

PROJECT TITLE:

**Exploring The Perceptions of Rural Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
on Factors that Influence their Employability.**

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**A Minor Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signature

05 September 2016

Date

ABSTRACT

Young people in rural areas bear the brunt of unemployment in South Africa. This is because many of them do not have access to the relevant opportunities and information needed to help them transition into adulthood roles and the labour market. The restricted access to opportunities poses as a threat to the successful transition and employability of these young people. This qualitative study explored perceptions of factors affecting employability among a select sample of youth that were not in education employment or training (NEET) from a rural community of Engcobo in the Eastern Cape Province. In-depth-individual interviews were conducted with 19 black African youth comprising of 8 males and 11 females between the ages 18 and 34 years. The researcher sought to explore the opinions of the youth to inform us of the factors they think influence their employability by adopting an Integrated Model of employability by McQuaid and Lindsey (2005). The study was important in order to gauge the voices of these youth regarding their employability. The researcher explored factors influencing the respondents' entry into employment, the factors useful to their gaining employment and personal experience of their unemployment status.

The findings revealed that circumstances leading to youth's unemployment may differ, but the way in which youth experience unemployment remains the same whether young or old. The fact that young people experience unemployment is the same shows that being NEET at one stage raises the likelihood of remaining in the NEET for a longer period. The respondents' unemployment status affected their behaviour and the way in which they saw themselves: as not contributing members to their families or society. The findings also revealed that young people are not employed due to the scarcity of jobs in their local town. Their low levels of educational attainment and skills sets also played a role in this regard. Social networks play a major role in helping young people find information about employment; however this was restricted to a certain extent for rural youth as access to formal information systems is non-existent. The lack of formal information systems plays a major role in hindering the mobility of the youth, be it in education or finding employment. The factors identified were mostly as a result of personal circumstances that may have led them to leave school and external factors related to the labour market.

The following recommendations were provided. Efforts to provide alternative educational and training opportunities to accommodate the lengthened transitions to adulthood of NEET youth from rural areas must be given priority. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges can be used as a mechanism to achieve this. TVET Colleges must be responsive and cater for the needs of the communities and be more visible and accessible. Equally important is clarifying what options are available for young people in terms of technical, vocational education and training opportunities. As such TVET colleges have to find effective ways to share information with youth from rural areas about the programmes they offer and how to access these.

Furthermore, relevant employment opportunities that are in line with the youth's needs and skills sets have to be considered. For instance the government could make agriculture and farming more popular amongst the youth in rural areas. This could be done by providing youth friendly services and information about the use of land. In addition to the use of social networks, formal information systems have to be introduced to rural areas to help facilitate job search. This could include information centres for young employment seekers and access to the internet to help expand their reach. Unemployment serves as a major form of exclusion for youth in society at large. This study argues for a holistic approach that considers both structural barriers and young people's deficits to design interventions towards education, employment and training.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), of the factors affecting their employability. This chapter provides the background to the problem of rural youth unemployment, followed by the purpose of the study and the rationale for and significance of this study. The main research questions, research objectives, clarification of the key concepts used in the study, and structure of the research report are also outlined in this chapter.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Young people make up a significant proportion of the world's population. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014), the global youth population is 1.2 billion (17.6 % of the total population). Sub-Saharan Africa is listed among those regions with the highest proportion of young people at 20%, followed by the Arab States and South Asia at 19.6 % (UNDP, 2014). In 2014, South Africa's youth population (people between 15 and 35 years) was at 19, 6 million which constitutes about 36% of the total population (Stats SA, 2016). There is a youth bulge in South Africa as well as in the international context. The term youth bulge refers to the rapid growth of the youth population of a country. This to an extent signifies that there are a large number of people that need to be absorbed in the labour market.

However, the youth in South Africa face high levels of unemployment. Findings from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS, Quarter 2 2014) show that 37% of the unemployed in South Africa are young people between the ages of 15 and 35 (Stats SA, 2014). This is approximately three-quarters of the country's unemployed population. With youth representing such a large proportion of the South African population, their economic inactivity reduces the country's potential for economic expansion. A comparison of unemployment rates between youth and adults over the age of 35 revealed that the unemployment rate among youth was approximately 20% higher than that of the adults (16%). This high rate of unemployment amongst the youth is however, not significant to South African youth only. According to the ILO (2012), youth unemployment is a global problem: in 2011, nearly 75 million youth worldwide (12.6% of youth) were unemployed.

