testing. The questionnaires were given to these students to complete, in the process, errors were identified. The errors were addressed, and the final questionnaire was sent to the supervisor for review before the data collection commenced.

3.11 Distribution of the questionnaires.

Prior to handing the questionnaires to the participants, the investigator handed consent letters to the participants. The consent letter introduces the investigator's intent and the objectives of the investigation. This letter also allowed the participants to indicate their interest whether to participate in the study or not. Thereafter, the participants were prepared and briefed on their role and its importance to the research project's success. Also, each section in the questionnaire was clearly explained and support was provided to the students when needed. A total of 140 questionnaires were successfully administered and returned.

3.12 Conceptual framework (Entrepreneurial Cognition Approach (ECA))

This study employed Entrepreneurial Cognition Approach (ECA) developed by Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020) to determine the association between the agripreneurship intentions of the

youth, their perceptions as well as socio economic factors. The framework posits that human behaviour is influenced by mental process such as attitudes, perceptions, human traits or socio-economic factors. According to Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020), socio-economic factors play a vital role in agripreneurship due to the social embeddedness of the sector. The motivation to and identification of new business opportunities in agriculture are "inextricably linked to family relationships and roles" (Bello et al., 2021). This indicates that a specific characteristic of the sector and socio economic and socio demographic factors can influence the decision to consider entrepreneurial activity.

For instance, Egboduku, Sennuga, and Okpala (2021) observed that a higher level of income earned by an individual in an household may enhance other individual's probability of considering agripreneurship, as this provides capital for starting the business. In recent years, studies (Bello et al., 2021; Egboduku et al., 2021) have shown that the need to gain additional sources of money or supplement formal income has been associated with larger households rather than smaller ones. Factors such as culture have been reported to influence individuals' entrepreneurship intentions.

Studies which employed ECA have shown that individuals who possessed high academic qualification are often able to manage sustainable and profitable businesses. This finding is attributed to the fact that individuals with higher academic qualifications tend to have better business management and problem-solving skills as compared to those with low academic qualification or uneducated (Ezeh & Juniadu, 2019). Study by Inegbedion and Islam (2021)highlights that high levels of academic knowledge often brings about greater skills for the youths when they set to establish their business. In the same vein, Nlerum and Babatunde (2019) noted that the the previous entrepreneurial experience often enhances the possibility of becoming an entrepreneur. In addition, this knowledge allows the entrepreneur to avoid costly mistakes.

Perceptions is vital in the interest of the youths towards agriculture as a career. Following (Egboduku et al., 2021), a youth decide to venture into an agricultural business if it is more profitable than other alternatives. The literature also showed that individuals whose parents are business owners often become a better entrepreneur due to the fact that their parents support them and are their role models (Ezeh & Juniadu, 2019). In this study, through the ECA, the researcher investigated individual youth's economic and socio-cultural perceptions of agriculture as a career.

3.13 Data analytics

All collected raw data was prepared before analysis through data coding, entry, editing, and transformation. Administered and filled questionnaires were corded by assigning a numerical value to each response. Microsoft Excel software was used to capture the data. This included adequately coding the responses received from the respondents and entering the data into SPSS (Version 28). The coding of the answers was necessary for the efficient analysis of the data. The coding was supported by using coloured pencils before a digital coding was done in Ms-Excel. Thereafter, the data was exported to SPSS and an analysis was carried out. In analysing the data, section A, which contains the respondents' biodata, was analysed using descriptive statistics. Section B of the questionnaire comprises item statements to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis using the chi-square test of independence.

3.14 Ethical considerations

As a core requirement of scientific research, this study adhered to all scientific principles and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's ethical principles. In this regard, ethical approval was acquired from the Ethics committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To guarantee human dignity, the researcher requested all the respondents to provide informed consent and allow them to decide whether to take part in the study. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that respondents' private information is not disclosed.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to achieve the objectives of this study. It discusses the sampling techniques employed, data collection process, as well as other relevant aspects of research methodology this study employed. The next chapter presents the data analysis and the results.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the data collection from the three uMfolozi TVET campuses, namely Nkandla, Bhambanana and eShowe TVET Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter mainly sets out analysis of the findings of data collected and given based on the research problem statement and the research questions which were outlined in the fist chapter of this document. The questionnaire of this study were designed with close-ended questions which addressed the demographic information of responded at the start. The main data were collected using questionnaire with learners and has been analyse. A sample size of 140 was selected and 140 questionnaires were given to the participants. All the questionnaires were returned, thus a response rate of 100%.

In the preceding chapter, the methodology the researcher employed to achieve the study's objective was presented. This includes an explanation of the research design, approach and sampling techniques that were used to select the participants. In the chapter, the method of analysis was also presented. This chapter presents an analysis of the data and describes the various tests the researcher carried out. The discussion of the findings aligns with the research objectives and is presented in the next chapter (Chapter 5). The data collection tool (questionnaire) was designed in alignment with the construct of the conceptual frameworks.

As indicated in the introductory chapter (chapter 1), the objectives of the study were to investigate perceptions of youth towards agriculture as a career. This has led to the following research questions:

i. What are the government initiatives to attract youth towards agriculture?
ii. What is the influence of career guidance on adopting agriculture as a career?
iii. What are learner's perceptions on the economic opportunities of the agricultural industry?

4.1.1 **Government policies, initiatives, and interventions**

Moolla (2024), reported that South African history has shown that a united and committed young people can change the economy of the country. The young people of 1976 join forces under a very painful fortune to fight for freedom and over the years that has paid the supreme sacrifice to ensure that we live in a democratic country. Youth are being being encourage to

become agents of change in their community in which they live to assist the country to defeat the triple crisis of high unemployment rate, poverty and inequality. Despite the nation's best attempt to deal with these challenges constituted by apartheid have worsened following the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the July 2021 unrest and the destructive floods in most of the areas of our country. This has left million and millions of youth without jobs and capacity building to young people being the greatest challenge. The unemployment rate of young people has reached the horrifying levels in South Africa. Unlike the youth of 1976, the youth of today's have the democratic and caring government who understand their needs and which to see them being the better people in the future.

The government has introduced several programs and interventions to deal with youth unemployment, learnerships, internships, capacity building, and entrepreneurial youth support through Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme. These empowerment programmes are providing the essential support to youths and prepare them to face the societal challenges. The Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme has assisted the youth with dignity and hope to reach their dreams. More than 1 000 000 youths are benefiting from the programme. These developments assist the youth to acquire the necessary work experience and serve as a necessary tool until the private firm create employment for young people. Government's Employment Tax Incentive encourages private sector to employ more youth. The government also introduced social employment initiatives, which attracts applicants into employment opportunities that support local needs like community safety, urban farming, soup kitchen, early childhood development, gender-based violence (GBV), waste management to create safer and lovely public places (Moolla, 2024:1-2)

All these social employment programmes are managed by community-based organisations across the country and are being funded by Social Employment Fund. The South African government has addressed the need of skills shortage and unemployment of young people by ensuring that young people gain work experience through government graduate internship and learnership programmes. The National Youth Services has been re-established to assist youth with opportunities to undertake work that assist youth with technical skills, work experience and self-confidence. Currently, over 4 800 000 youths have registered on SAYouth.mobi, an online platform for South African youth to access learning opportunities (Moolla, 2024:1-2).

4.2 Response rate

As described in the preceding chapter, the research sample size for this study was selected in conformity with Krejcie and Morgan 1971 sampling table. The target population for this study included the 210 students from the three campuses (Nkandla, Bhambanana and eShowe) of uMfolozi TVET. From this population, a sample size of 140 was selected and 140 questionnaires were given to the participants. All the questionnaires were returned, thus a response rate of 100%.

4.3 Reliability

The reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha test. The test was considered vital as it enables the researcher to determine whether the items in a group are closely related and can reliably be assumed to measure the same underlying construct. Following Nayak and Singh (2021), a Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0.7 implies high reliability. This further implies that the closer the value to 1, the higher the reliability and the higher the chance to obtain high internal consistency. The reliability and consistency for the items in each questionnaire section were determined through SPSS. The results are shown in Appendix B.

4.4 Normality test (distribution of the data)

As noted by Nayak and Singh (2021); Vickers (2005), prior to any analysis of a data set it is important to determine whether such data follows a normal distribution in a process known as a normality test. While it is vital to determine the normality of a data set, past studies show that most analyses are carried out with the assumption that the data follow a normal distribution. As observed in the study by (Nayak & Singh, 2021), data are said to follow a normal distribution when both the Shapiro & Wilk and Kolmogorov test yield a significant value greater than 0.05. However, if the significant value obtained is less than 0.05, then such data is considered non-normally distributed data. For this study, normality was assessed, and the following hypothesis were used

Ho: Variable being tested follow a normal distribution

H1: Variable tested do not follow a normal distribution

Based on the result obtained from the test (See appendix c), the results reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the data do not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, the researcher employed a non-parametric test, or specifically chi-square test.

4.5 Demographic factors

In this section, the descriptive statistics of the data is presented. This includes gender, age, race, education level and place of domicile.

Table 4.1 indicate the targeted sample size and the actual participants. The total number of the sample size was 140 and all the questionnaires were returned, thus a response rate of 100%.