This rising trend of youth unemployment also means that many young people will remain unemployed for a long time. About 10% of unemployed youth are reported to be either abandoning job search altogether or delaying the transition from the education system to the labour market (ILO, 2012). The problem is especially severe in South Africa.

As part of strategies to address these high numbers of unemployment amongst the youth, the South African government has identified groups that need more attention. Amongst the targeted youth groups, is the “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEET) youth between the ages of 18 and 24 and rural youth (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2009). Rural youth, in particular, are faced with limitations regarding access to and availability of services and facilities, which results in fewer opportunities and less information and employment for them (RSA, 2009). Due to these limitations in rural areas many young people have decided to migrate to urban areas. The decision to migrate is linked to a combination of factors, such as pursuing higher education, or access to better work opportunities. Migration has however left those young people who remain in rural areas in an even more disadvantaged position, as more resources are directed to urban areas, thus creating an urban bias in terms of resource allocation. Many young people in rural areas are therefore faced with challenges that hinder them from making smooth transitions into adulthood roles.

Efforts have been made by the government to look into the needs and experiences of these young people in an attempt to foster youth inclusion and development. These include the introduction of free basic education policies and the establishment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges with increasing participation rates. Other instruments include the introduction of learnerships, apprenticeships, and public works schemes to help young people gain work experience (Kraak, 2013). However, these efforts have not produced the results expected, as they fail to meet the lived realities of unemployed youth particularly those in rural areas. Additionally, even though participation rates in TVET institutions have increased their number and quality to meet the intermediate skills needs of the economy is still seen as insufficient (Sheppard and Sheppard, 2012). The degree to which individuals are aware of and can access these programmes is still questionable, especially for those that reside in rural areas.

Youth in the NEET category may not have completed their matric and thus do not have access to some of the facilities government has created, putting them at a further disadvantage to participate in the targeted programs. These experiences are however less documented and, as a result, one finds that interventions directed to these youth do not meet their needs and realities. Non-participation in education, employment or training has been linked to short and long-term consequences.

Longitudinal survey evidence suggests that there is a connection between long-term exposure to NEET and structural unemployment (Raffe, 2003). The youth in the older age cohort for instance, still have the same experiences as their younger counterparts and for them, this might be over a longer period compared to the younger age cohort included in the NEET category. Both these youth cohorts, the 18-24-year-olds and the 25-35-year-old cohort, are in need of relevant interventions to meet their different needs. Hence the inclusion of 25-35-year-olds in this study. Interventions targeted at this grouping also have to be distinctive in nature to meet the different needs. As it stands, there is a tension between allocating resources to interventions to provide skills and education for young people who lack skills, as this is an important factor in their gaining employment or to interventions creating paying jobs for young people, who urgently need an income.

One of the key criticisms of the NEET concept is the age range that defines this group (Maguire and Thompson, 2007). Many youth in the older age cohort (25-35) have dropped out of school during their earlier years may still not be in education, employment or training, but are not included in this NEET category. This exclusion of the older youth cohort might be an oversight because growing older than 24 years does not automatically make these youth employable. They still face the same challenges they did while they were in the 18-24 year old cohort.

Furlong, (2006) argues that NEET young people are a heterogeneous group with distinctive problems and needs, including long-term unemployment, those who have children, and those who have dropped out of school and training. The older youth cohort may still be in the NEET category, but may now be at a stage where they have families that they have to look after. They may not necessarily be able to go back to mainstream education and training but rather, are looking for jobs.

Employability is one of the issues that are often debated when it comes to explaining youth unemployment in the literature. There is however no standard agreement regarding the definition of employability. Traditionally, definitions of the term have been person-centered with a focus on an individual's knowledge skills, abilities and attributes as the only contributors to gaining employment. Wedekind (2015) for example states that employability measures tend to focus on the 'product' of the system, it is very individualized and is based on the needs of the employers. This is without acknowledging the individual's needs and realities, the economic or the societal factors that may impact on the individual's employability. Given the state of youth unemployment in the country and elsewhere, it is safe to conclude that a young person's employability cannot only be measured by their own individual attributes.

Drawing upon McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) model of employability, this study sought to examine perceptions of rural NEET youth to gauge on their own lived experiences. The framework sets out three interrelated components that inform employability, namely: individual factors (skills and attributes), personal circumstances (social and household circumstances) and external factors (labour demand conditions). The study used this framework to explore the views of the youth on what they perceive as enablers and constraints to their being employable. Questions related to the views of the youth on their unemployment, their employment aspirations, questions on the skills and resources they have on their disposal as well as the perceived barriers to accessing these jobs were asked.

1.3. RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The motivation for this study stems from both personal and academic reasons. As a young person that was born and raised in rural South Africa, the researcher is interested in the development of young people in our country, especially those residing in rural areas. By exploring rural youth's perceptions on factors affecting their employability, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of who is part of the NEET group in rural areas, how they got to be part of this group, where they go for job or training information services and who is there to support them as they make these transitions. This information will provide insights as to what kinds of pathways these youth would like to follow so that interventions targeted to this group are based on their different needs and realities. This will ensure the effectiveness of the targeted interventions so as to improve rural youth's employability and

foster their inclusion and development. Information about the support system that these youth have in terms of job search information will also give an idea as to what forms of services could be provided for rural youth.

1.4. RESEARCH TOPIC

Exploring The Perceptions of Rural Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) on Factors that Influence their Employability.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do the rural youth perceive their unemployment status?
- What employment aspirations do NEET youth have?
- What skills and resources do they believe they have at their disposal?
- How would they use these to get the kind of employment they want?
- What are their perceived barriers (personal and external) to accessing the kind of jobs they want?

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the rural youth's perceptions with regards to their unemployment status
- To explore the employment aspirations that NEET youth have
- To determine the skills and resources NEET youth have at their disposal
- To determine how the NEET youth use these skills and resources to gain the employment they want.
- To establish the perceived barriers to accessing the jobs they want

1.7. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Youth: The National Youth Policy 2009–2014 (RSA, 2009:12) defines young people as men and women falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years. Youth will be used interchangeably with the term young people.

NEET youth: Young people not in education, employment and training between the ages of 18-24 (RSA, 2009).

Unemployed: This study uses the extended definition of unemployment provided by Statistics South Africa (2014) “as anybody without a job between the ages of 15-65, who

wanted to work, was available to take up employment in the reference period, irrespective of whether they actively looked for a job 4 weeks prior to the reference week”.

Employability: The ability for one to look for, find and keep work, which is influenced by individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors (McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005).

1.8. STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 1 contains the Introduction to the problem of rural youth unemployment. The significance of the study with regards to the understanding of rural NEET youth to inform targeted interventions is also included.

Chapter 2 of the report will provide a literature review of previous studies consulted in relation to youth as a period of transition and the challenges faced by the youth of South Africa. As well as the theoretical frameworks used as a lens to understand rural youth unemployment and the legislation and policies consulted in respect of the research topic.

Chapter 3 provides a thorough overview of the research design and methodological practices used to achieve the study aims.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the research study. In particular components on the respondents experiences of their NEET status and how this has affected their lives. Their employment aspirations, the skills and available resources in their disposal and how they utilise these to look for employment as well as the perceived barriers to their employment endeavours are explored.

Chapter 5 outlines the main conclusions of the study with regards to the factors that influence rural youth's employability using the three fold model of employability by McQuaid and Lindsey. This will be followed by a discussion of the recommendations directed to institutions and individuals that may be responsible for the enhancement of rural NEET youth's employability.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of literature on youth as a period of transition as well as the literature on the state of the youth in South Africa. First, a discussion international literature and that from sub-Saharan Africa on youth as a period of transitions will be presented. This will be followed by literature on the challenges faced by the youth in South Africa. A brief discussion of the integrated model of employability and the concept of social exclusion will then be presented, followed by a discussion of the South African Youth policy and the Further Education and Training Colleges College's Act.

2.2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.2.1 Youth as a Period of Transition

The terms 'youth' or young people are popularly used to describe those aged between 16 and 25. However, there is no single agreed definition of whom and what constitutes youth and definitions vary between countries and organisations. Youth is seen as a key period of transition wherein young people learn to engage with society and the world of work as they take on adult roles and responsibilities. In America these roles and responsibilities of adulthood were traditionally observed as the time in which young people are expected to finish school, secure a job with benefits, marry, have children and establish independent households (Furstenburg, Kennedy, Mcloyd, Rumbaut and Settersten, 2004). During this time young people were expected to be economically independent from parents. In some societies, particular social or cultural rituals may also mark the transition to adulthood. For instance in some countries as well as in South Africa young men and women have to undergo some rituals that form part of the rite of passage to adulthood. An example of this in South Africa is the ritual of umaluko (circumcision in the traditional way) to mark the right of passage for young man into manhood (Mgqolozana, 2009). This serves as a way to give these young men the right to be among adults.