Table 4.1: sample size

Name of the TVET College	**Targeted**	**Actual**
	Learners	**Learners**
Bhambanana	47	47
eShowe	47	47
Nkandla	46	46
Total	**140**	**140**

4.5.1 Gender Profile

South Africa's transition to democracy has play a vital role in addressing gender inequality. Gender differences is critical in career choices, with perceived subject appropriateness or gender stereotype affecting career choice(Meintjies et al, 2023. In this study, participants were asked to indicate their gender. Results (Figure 4.1) obtained showed that 44.3% of the participants were male while the remaining percentage (55.7%) constitutes female participants.

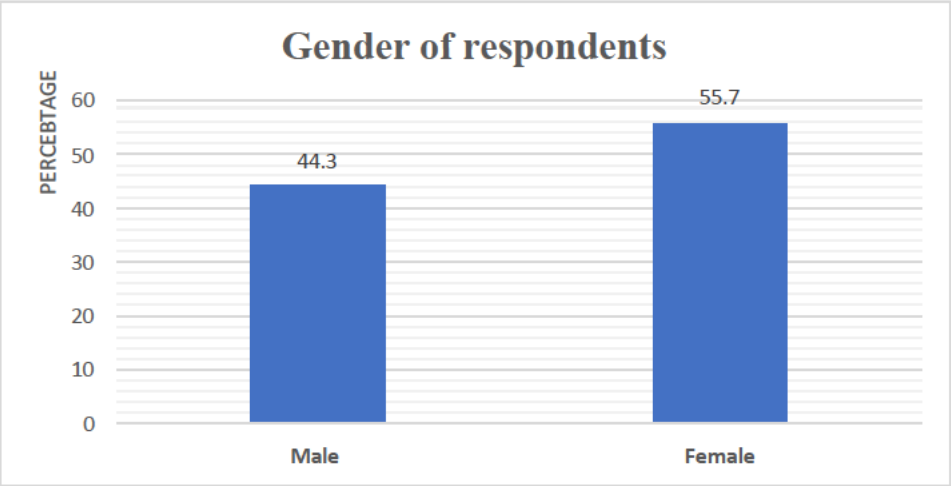

Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents

Age

Participants of this study were classified according to the age range; Age18-25, 26-35, 36-45, and 46 and above. As shown in figure 4.2, 58.6% are within age 18-25, 39.3% were within age 26-35, 1.4% were between age 36-45 and only 0.7% of the participants were within age 46 and above.

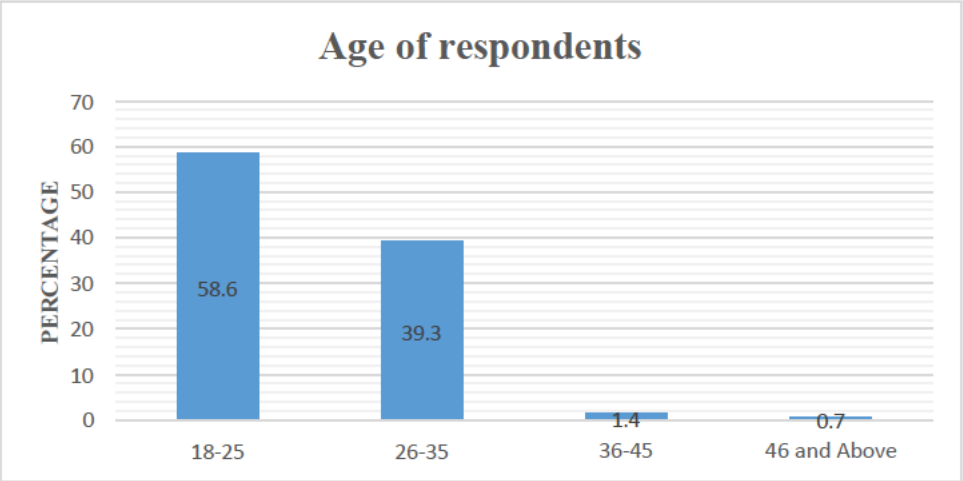

Figure 4.2: Age distribution of respondents

4.5.2 Racial grouping of the participants

The study site for this study was Northern KwaZulu-Natal Province. This province is mainly dominated by Africans followed by Indians a an ethnic group. As shown in figure 4.3, all the participants for this study belong to the African ethnic group.

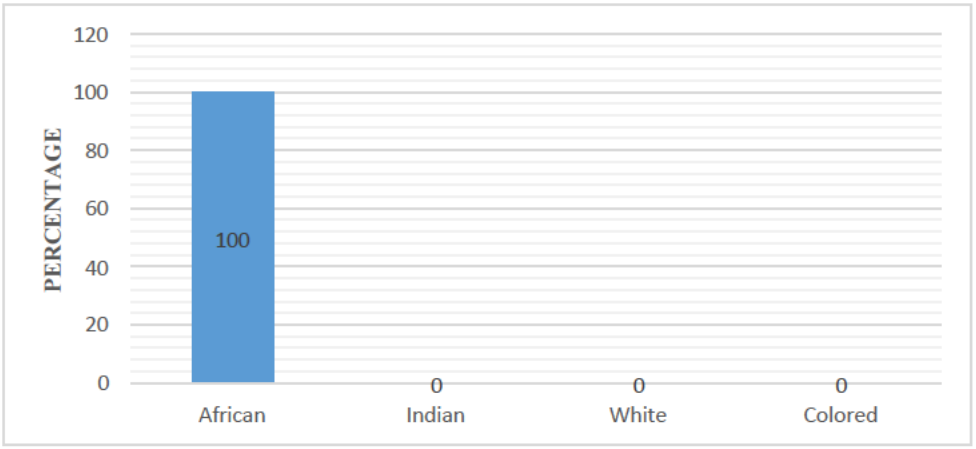

Figure 4.3: Racial distribution of respondents

4.5.3 Educational level

In this study, the majority (97.7%) of the participants possessed higher certificate qualification (figure 4.4) while only 2% possessed diploma qualification.

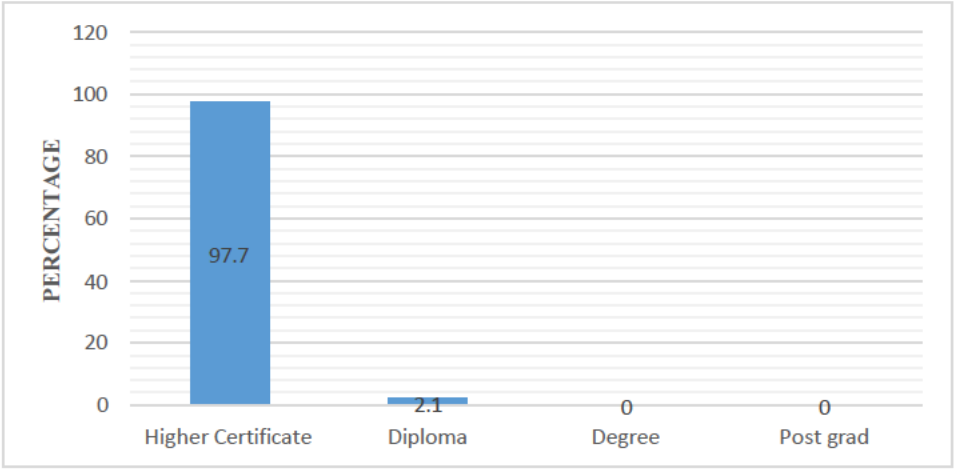

Figure 4.4: Participant's qualification

4.5.4 Place of domicile

In this study, majority (92%) of the participants reside in rural area with a small percentage residing in peri-urban and urban areas, as shown in figure 4.5.

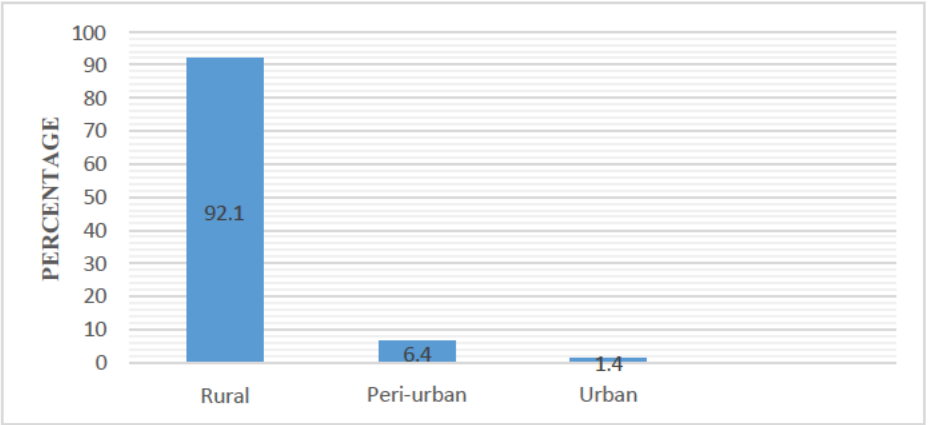

Figure 4.5: Participant's place of domicile

4.6 Constructs used in this study

The constructs used in this study were individual perception, economic perception and socio-cultural perception. Respondents were asked questions around these constructs and this in turn offered the researcher a clear insight.