The ability to start one's own family through marriage has always been seen as a marker of transitioning to adulthood. Findings from Furstenburg et al., (2004) show that some American youth experience adulthood as a time in which they struggle to gain the skills and

qualifications required to find employment that can support the family they wish to start (or perhaps have already started), and a struggle to have a sense of control in their lives. While Valentine (2003) observed that among the youth in the global North the traditional, transitional pattern in which young people were expected to move from single status to marriage to the establishment of an independent couple household before having children is being replaced by a variety of routes into parenthood. Similarly, Calvès, Kobiane and Martel (2007) in their study on transitions of young people in Burkina Faso found that increasing employment postponement and more informal first paid employment seem to be accompanied by a significantly postponed entry into marriage among both males and females. The process of transitioning to adulthood seems to be changing over time with many going through a variety of routes in-between. This shows that the routes into which young people take as they transition into adulthood are fluid being delayed over time. These findings are applicable in the South African context where a large number of young people's transitions are being delayed due to high levels of unemployment.

Gaining employment has now become one of the most important markers of adulthood. Furstenburg et al. (2004) found that for American youth completing school, establishing an independent household and being employed full-time were amongst the most important milestones in adulthood. This is because being employed provides one with an income and the ability to support one's self and others. Moreover, one can have some financial independence and increased self-worth. However, many youth across the world are delayed in acquiring this important marker of adulthood. This lengthened path to adulthood can be associated with a range of issues including societal changes, economic forces and changing social policies.

Valentine (2003) states that in the Global North transitions to adulthood are now bound up with wider structures such as the labour market, the family, the education system, consumer culture and so on and thus should not be viewed as linear but as fluid and complex. The increase in unemployment has meant that many young people's dependency period is increased. They are unable to move out of their parents' homes into marriage due to their financial constraints. Furstenburg et al. (2004) however, state that this delay in transitions does not mean that young people in America have extended adolescence but instead they are physically and mentally mature and are not reluctant to accept adult responsibilities. This

observation is similar to what is happening in South Africa where the dependency period of young people is being prolonged due to factors related to unemployment.

In her study on youth transitions in four African countries (Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia) Honwana (2014) found that youth from these states face challenges of joblessness and limited opportunities as they transition into adulthood, that are similar to those experienced by youth in Europe, North America. She refers to this state of transition as 'waithood' (waiting for adulthood), a state where young people are unable to access basic resources to become independent adults. During this state of 'waithood' Honwana (2014) argues that, young people are, however, not inactively waiting for their situations to change, but are rather inventing new ways to be active in society. These ways include the involvement of youth in criminal activities, romantic relationships and other ways to occupy their time.

These restricted/delayed futures of the youth do not result from a failure to transition on the part of the youth themselves. Honwana (2014) asserts that this delay is rather from a failure in the socioeconomic system that is supposed to provide young people with the opportunities to grow up healthy, get a good education, find employment, form families and contribute to society as fully fledged citizens. Similarly to this Furstenburg et al. (2004) found the scarcity of good paying employment to be a major contributor in the prolonged transition to adulthood for American youth. The period between childhood and adulthood has become more complex contributing to a greater diversity in youth statuses.

Moreover, the concept of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has gained increasing prominence worldwide as a means to conceptualise the range of problems facing young people once they have left formal schooling and enter the world of unemployment or short-term employment. In the United Kingdom, about 10% of the youth are reportedly in this group (Coles, et. al, 2010), while 25 % of the youth in Australia find themselves in this situation (Brader and McGinty, 2005). These high numbers signify that an extensive number of young people in the world find themselves without employment, education or training. This term, however, does not come without criticism.

Many have critiqued the use of the term NEET, arguing that it falls into the labelling trap

by identifying young people by what they are not (Yates and Payne, 2006). Other criticisms have to do with the age groups that are included in this definition (Maguire and Thompson, 2007). Another critique has to do with the heterogeneity of the youth within the NEET group who have different needs and problems that may need different kinds of interventions but are put under one umbrella with constricted NEET targeted interventions (Furlong, 2006). Also viewed unfavourably is that NEET interventions as introduced in Australia and the United Kingdom ignore changing structural conditions in the labour market, instead relying highly on the individual. Simmons and Thompson (2011) write that with the decline of traditional youth labour markets since the 1980s, youth transitions from school to work are becoming more complex, delayed and individualised. For instance, being in the NEET category means that these young people are unable to gain any form of work experience due to their low levels of education and lack of training and, as a result, are at risk of being in the NEET category for a long time.