4.6.1 Individual perception.

This construct was used to understand how youth perceived agriculture as a career. Seven items were used:

- My role model (father, uncle, aunt, etc.) has a successful Agric business
- Agriculture was one of my favourite subjects in high school
- Agriculture was an acceptable way of life
- Knowledge of agriculture in high school stimulated my interest to pick a career in agriculture
- I think I would be able to get a job in agriculture
- I can meet the laborious requirements of an agripreneurship
- I am able to develop a success agricultural business

Results obtained are presented as follows

- **Role model**: Results showed a higher percentage (76.5%) of the students have a relative who has succeeded in an agricultural business (figure 4.6).

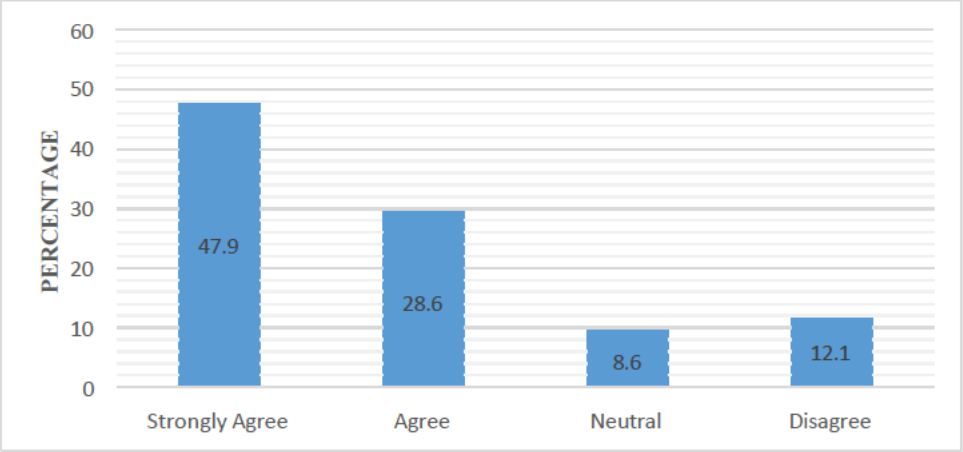

Figure 4.6: Role model

- **Favourite subject**: Results obtained showed that majority (97.9%) of the participants felt that agriculture was their favourite subject in high school as shown in figure 4.7.

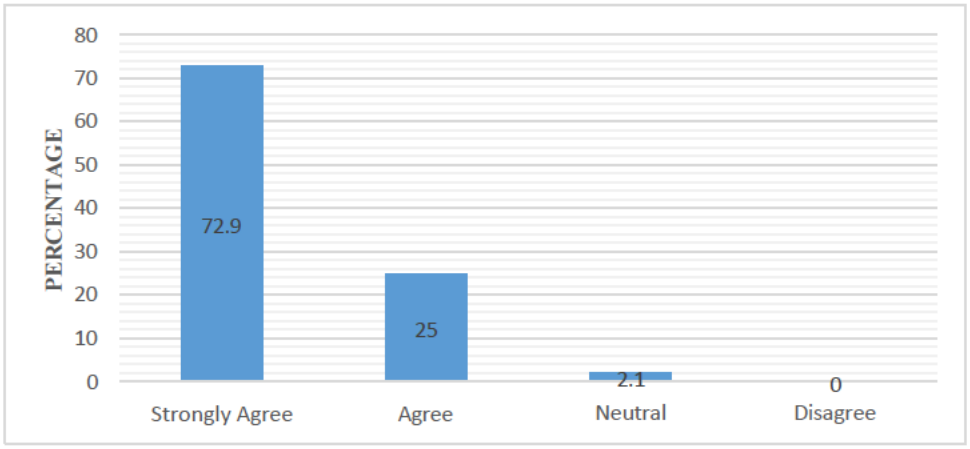

Figure 4.7: Agriculture as favourite subject

- **Acceptable way of life:** As shown in figure 4.8, a higher percentage (98.5%) of the respondents considered that agriculture is an acceptable way of life to them.

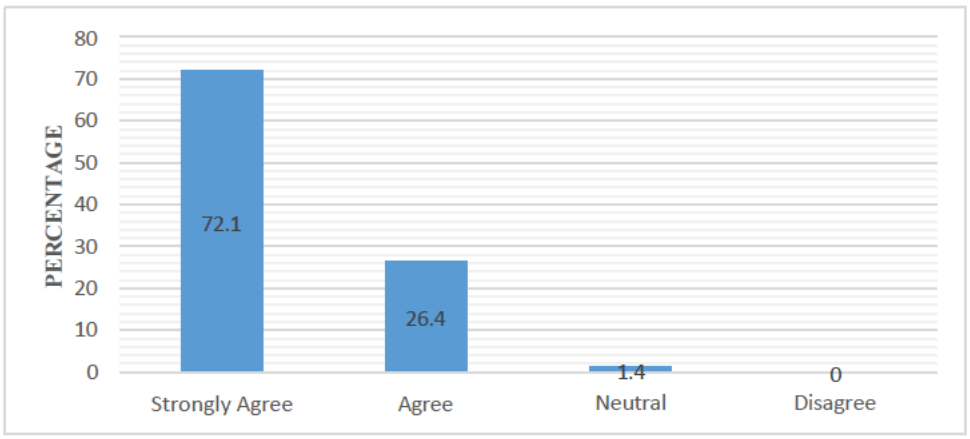

Figure 4.8: Agriculture is an acceptable way of life

- **Knowledge of agriculture stimulated my interest:** Respondent were asked if the knowledge gained from high school stimulated their interest. Results (Figure 4.9) obtained showed that majority admitted that this knowledge stimulated their interest.

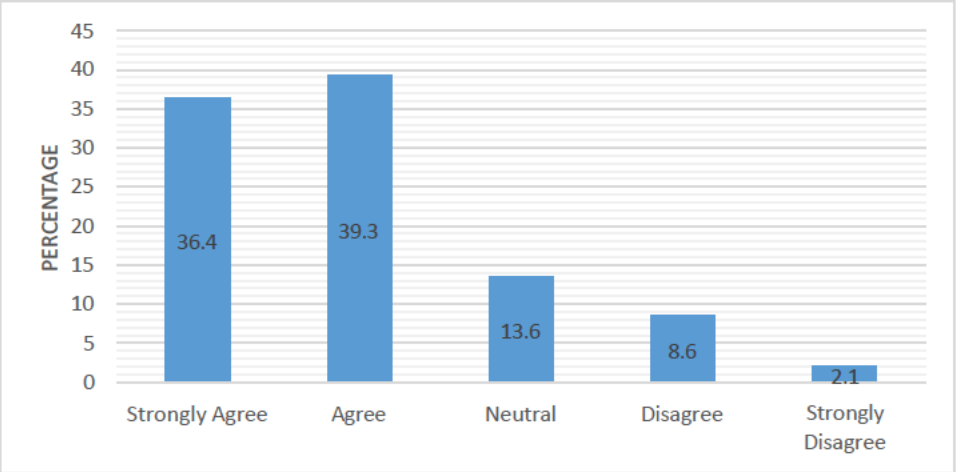

Figure 4.9: Knowledge of agriculture

- **I think I will be able to get a job in agriculture.** As shown in figure 4.10, a higher percentage (76.4%) of the respondents think they will get a job in agriculture

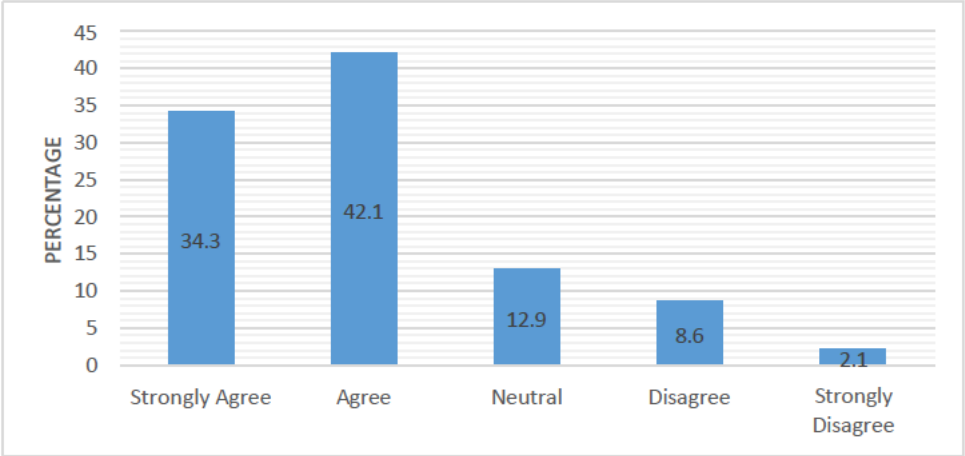

Figure 4.10: Possibility of getting a job in agriculture

- **Laborious requirements:** As shown in Figure 4.11, a higher percentage of the respondents admitted they can meet the laborious requirements of agripreneurships

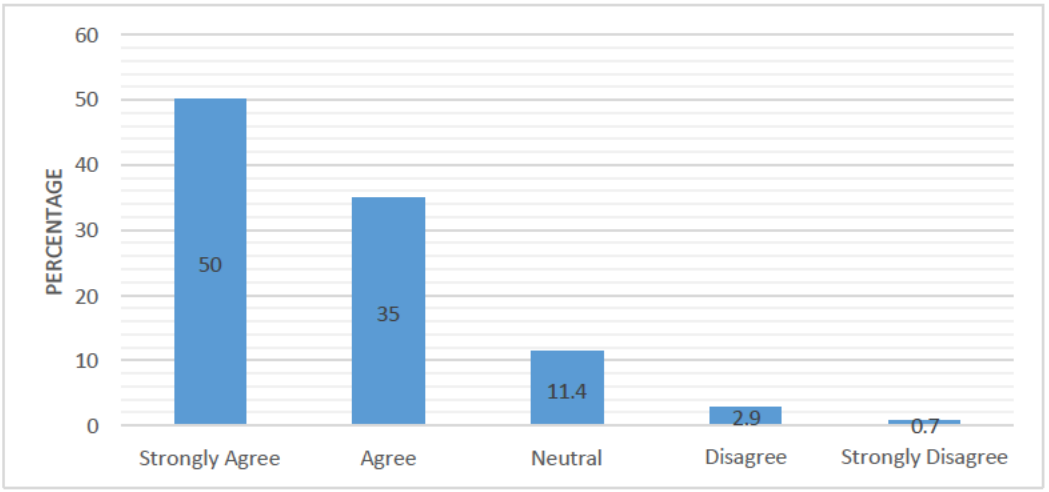

Figure 4.11: Requirements of agripreneurships

- **I am able to develop a successful agricultural business:** Respondents were asked if they are capable of starting a successful agricultural business. Results showed that a higher percentage (99.3%) of the students considered that they are able to start a successful agricultural business as shown in figure 4.12.

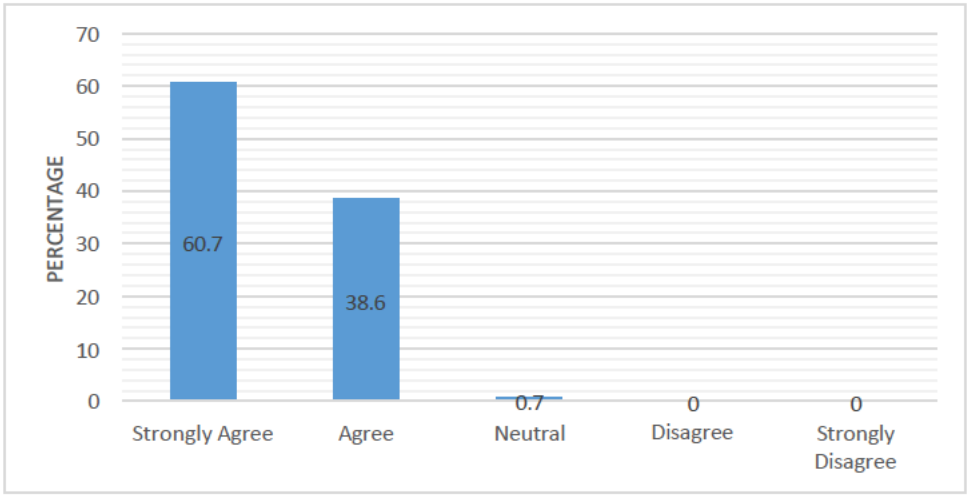

Figure 4.12: Ability to start an agricultural business

4.6.2 Economic perception

In this study, the construct was used to understand youth's economic perception of agriculture as a career. Five items were used for this construct. These are listed as follows:

- Agricultural remuneration is attractive
- Farming is a business
- Agriculture is profitable business
- There are opportunities for promotion in agriculture

- Agriculture creates employment

Results obtained are as follows:

- **Agricultural remuneration**: Respondents were asked questions around agricultural remuneration. Results (Figure 4.13) received showed that a higher percentage (91.5%) of the students felt that agricultural remuneration is attractive.

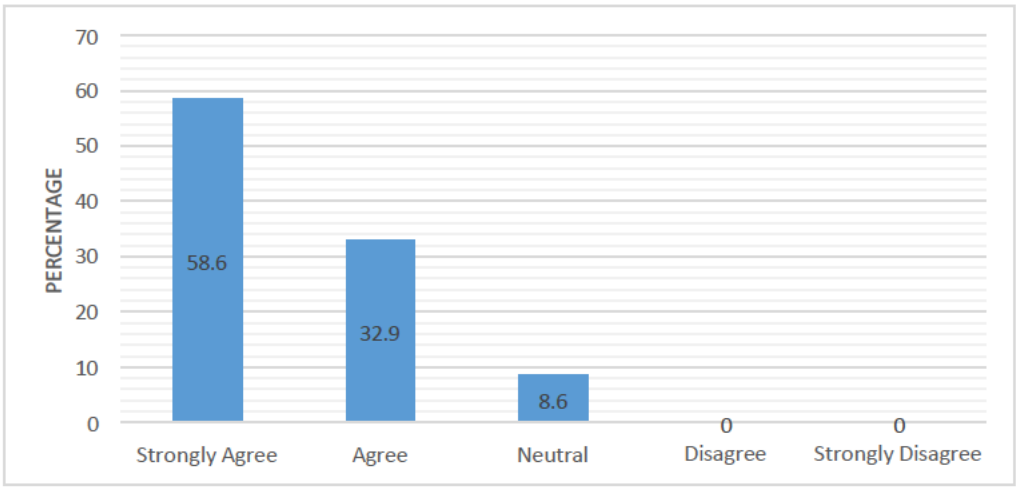

Figure 4.13: Agricultural remuneration

- **Farming is a business:** Results obtained showed that majority of the participants perceived farming as a business (Figure 4.14).

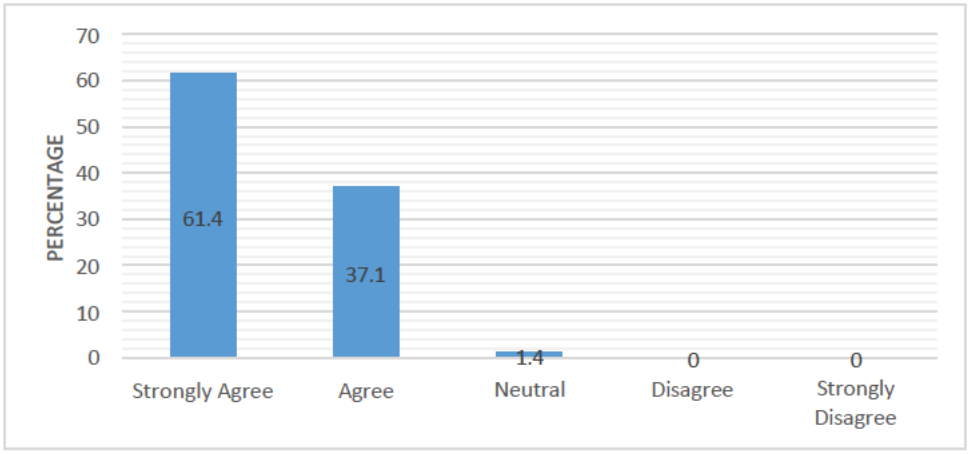

Figure 4.14: Faming is a business

- **Agriculture is a profitable business:** As shown in figure 4.15, a higher percentage of the respondent perceived agriculture to be a profitable business

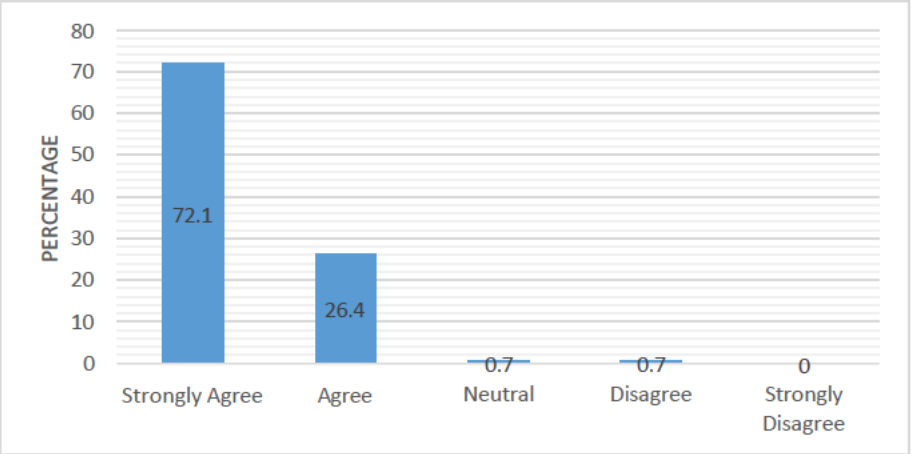

Figure 4.15: Agriculture is a profitable business

- **Opportunities for promotion in agriculture.** In this study, majority of the respondents admitted there are opportunities for promotion in agriculture, figure 4.16:

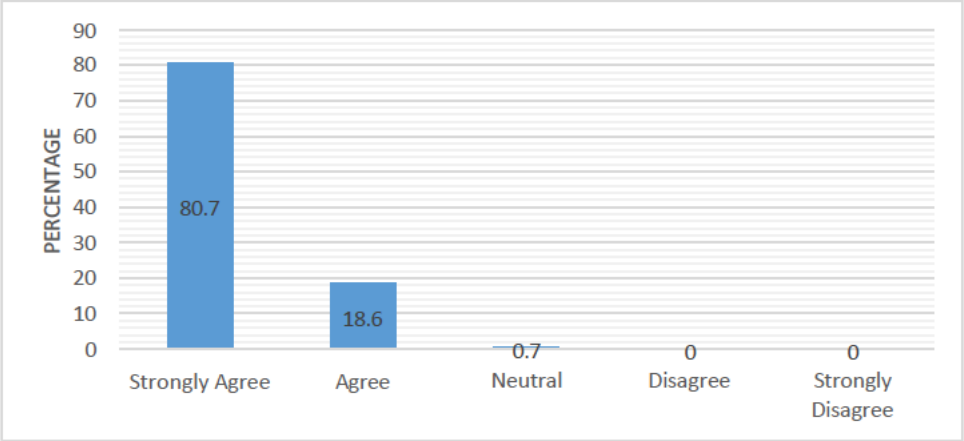

Figure 4.16: Opportunity for promotion in agriculture

- **Agriculture creates employment:** As shown in figure 4.17, respondents perceived that agriculture creates employment.