Youth transitions, therefore, involve the paths that young people take as they leave school, enter and navigate the labour market, housing and family circumstances and develop towards adulthood. Young people's transition to adulthood is effectively blocked and prolonged by the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities they are faced with. These blockages take specific forms in a highly unequal society like South Africa, which is the focus in the next section.

2.2.2. The State of the Youth in South Africa

The South African youth policy 2015-2020 uses a broad definition to peg 'youth' as the period between the ages of 15 and 35 years (Republic of South Africa [RSA, 2015]. This definition includes both men and women. The main reason cited for using such a broad range is the impact that apartheid had on delaying the transitions to adulthood of many young people in South Africa (Mathoho and Ranchod, 2006). Even though much has changed since 1994, the high levels of societal imbalances still impact the youth, making it difficult for them to be financially independent and establish their own households. The group is often segmented by age cohort, to include two sub-categories, the 15 to 24-year-old age cohort and the 25 to 35-year-old age cohort. Such an age categorisation however, does little to aid in defining the groups, which remain heterogeneous as their needs and experiences are diverse: they may be at school, college or university, in other forms of vocational training,

in paid work, unemployed, doing voluntary work, child rearing and so on.

The most pressing challenge faced by the South African youth in their difficult and protracted transition into taking on adulthood roles is unemployment. Unemployment, coupled with low levels of education, is a dire challenge that results in a number of far-reaching and over-arching socio-economic consequences for young people, putting them at a higher risk of falling into poverty, criminal behaviour, ill health and teen pregnancy (Barron, 2003). The following section will highlight the major challenges faced by the youth in South Africa as they transition to adulthood, viewing unemployment as both the outcome and cause of such challenges.

Becoming an adult involves earning a living, but it has been shown that, in many countries, millions of young people are unable to access economic opportunities and suffer widespread un-or underemployment (Hiker and Fraser, 2011). For most South Africans, ideally completing an education, finding a job and gaining social and economic independence are natural life stages. However, for significant groups of young people in South Africa, this is not a straightforward transition. Unemployment in South Africa is said to be high amongst the youth, with about three quarters (3,4 million) of the unemployed being young people between ages of 15-35 (Stats SA, 2016). As discussed above without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house, and cannot marry and their transition to adulthood is effectively blocked.

Disparities exist in the profile of unemployed young people aged 15–34 years, (Stats SA, 2016). Demographic differences have been observed regarding how youth unemployment pans out. The older youth cohort (25-35 years) reportedly comprises the biggest portion. According to the South African National Youth Policy young women reportedly face higher levels of unemployment, with about 34.5 percent of young women neither employed nor at school (including further and higher education), compared to 29.9 percent of young men (RSA, 2015). Furthermore, strong racial disparities exist: African, Indian and Coloured youth have been found to have lower access to employment than White youth (Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008). These racial disparities in finding employment are partly because white youth continue to attain higher educational levels compared to their black, coloured and Indian counterparts, and have better access to social networks to gain information about job opportunities. This is a reflection that the inequalities imposed by

apartheid still have an effect on the youth of the country. During apartheid, the discriminatory access to the labour market allowed whites to be favoured by better education systems, jobs reservation policies and residential and workplace restrictions.

Generally, the higher the level of educational attainment, the better the chances are for a young person to find employment. For example young people that have a tertiary education have been found to have a significantly better chance of finding employment compared with those who have less educational attainment (Stats SA, 2014). Educational attainment is an important contributor in the transition of young people to adulthood roles through employment. Conversely, low levels of education continue to be a huge contributing factor to the high unemployment levels of South African youth (Mlatsheni, 2012). These can be ascribed to a number of problems that continue to plague the South African school system including the poor quality of education, with poor teaching and learning practices leading to low quality schooling outcomes. As it stands, education in South Africa continues to reproduce inequalities in society, inequalities that threaten the solidity and comforts of all young people (Bloch, 2009).