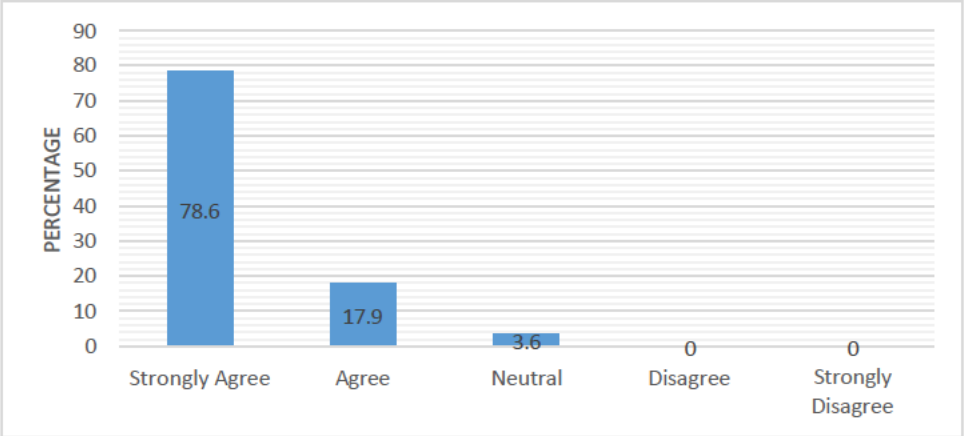

Figure 4.17: Employability

4.6.3 Socio-cultural perception

In this study, the construct was used to understand youth's socio-cultural perception of agriculture as a career. Three items were used for this construct. These are listed as follows:

- Farming is not a clean job
- Farming is only suitable for old people
- Agriculture professions are admirable

Results obtained are as follows

- **Farming as a clean job.** Respondents were asked to indicate whether they perceived farming as a clean job or not. Result obtained showed that the majority of the respondents considered that farming is not a clean job as shown in figure 4.18.

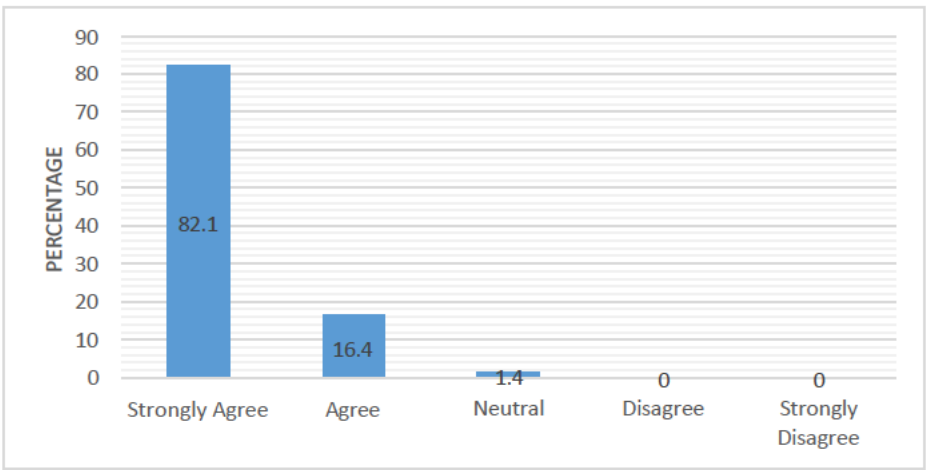

Figure 4.18: Farming is not a clean job

- **Farming is only suitable for old people:** Results (Figure 4.19) obtained showed that majority of the respondents disagreed that farming is only suitable for old people.

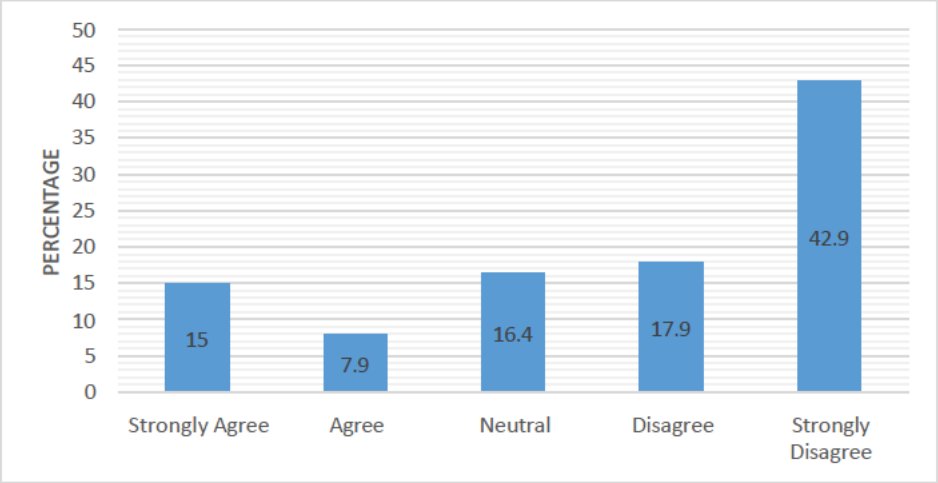

Figure 4.19: Farming is only suitable for old people

- **Agriculture professions are admirable:** Results obtained (Figure 4.20) showed that the majority of the respondents disagreed that the agricultural profession is admirable.

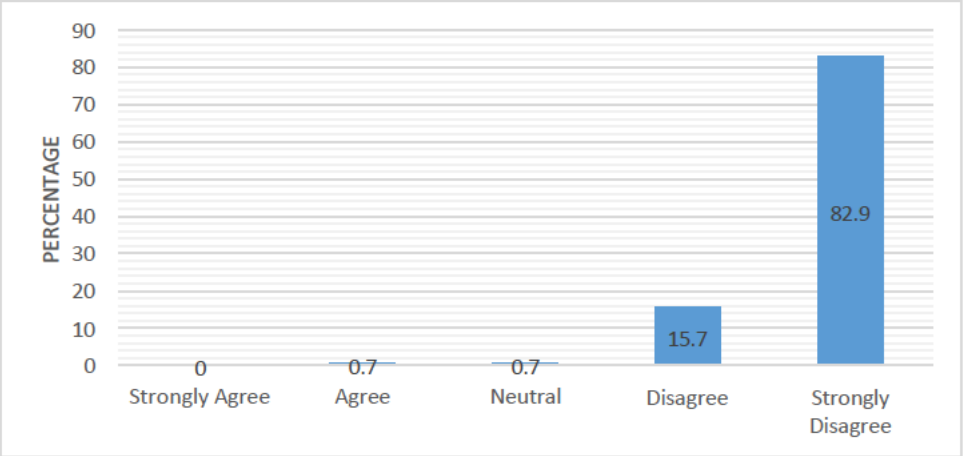

Figure 4.20: Agriculture professions are admirable

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the responses of the participants were presented. A 100% response rate was achieved; however, most participants were females. All of the participants were African and have completed a higher certificate qualification. They were mostly between 18-25 years of age, and hence may be classified as youths. Descriptive statistics in the form of graphs were used to illustrate the results. It is alarming to see how young people are not interested in farming activities, which is why they not actively participating in agriculture or choosing agriculture as the career of choice. In any areas of development, youth are more interest in innovative methods and

if given the appropriate training in new farming innovation , young people would be able to implement these innovative technologies and can also be able to teach older farmers in the community. Majority of youth living in urban areas are educated and have access to facilities like internet that assist young people to search information regarding any available programs or opportunities for the youth. On other hand, rural youth are not engaged in any development process. This is due to the fact that there is no network for youth organisations, lack of capacity building and lack of departmental national programs for the youth residing in rural areas(Gaadi, 2022).

Recommendation

- Government has pronounced various youth development programs to assist young people. These programs are gender inclusion, even rural youth can submit their funding proposals. These programs include learnerships, internships, capacity building, and entrepreneurial youth support through Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme(Gaadi, 2022).

- Government should established agricultural industry training opportunities such as drones, agricultural marketing apps etc, that target young people from rural areas.

The next chapter present the discussion of this result with regards to the research objectives.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discusses the findings and the analysis of the data that was collected in this study in relation to the objectives of the study as well as how they align with previous research on youths' perception of the agriculture industry in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The collected data was analysed descriptively and the statistics obtained were presented in the form of graphs of percentages. This chapter presents the implications of the results obtained.

5.2 Aligning of results with the objectives of this study

The following are the research objectives of this study:

i. What are the government initiatives to attract youth towards agriculture?

ii. What is the influence of career guidance on adopting agriculture as a career?

iii. What are learner's perceptions on the economic opportunities of the agricultural industry?