Compounding these obstacles is the high dropout rates experienced in South African schools. The Department of Basic Education (2011) reported that about 10% of learners enrolled in grade 9 to grade 11 drop out of school without obtaining a matric certificate. In South Africa, a matric certificate can give one entry into many avenues and without it one's social mobility is restricted. Research has shown that dropping out of school is due to a number of reasons. In this regard, Strassberg et al. (2010) found that financial pressures due to poverty and social processes such as teenage pregnancy and substance abuse were amongst the causes of disengagement in schooling, resulting in drop out. Some may drop out in the hope that they can work and help with the finances in their homes, and money to help raise their own children. However, according to the OECD, about 40% of

South Africa's total population live in poverty and 16% of those people are at the age in which they should be in post-school education. This illustrates that many of those who have dropped out of school with the hopes of gaining employment may not necessary succeed as they lack the necessary qualifications. Although some of the school drop outs may have reached the legal working age their dropping out of school puts them at a high risk of not

gaining employment. An incomplete secondary education is not sufficient to guarantee employment, especially since the South African economy has a high skill demand due to technology advancements (Lam, Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni, 2008). Young people that drop out of school are therefore left with insufficient skills and qualifications to be absorbed into the labour market. For these young people, the situation in which they find themselves can best be described as being trapped in, and adding to, the poverty cycle and their only hope is better educational opportunities and skills training.

South Africa's high rate of youth unemployment is also attributed to the skills shortage within this age group. Hausmann (2008) argues that the South African economic growth has occurred mainly in skills-intensive sectors, such as the financial and business services sectors. With a large number of South African youth unskilled and with low levels of education this means that there is no supply of matching skills set. It has therefore been recognized that one of the primary causes for South Africa's widespread unemployment today is a structural mismatch between the skills the modern South African economy demands, and the skills it supplies (Hausmann, 2008; Swartz et al., 2012). Many young South Africans lack the appropriate skills, work-related capabilities and higher education qualifications required for a high-skills economy. The general scarcity of jobs is another one of the reasons that young people are unemployed.

Altman and Marock (2008) argued that unemployment is not only a supply side problem but also a demand side problem, as the number of jobs created in the economy is insufficient to absorb all those that are unemployed. The combination of poor demand for labour due to the increasingly skills-intensive orientation of the South African economy, and insufficient supply caused by the emergence of risky low-skilled youth, serves as a hindrance for the majority of South African youth towards making transitions to a productive working life. Many employers see employing young inexperienced workers whose productivity is not known as a risk for their businesses (Van Aardt, 2009). These inexperienced youth could benefit by engaging in informal sector activities; however, this is also hindered by barriers such as lack of access to capital, crime, lack of access to infrastructure and training services, and lack of access to the market and business development programmes (Yu, 2013).

Technical and vocational training (TVET) colleges are arguably the most important provider of intermediate-level technical and vocational skills and providers of second chances for those who did not complete secondary school. The government has employed many policies to strengthen the capacity of TVET colleges, but there are many blockages within this sector. It is still characterised by extreme inefficiencies in terms of throughput and retention rates as well as low pass rates (Sheppard and Sheppard, 2012). This compounds the skills shortage in the country as many learners in TVET colleges do not complete their qualifications within the relevant time or even finish the qualification at all. This may in turn limit the opportunities that the youth have towards transitioning to adulthood. In addition, many employers hold a poor image of TVET colleges with the result that only a minority of their graduates are able to find employment (Matsheni, 2012). This raises a concern over the work readiness of those graduates and the responsiveness of the post-school sector to the labour market needs. (TVET colleges are discussed further in section 2.4.2 below). Moreover the youth's awareness and access to TVET colleges are still questionable. If young people could be aware of the opportunities TVET colleges have and how to gain access these they could be able to explore different schooling paths. These shortfalls in the education and training system limit the prospects of young people, leaving them unskilled, and in many cases, without basic competencies and thus unemployable.

Having good health is as equally important to a successful transition to adulthood. Mlatsheni (2012) states that having good health not only reinforces the ability of a young person to secure employment, but also influences their ability to perform and meet their goals at work. In other words, being in good health enhances one's productivity. Physical changes in the transition to adulthood do not only offer opportunities but also risks that can affect health (both physical and mental) significantly. Young women, for instance, are at a risk of early pregnancy and childbearing, which has been noted as one of the contributors to high school dropout rates, while both sexes are at a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and addiction to tobacco and alcohol. HIV was reportedly the cause of 28,2% of male and 29,0% of female youth's deaths during 2013 (Stats SA, 2016). This demonstrates that young people are at a greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Young women with low levels of education face a risk of becoming economically dependent on men and may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Studies have shown that young women involve themselves in transactional relationships where they exchange sex for gifts or money in order to survive (Hallman and Diers, 2004).

Similarly, Selikow, Zulu and Cedra (2002) in their study on HIV and youth culture found that because of poverty young women would do anything for money, making them ‘forget’ about the risk of HIV. They would engage in sexual relations to pay for basic sustenance. These economically motivated reasons for engaging in sexual relationships put these youth at a high risk of HIV infection.

Studies have shown that there is a direct link between depression and unemployment. Although thorough research has not been conducted in South Africa on this topic, there is much international evidence that links unemployment to depression. Dooley, Prause and Ham-Rowbottom (2000) found that, amongst American youth, changes from employment to unemployment resulted in a significant increase in depression. Having a job is crucial to one’s self-worth as this is expected by one’s family and friends. Not having a job means that one has not met the expectations of adulthood, hence the depression. When depression sets in as a result of not being able to make the transition to adulthood, the ability of a young person to function can be severely hampered and can thus affect their employability status in a vicious cycle. So depression can be both a cause and consequence of unemployment. Rankin, Simkins, Rule, Trope and Bernstein (2007) state that for the individual, failure to make the transition to employment may lead to dependence, financial limitations, frustration, self-doubt, guilt, stress, lower self-esteem, depression and feelings of anomie and alienation. Having paid work means that not only will one gain experience and acquire income but also the benefits of independence, dignity, a sense of accomplishment and freedom by being able to provide for one’s self.

Barriers to youth economic participation also include the inadequate life skills of the job seeker required to successfully navigate the transition to adulthood. For example, some young people do not know how to look for a job, some lack self-discipline, decision-making skills and the time management skills needed (Swartz et al., 2012). These soft skills are important in helping one gain and keep employment. Young people in South Africa, especially those that leave school early may not possess such skills and are often faced with very little choice as to what jobs they can do. Furthermore, the way in which young people view and their attitudes to the world of work is important in ensuring their progression in the working environment. Attitudes as conceptualised are antecedents of behavioral intention; these serve as significant predictors of individuals’ behaviours and, thus, can

provide clues about behaviour related to finding and keeping paid work (Mncwango, 2016). In other words, young people can act in accordance with their attitudes and how they feel welcome or unwelcome in the labour market. As a result, the perceptions that young people have of the support systems and barriers, to gaining work can affect their decision making when it comes to looking for employment. Hence, driven by the need to feel a sense of control and competence, many young people may participate in criminal activities.

Research shows that in South Africa young people constitute the majority of both victims and perpetrators of crime. Results from the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention's 2005

National Youth Victimization Survey (which surveyed 4,409 respondents aged 12-22), showed that the assault experienced by young people was roughly eight times than the adult rate; theft at five times and robbery at four times the adult rate (Leoschut and Burton, 2006). Many of these crimes are said to have been experienced in the home, at school or in the community. The very environments in which young people spend most of their time are characterised by crime. A person's environment plays a role in influencing their behaviour. If the environments to which these young people are exposed are not positive, then their prospects can be damaged.

In addition to victimisation, half of the youth in the survey admitted to having committed a crime (Leoschut and Burton, 2006). Being unemployed increases the risk of being involved in delinquent behaviour, such as involvement in criminal activities as well as the risk of young people dropping out of school (Mlatsheni, 2012). Many youth end up involved in criminal acts as a way to avoid the feelings of alienation that come with being unemployed and out of school. Belonging to a single parent household, exposure to violence, poverty, absence from school, association with delinquent peers, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities have been found to be amongst the risk factors determining whether youth become victims and perpetrators of crime (Leoschut and Burton, 2006). Young people's involvement in crime however, threatens their prospects of successful labour-market outcomes while, at the same time, is often the result of unsuccessful attempts at finding sustainable employment.

2.2.3. Rural Youth

The patterns of youth unemployment reflect the spatial inequalities that stem from the apartheid era's policies of separate development. Young people living in rural areas continue to experience greater unemployment rates compared to those living in urban areas (Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008). Many rural youth do not have access to information and services needed to gain employment or training. Booyens and Crause (2012), in their study of unemployed rural youth, found that limited access to information and access to opportunities and resources, including those related to vocational training, were some of the barriers to employment experienced by rural youth. This shows that the geographical location on its own acts as a barrier towards gaining employment.

Swartz et al. (2012) argue that the socio-economic status of young people's communities plays a large role in limiting access to opportunity. Young people who don't have access to places where they can find information on employment or people like family members who might have that information run a higher risk of exclusion. Booyens and Crause (2012) found that many of the young people in their study connected with employment opportunities through their family and friendship networks, showing the value of social networks in the economic inclusion of the youth. However in a society where unemployment is a norm these might not be the best sources of information, especially in poor rural communities. Hence the reality for many poor South African rural youth is that they don't have access to any of these resources or people, because even their older counterparts are facing the same struggle doing casual work or are out of work. MacDonald (2008) concurs with the above showing that low-level aspirations among the youth may be as a result of local subcultural and class cultural values.