Nthoesane and Teele (2024) argued that the attributes related to socio-economic dimensions of the society that has influence on individual's judgment and approach about a particular matter is critical. Societal norms inspire necessary factors community stem and promote attitudes of young people towards farming both negative and positive. One need to understand the relationship of societal factors that affect young people's perceptions toward choosing farming a a career. Having full understanding of these factors will assist in developing strategies which are aimed at attractive and capacitating the youth in the farming industry. The following factors influence young people's attitudes towards agriculture as a career:

1. **Perceptions concerning Agriculture Industry:** farming is perceived as a career for elderly people, illiterate and for rural individuals. Many young people have moved away from rural areas to search for better job opportunities in big towns (FANRPAN, 2012;1-3)
2. **Capacity building opportunities:** studies showed that implementing capacity building programmes which are aimed at increasing the knowledge about agriculture can

influence the youth to change their attitudes about agriculture. There is an urgent need to increase awareness about agricultural opportunities available for agriculture industry to attract more youths (FANRPAN, 2012;1-3).

5.3 Factors that influence youths' perception towards agriculture

According to Fig. 4.4 in the previous section, most of the respondents (92.1%) reside in rural areas, while 6.4% and 1.4% reside in peri-urban and urban areas, respectively. In a country like South Africa, where unemployment is high, agriculture may have a symbolic meaning for the rural youths in terms of job creation and gainful engagements. The quest to get gainfully engaged is a pre-occupation of most working-age South Africans and this might inform their decision either to remain in rural areas of seeking better opportunities in the cities. The inclusion and participation of rural youths in agriculture could play a role in discouraging rural-urban migration, which would normally strain already limited resources in most South African cities. Various agricultural activities could help provide sustenance and income for rural families. This would go a long way to reduce crime in rural communities, those in Pietermaritzburg where unemployment is relatively high and there is a significant income gap between the rich and poor residents (Meinzen-Dick, Quisumbing et al. 2019), as the youths would have a sense of purpose and engage productively to make the society a better place. Pietermaritzburg has a population of 744 000 majority of which are black (73.5%) and constitutes the most unemployed. The national unemployment rate in South Africa could be as high as 37.2% (Burger and Fourie 2019), while the unemployment rate among black South Africans could even be higher (Ranchhod and Daniels 2021). A variety of factors, including lack of economic opportunities in historically disadvantaged communities, discrimination in the workplace as well as lack of access to education and job training, is responsible for this disparity. The government of South Africa has implemented a number of interventions to ameliorate these challenges but the progress has been sluggish. Given, the enormous plight faced by black South Africans in terms of unemployment, this research is greatly justified.

A study by (Metelerkamp, Drimie et al. 2019), in two South African Provinces (KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape) found mixed youth reactions to careers in agriculture, despite interest in agriculture-related professions. The factors influencing youth reaction towards agriculture, as a career, are researched extensively in this study and they are enumerated below.

5.3.1 Gender

According to Figure 4.1, 55.7% and 44.3% of the respondents were female and male, respectively. The higher number of female respondents might not indicate that females from the region are keener on agriculture than the males but simply a function of the demographics of the region and a combination of factors at play during the period of the survey. Agricultural industry is considered male-dominated due to the perceived physical activities involved (Hulls et al. 2022). However, continuous automation and other technological improvements in agriculture as well as awareness campaigns seem to attract more females to the sector in recent times (Khatri-Chhetri, Regmi et al. 2020). The inclusion and participation of females in the agricultural sector is vital as they form an important proportion of the unemployed in South Africa (Wilkinson 2019). Further, gainful engagements by females could go a long way to complement the various women-empowerment initiatives advocated and implemented by the South African government and other role-players. Gender-based Violence and Femicide as well as related abusive crimes could take a massive downturn if unemployed females are incorporated gainfully in the sector. As a successor to the Millennial Development Goal of the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have various components that deal with reduction/ elimination of gender inequality, decent jobs and growth as well as eradication of unpaid unemployment, which mostly affects women. Inclusion and participation of women in the agricultural sector will further increase the successful attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to women, in an inclusive way that leaves no one behind. Involvement of black women, who constitute 46.9% of South African unemployed (Maluleke 2019), in agriculture will also help in women empowerment.

5.3.2 Age

The respondents had various age ranges. Figure 4.2 reveals that 58.6%, 39.3%, 1.4% and 0.7% had the age range 18–25, 26-35, 36-45 and 46 & above, respectively. As could be seen from the graph, 58.6% of the respondents have ages between 18 and 25 years, which falls within the age group that accounts for 67% of South African unemployed. The opinions of the respondents from this research supports the comment by Metelerkamp, Drimie et al. (2019), who argued that agriculture could play a vital role in the lives of youths in South Africa. The Covid-19 pandemic added to the woes of unemployment in the country (Posel, Oyenubi et al. 2021) and many have contributed to the realisation of the importance of self-employment. During the pandemic and thereafter, a lot of employers downsized and a sizable proportion of currently employed people do not have job security. Investment and engagement of youths in agriculture

could help unleash their entrepreneurial potential, thus making them self-sufficient and place them in a position to employ others, which will greatly alleviate poverty and increase life expectancy in the area of operation.

5.3.3 Race

According to Figure 4.3, 100% of the responded are black South Africans. While this outcome could result from the demographics of the surveyed responded, the data collected could significantly reveal the perception of agriculture among working-age people that reside in the rural areas of South Africa as the black racial group constitutes the majority of the unemployed in South Africa (Watermeyer 2019). This could indicate a potential bias in the sample selection, as it is possible that the survey only targeted black South Africans, or that other racial groups were underrepresented in the survey.

The fact that black South Africans constitute the majority of the unemployed in the country is also mentioned, which suggests that the perception of agriculture among this group may be particularly important to understand. The reference to the "discriminatory apartheid regime" implies that there may be historical injustices that have contributed to the current socioeconomic situation of black South Africans (Marumo and Sebolaaneng 2019) and that addressing these injustices may be necessary in order to empower this group and improve their access to employment and economic opportunities. It is also important to note that the data collected from this survey may only be representative of the rural area of South Africa, and may not be generalisable to the entire country or other regions.

5.3.4 Education level

This passage discusses the results of a survey on the education level of respondents working in the agriculture industry. As shown in Figure 4.4, majority of respondents (97.7%) possessed a Higher Certificate Qualification, while the remaining respondents possessed a Diploma Qualification. The passage notes that education level can have a significant impact on a career in agriculture. Having a higher level of education such as a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in agriculture or related fields can open up more advanced and higher-paying job opportunities in the industry, such as management positions or roles in research and development. Additionally, formal education can provide individuals with a deeper understanding of the technical and scientific aspects of agriculture, which can be beneficial in a variety of roles. However, the passage also notes that it is possible to have a successful career in agriculture without a higher

education through on-the-job training and experience, which could help improve job motivation and reduce turnover in the industry (Jilito and Wedajo 2021).

5.3.5 Place of domicile

Figure 4.5 reveals that majority of the respondents (92.1%) reside in rural areas. Perception of rural dwellers towards agriculture could vary greatly depending on factors such as level of education, access to resources and technology as well as economic conditions. Many rural dwellers view agriculture as a mean to provide food and livelihood to their families and communities and see agriculture as a source of pride or tradition (Snyder, Sulle et al. 2020). Some rural dwellers may also view agriculture as a means of preserving the environment and maintaining a sustainable way of life. It is, therefore, not surprising that 98.5% of the respondents view agriculture as an acceptable way of life, 85% demonstrated readiness to cope with the laborious requirements and 99.3% believe they are able to develop successful agricultural businesses. People who live in rural areas may have more direct exposure to agriculture, as they may live on or near farms, see crops growing in the fields, and interact with farmers on a regular basis. This exposure can lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the industry and the role it plays in society. On the other hand, people who live in urban areas may have less direct exposure to agriculture and perhaps are less likely to have a personal connection to the industry. They may have less understanding of the industry and may be less likely to have interest in it. However, this doesn't mean that people in urban areas are not interested in agriculture and rural areas. They may have an interest in the food they eat and the environmental impact of agriculture.

5.4 Individual perception

A number of factors, including role model, remuneration, personal experiences, education, socio-economic status, amongst others; can affect individual’s perception of agriculture. Some of these are discussed below.

5.4.1 Role models

The influence of role models on the career choices and paths of young people is significant (Magagula and Tsvakirai 2020), particularly when it comes to the agricultural industry. According to figure 4.6, 76.5% of respondents have role models with successful agricultural businesses, and 92.1% of these respondents are from rural areas. These role models are likely to be family or community members who are farmers. This is important because role models can inspire and encourage young people to pursue careers in agriculture by showing them the

potential for success and fulfilment in the industry. They can also provide guidance and mentorship to help young people navigate the industry and develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed (Magagula and Tsvakirai 2020). Additionally, role models can help to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about agriculture and promote the importance and value of the industry to young people.

5.4.2 Agriculture as a favourite subject in high school

As could be seen from Fig. 4.7, 97.9% of the respondents indicated that agriculture was their favourite subject in high school. This data was expected since most respondents are from rural areas and likely have exposure to various forms of agricultural practices. The subjects offered in school can influence a person's career choice. Offering agriculture, as a subject, can expose a child to various aspects of the agricultural sector. In addition, agriculture as a career requires specific skills. Therefore, offering agriculture in school could affect the ability of a child to enter the agriculture industry. Offering agriculture in school could can have a direct impact on a child's decision to choose agriculture as a career. For example:

- Exposure: School subjects can introduce students to different fields and careers they may not have otherwise considered. For instance, a student who takes a class in agriculture may become interested in pursuing a career in animal science.
- Skills and knowledge: The classes students take in school can help them develop specific skills and knowledge that are needed for certain careers. For example, a student who takes an agriculture class may develop strong animal husbandry skills that could be useful in a career in the agriculture sector.
- Educational requirements: Some careers require specific educational backgrounds or certifications. For instance, a career in veterinary medicine requires some level of proficiency in Life Sciences as well as Physical Sciences.
- Talents and interests: Youths may develop talents and interests in certain subjects in school which could lead them to certain careers. For example, a student who excels in farming may want to pursue a career in the agriculture industry.

It is worth noting that the subjects offered in school may not be the only factor that influences a youth's career choice. Personal experiences, family background, and community can also play a role in shaping their career aspirations.

5.4.3 Agriculture as an acceptable way of life

As shown in Figure 4.8, 98% of the respondents viewed agriculture as an acceptable way of life. Agriculture is a vital aspect of human civilisation, as it provides food and income for millions of households around the world. It also plays an important role in rural development, food production and preserving local ecosystems (Sarker, Wu et al. 2019).

However, certain forms of intensive industrial agriculture, such as monoculture, heavy use of pesticides and fertilisers and overuse of land, can have negative environmental impacts such as soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, water pollution and climate change. Additionally, industrial agriculture can lead to social issues such as displacement of local communities, exploitation of workers, and loss of traditional farming practices (Hasan, Shahriar et al. 2019).

On the other hand, sustainable and responsible agriculture, such as organic farming, agroforestry and permaculture, can protect and enhance the natural resources that support farming and promote social and economic well-being of farmers, rural communities and society as a whole (Gowda, Steiner et al. 2018).

Therefore, agriculture can be seen as an acceptable way of life when it is done in a sustainable and responsible way that balances the needs of people and the environment. This can ensure long-term food security, promote sustainable development, reduce environmental impact and increase productivity (Gaffney, Bing et al. 2019).

5.4.4 Knowledge of agriculture in high school stimulated my interest

According to Figure 4.9, 76.4% of the respondents said that the knowledge of agriculture, as a subject in high school, stimulated their desire to pursue careers in the field of agriculture.

5.4.5 The prospects of getting a job in the agriculture sector

Figure 4.10 shows that 76.4% of the respondents believe they can secure employment in the agriculture industry. The job prospects in the agricultural sector can vary depending on the specific field and location. In general, the demand for jobs in the agricultural sector is expected to grow in the coming years due to an increasing global population and a need for sustainable food production. Some specific fields with potential for growth include precision agriculture, organic farming and biotechnology (Kumar and Ilango 2018, Dhiman 2020, Hussain, Shi et al. 2020).

In precision agriculture, farmers use technology such as GPS and sensors to gather data and make more informed decisions about planting and crop management. This field is expected to grow as farmers look for ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Organic farming is also becoming increasingly popular as consumers demand healthier and more sustainable food options. The organic agriculture market is expected to grow at a steady rate in the coming years, leading to increased demand for jobs in this field.

Biotechnology is another field with potential for growth in the agriculture sector. Advances in genetic engineering and other technologies are allowing for the development of new crop varieties that are more resistant to pests and diseases, as well as more tolerant to environmental stressors. This is expected to lead to increased demand for jobs in this field in the future.

5.4.6 Readiness to cope with the laborious requirements

Youths, like any other group of people, have varying levels of physical capability and stamina. However, with proper training and support, many youth are able to handle the labour-intensive requirements of agriculture. It is interesting to note, from Figure 4.11, that 85% of the respondents demonstrated the readiness to cope with the laborious requirements of agriculture, which may include tasks such as planting, harvesting and maintaining crops and livestock. Depending on the type of agriculture, these tasks may involve manual labour, such as using hand tools or operating machinery. It is important to note that agriculture can also be done with modern technologies and is less labour intensive, it can be done with precision agriculture and other forms of mechanisation (Rotz, Gravely et al. 2019). In addition to physical labour, agriculture also requires knowledge and skills in areas such as crop management, animal husbandry and business management. With proper training and education, youths can develop the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in agriculture. Overall, youth can handle the laborious requirements of agriculture with proper training, support and education and with this they can also bring in new ideas and innovations to the field.

5.4.7 Ability to run a successful agriculture business

According to Figure 4.12, over 99% of the respondents said they could build and run successful agricultural businesses. In addition to their optimism, the youths will need to consider several key factors that can contribute to the success of a youth-run agricultural business, including;

- Knowledge and experience: Having knowledge and experience in the field of agriculture is essential for running a successful agricultural business. This includes knowledge of farming techniques, crop management and market trends.
- Business management skills: As with any business, running a successful agricultural business requires strong business management skills such as financial management, marketing and customer service.
- Access to resources: Starting an agricultural business requires significant investment of time, effort and resources. Youths should seek resources such as mentorships, training and financing to help them navigate the challenges of starting and growing an agricultural business.
- Other requirements include networking, innovation and diversification.

Worth mentioning is that youths should also be aware of the legal requirements and regulations in their area regarding agriculture (van de Weerd and Ison 2019) and should take into account the environmental and social impact of their business.

5.5 Economic perception

Economic factors that could influence a youth's perception of agriculture include remuneration, profitability of agriculture sector, and opportunity for promotion, amongst others. These factors are discussed below:

5.5.1 Attractive remuneration

Figure 4.13 shows that 91.5% of the respondents believe they could get acceptable remuneration in the agriculture sector. Acceptable remuneration is key to attracting youths to the agricultural sector (Taib, Rahim et al. 2019). The agricultural sector can be a rewarding field for those with a passion for farming and a strong work ethic. However, the level of remuneration can vary depending on a number of factors such as the size of the farm, the type of crops or livestock being raised and the location of the farm.

In general, large-scale commercial farms tend to have higher revenues and may be able to offer higher salaries and benefits than smaller family-run farms. Additionally, farms that specialise in high-value crops such as fruits and vegetables or that have niche markets for organic or locally-sourced products, may also be able to offer higher compensation.

Worth noting is that the agricultural sector is a seasonal industry, meaning that the workload and compensation can vary greatly depending on the time of year. It is also physically

demanding work and farmers often work long hours, sometimes in extreme weather conditions. Remuneration in the sector can vary widely depending on the location, type of farm, and an individual's experience and qualifications.

The profitability of the agricultural sector can be affected by a number of factors such as weather conditions, diseases, pests and market prices (Zakirova, Klychova et al. 2020). All of these can be unpredictable and can have a big impact on remuneration.

5.5.2 Farming is a business

According to Figure 4.14, over 76.4% of the respondents believe that agriculture can be considered a business.

5.5.3 Profitability of agriculture business

According to Figure 4.15, over 98% of the respondents believe that agriculture is a profitable business and, indeed, agriculture can be a profitable business. Whether or not agriculture is a profitable business depends on many factors, such as the type of crop or livestock being raised, the location of the farm, the cost of inputs (e.g. seed, fertiliser, labour) and the price at which the products can be sold.

In general, large-scale commercial farming operations that focus on high-yield crops such as grains or industrial crops like cotton and soybeans can be quite profitable. However, small-scale or specialty farms that focus on niche markets such as organic produce or heritage breeds of livestock may face more challenges in terms of profitability.

Additionally, the profitability of an agricultural business can be impacted by external factors such as weather conditions, changes in government policies and fluctuations in global commodity prices. The global market for agricultural products and the government policies also play a major role in determining the profitability of agriculture (Giller, Delaune et al. 2021).

5.5.4 Opportunity for promotion in the agriculture sector

Figure 4.16 reveals that 99.3% of the respondents believe that there is opportunity for promotion in the agriculture sector. Employees want growth and development opportunities in any industry. They do not want to stay in a position for a long time. Offering job-related skills and training programs can attract and retain skilled, motivated employees, reducing turnover and encouraging innovation. Organisations can use this strategy to minimise high labour turnover as outlined by Al Mamun and Hasan (2017) and Islam et al. (2013). Training and up-

skilling employees within the organisation can also lead to the employees remaining in the organisation for the duration of the training program.

5.5.5 Agriculture as a source of employment

As shown in Figure 4.17, 96.5% of the respondents believe that agriculture can create employment. It can provide jobs for farmers, agricultural workers, and those involved in related industries such as food processing and distribution. In addition, the development of new technologies and farming methods can also create employment opportunities in research and development. Agriculture can provide employment in the following ways:

- Farming: Growing crops and raising livestock requires labour, so farmers and agricultural workers are employed to perform these tasks.
- Processing and distribution: Once crops and livestock are harvested, they need to be processed and packaged for distribution to consumers. This can create jobs in factories, warehouses, and transportation.
- Research and development: Advances in technology and farming methods can create jobs for scientists, engineers, and other professionals involved in researching and developing new technologies.

  Support services: Agriculture also requires various support services such as finance, insurance, marketing, and legal services, which can create jobs for professionals in these fields.
- Agri-Tourism: Many farmers are now diversifying into agri-tourism, where they open their farms to visitors as a way to supplement their income, this also creates jobs in the hospitality and tourism industry.

5.6 Socio-cultural perception

5.6.1 Cleanliness of agricultural jobs

According to Figure 4.18, majority (98.5%) of the respondents believe that agricultural jobs are not clean. It is possible that respondents have various approaches to the term ‘cleanliness’. In literal terms, being ‘clean’ could refer to the degree of operational neatness on the job. Based on physical neatness, modernised farming practices may reduce physical contact between the farmer and soil as well as other objects that might soil the farmer physically. Also, most tasks in large-scale agro-businesses are automated.

One can also view the term ‘cleanliness’ in terms of environmental sustainability. Farming can involve the use of fertilisers and pesticides, which can have negative impacts on the environment if not properly applied (Rathi, Kumar et al. 2021).

Certain farming practices, such as clear cutting and monoculture can lead to soil erosion. This can result in the loss of fertile land and can contribute to sedimentation in waterways. Disposal of animal wastes and application of agricultural chemicals can pollute waterways and lead to toxic algal blooms. Clear cutting and monoculture can also lead to the destruction of natural habitats for wildlife (Franklin, Macdonald et al. 2019). Nevertheless, there are also sustainable farming practices that can minimise these negative impacts and even have positive impacts on the environment. These include practices such as crop rotation, intercropping, agroforestry, conservation agriculture, integrated pest management and regenerative agriculture. These practices can help to conserve resources, protect the environment and promote biodiversity.

5.6.2 Agriculture as an occupation confined to older people

According to Figure 4.19, the respondents differed in their opinions on whether agriculture was only meant for old people as 15% strongly agreed, 7.9% agreed, 17.9 disagreed and 42.9% strongly disagreed.

Agriculture is not meant exclusively for old people. It is a profession that can be pursued by people of all ages and backgrounds. Agriculture is a vital industry that plays a crucial role in providing food and other resources for the population. It is also a profession that offers a variety of opportunities, from managing large farms to working in research and development of new agricultural technologies.

Additionally, modern agriculture industry is not limited to field work only, it also includes many other aspects such as data analytics, precision farming, logistics, biotechnology, and more (Kumar and Ilango 2018, Dhiman 2020, Hussain, Shi et al. 2020). These opportunities attract young people as well. It is important to note that, physical work can be demanding, however, there are many modern technologies available to make farming easier, such as tractors, irrigation systems, and other mechanised equipment. This means that people of all ages and physical abilities can participate in agriculture.

5.6.3 Attractiveness of agriculture as a profession?

It is surprising, according to Figure 4.20, that 98.6% of the respondents did not agree that agricultural professions are admirable. However, one would see, upon careful consideration,

that it is not completely accurate to say that all agriculture professions are not admirable. Agriculture plays a vital role in feeding the world's population and there are many individuals in the field who work hard to produce safe and nutritious food (Pawlak and Kołodziejczak 2020). They may also work to conserve and protect the environment. Many people find these careers to be rewarding and they make an important contribution to the society. There are many roles in the agriculture industry including farmers and ranchers and agribusiness professionals. Each of these roles has its own set of challenges and rewards.

5.7 Strategies to improve student enrolment in agriculture courses

Based on the outcomes of this research, a number of strategies can be adopted to improve student enrolment in agriculture programs. These strategies include but are not limited to the following:

- Partnering with local farms or agricultural businesses to provide internships or job opportunities for students.
- Incorporating hands-on, experiential learning opportunities in curricula.
- Highlighting the many career opportunities available in the field of agriculture, such as sustainable farming, research, and agribusiness management.
- Creating an engaging and interactive learning environment.
- Building a strong alumni network to help connect students with job opportunities and industry contacts.
- Creating a marketing strategy to promote the agricultural program to potential students.
- Providing opportunities for students to participate in relevant conferences and workshops.
- Creating a strong relationship with the local community and promoting the importance of agriculture.
- Offering online, distance or blended learning options to allow more people to access the program.
- Offering scholarships or financial aid for students interested in studying agriculture.

5.8 Mapping objectives to key findings

Table 5.1: Mapping objectives to the key findings

Objectives	Key findings
1. To identify factors that prevent youths towards adopting agriculture as a career	The key factors that might prevent youths from pursuing a career in agriculture are listed below; - Wrong perception that the agriculture industry does not provide clean jobs, - Wrong perception that agriculture professions are not admirable - Limited resources and/or lack of knowledge of available resources
2. To understand youth perceptions of adopting agriculture as a career choice	The following can be deduced from the findings of this study when it comes to youth perceptions of agriculture; - The agriculture sector can provide jobs to youths - Agriculture is an acceptable way of life - Role models can positively influence youths to pursue careers in agriculture - Youths are ready to put up with the laborious requirements of agriculture - Youths can run successful agriculture businesses.
3. To determine factors that influence student's choice of agriculture as a career choice	The following can be deduced from the findings of this study when it comes to determinants of a youth's choice to pursue agriculture as a career; - Offering agriculture as a subject in high school - Agriculture being a favourite subject in high school - Acceptable remuneration - Perception of farming as a business
4. To devise a relevant strategy of attracting more youths enrolling for the subject as a field of study	This study found that the following can help to attract youths' interest in the agricultural sector; - Provide education and training - Create internships and apprenticeship opportunities - Show potential for career advancement - Provide financial incentives - Highlight technology integration

5.9 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The investigation (survey) of this study was based on leaners who are studying agriculture, reason being that South Africa is faced with high unemployment rate, many being unemployed youth. Agricultural farming has been identified as acritical sector in creating employment for

the youth, including those youth who may not have relevant qualifications. However, in future there is a room to further investigate learners' perceptions and misconceptions of non-agricultural learners or include youths who are not enrolled in agricultural studies. Another limitation is that in this study, the investigator only considered a sample from one of the nine South African provinces. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies should be broader in scope by gathering data from other South African provinces to determine whether these findings are consistent. In addition, this study only used questionnaires. Therefore, to gain deeper insights into certain questions on students' perceptions towards agriculture as a career, future studies may supplement the questionnaires with interviews.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter showed the alignment between the results obtained by the participants in this study and the objectives of this research. The chapter presented the three research objectives and how the results of this study have helped to achieve these objectives. This study investigated the factors that influence youths' perception of the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal. The study also crystallises some strategies that could attract youths to the agricultural sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are recommended:

1. The government need to implement agricultural related programmes to inspire young people rural areas. This can be done through by improving policies which can give a chance to young people from rural to have access to funding and capacity building plans to develop young farmers.

2. The government need to encourage the local Department of Agriculture to improve the extension services and prioritise young people. The visibility and extension support by the Agricultural Advisors will inspire young people to participate in agriculture and assist in retaining the young people who have been already participating in farming activities.

3. It is critical to advertise success stories of agriculture or agricultural related businesses owned by youth. These stories have to be advertise on social media platforms like LinkedIn, X(Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, mainstream media blog and policy briefs, packaged in the way that is appealing to the young people.

4. There is an urgent need to establish initiatives aimed at supporting few small-scale farmers which can be used as model farmers in rural areas so that the success of these farmers will encourage youth to realised the important of participating in agricultural activities or can be able to choose agriculture as the career of choice.

5. Capacity building and mentor-ship programme aimed at developing young people from rural areas must be link them with successful and experienced commercial farmers.

6. Parents and schools have a good influence on youth development. Parents and schools must workshop young people on the importance of farming and careers that are available in agriculture. This will assist in promoting youth interest towards farming activities and inspire participation of young people in agriculture.

7. The bad perception of the young people about agriculture must change. A mind-shift of viewing farming as a source of income and job creation is needed by young people themselves. This mind-shift will not only attract young people to participate in farming activities, but also decrease the migration of young people from rural communities into urban areas and ensure a successful implementation plans for farming sector.

8. Tailor-made capacity building on agro-processing,agricultural value chains, beef production, goats/sheep production, crop production, input production supply, leadership and entrepreneurial skills must be implemented tor emerging small-scale young farmers to increase interest for the youth participation in agriculture and to improve their farming knowledge and skills

9. Agricultural promotional shows on television and radios must be aired during prime time where youth can be able to view and listen to them.

10. Career awareness, workshops and seminars that give the opportunity to young people from rural communities to interact with commercial farmers and successful farming entrepreneurs will convince the youth to be engaged in agriculture.

11. Access to land has been the biggest challenge for the youth to participate in agricultural activities. Government and traditional leaders must give the fertile land to young people so that they can be able to participate in agriculture

12. The poor network connectivity in rural communities and expensive data, limit young people from accessing information technology(IT), which further have a negative impact on knowledge and skills.

13. Tailor-made funding which target the youth from rural areas should be implemented. However, monitoring and evaluation process/plans must be in place to ensure that funds are being used for the purposes stipulated in the business plan or original proposal.

14. Farm Production Unit(FPU), logistics, agro-processing and facilitation seminars on farm business development are some of the opportunities that are available in agricultural sector, where young people can look at if they do not want to participate in primary agriculture.

15. Lastly, strategies that could attract youths to the agricultural industry such as offering of internships and training opportunities, offering financial incentives as well as integration of technologies must be be implemented urgently to ensure that young people view agriculture as a career of choice.

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APPENDIX - ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

05 July 2022

Xolani Mduduzi Qwabe (210555493)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear XM Qwabe,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004264/2022
Project title: Government initiatives and learner perceptions influencing agriculture as a career choice in KwaZulu-Natal
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 03 June 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 05 July 2023.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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