Results from a study by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2007) show that socioeconomic conditions may influence the number of job opportunities to which individuals are exposed when growing up and, consequently, the route of their economically active lives. In the Eastern Cape for example, which is characterised by a majority of rural communities, it was found that the largest employer of youth was the wholesale and retail trade sector (Eastern Cape-Socio Economic Consultative Council, 2012). This sector is characterised by low educational qualifications, low skill and often short-term and part-time employment. Hence it is easier for the youth to get employment in the wholesale and retail sectors.

Furthermore, the spatial isolation experienced by young people in rural areas cannot be ignored. Altman (2007) notes how youth in rural areas are often faced with mobility difficulties compared to their urban counterparts. This is due to that young people living in rural areas have to travel to town areas while they search for employment as there are no opportunities in their communities. These mobility challenges then play an obstructive role in accessing the right information that these youth need to gain employment. They further face challenges such as the cost associated with searching and applying for work, and transportation costs associated with living in rural and remote areas (Altman, 2007). In their unemployed situation young people from rural areas may not be able to afford these traveling costs. In this milieu, the youth may set limitations on their aspirations and ideas about the labour market based on what they have access to.

This poses a question of how then do young people in rural areas survive. Klasen and Woolard (2008) show that being attached to households, through postponing leaving home, ensures that unemployed youth will have adequate access to basic needs for survival. However, this places the households in which they reside in a vulnerable position for poverty, as they have to support unemployed members. The decision to remain in rural areas thus becomes a coping strategy for these young people as the nature of economic support tends to be better due to available family support. This trend can thus partly account for the high rural unemployment rates (Klasen and Woolard, 2008). However, these coping strategies appear to negatively influence the search and employment prospects of unemployed rural youth as they reduce their mobility and keep many unemployed in locations that are far away from promising labour market opportunities.

NEET youth are the manifestation of the challenges faced by young people in South Africa with regards to education, training and gaining employment. The following section will take a closer look on the NEET young people in South Africa, focussing on definitions and consequences of being part of this group.

2.2.4. NEET Youth in South Africa

Young people Not in Education Training or Employment (NEET) are a group that represent the diverse nature of youth in South Africa. In South Africa, the NEET refers to those persons between the ages of 18-24 who are not employed, nor in any education or training institution. In 2015, 32, 9% of the South African youth between the ages of 15-24 were reportedly Not in Employment, Education or Training (Stats SA, 2016). Cloete et al., 2009 point out that this group comprises of pupils who have left school after grade 10 and 11; those who have failed grade 12; those who hold grade 12 but are not improving their education and training nor are they employed, and a group of young adults with a poor educational profile possessing lower than grade 10. In addition to this group of young people who have left secondary school without completing matric is a group of young people with post-school qualifications from TVET colleges and universities of technology who remain unemployed even after graduating who further swell to the NEET category (Kraak, 2013). The different characteristics of the individuals found within this group show the level of heterogeneity amongst NEET youth in South Africa. This clearly shows that these youth have different experiences and realities which need carefully planned targeted interventions. The low levels of education for some of the youth who left school without completing matric coupled with the unavailability of jobs in South Africa raise the vulnerability of these youth to be in the NEET category.

Spending time in the NEET category has a damaging effects upon a young person's future and on society as a whole (Maguire and Thompson, 2007). For instance, not being in school or any form of training means that many young people are excluded from some spaces and sources of information that may be beneficial to them. For example the South African government aims at creating youth-friendly services by integrating some services into the education system. However these cannot reach out-of-school youth, putting them at a greater disadvantage. These effects continue to plague the youth and extend even to when they have moved out of the 15-24 year old age cohort. Not being able to access employment timeously may serve as an exclusionary factor for older job seekers. Thus, the youth in the older age cohort (25-35) may experience greater consequences for not being educated, employed or trained as they continuously remain in the same pool longer than their younger counterparts. As can be seen from the different kinds of groupings that fall under the NEET category in South Africa, this is not an individual issue but a problem that affects society as a whole,

and requires differentiated interventions.

The challenges faced by young people in South Africa manifest themselves in different forms for different groups of youth. As such the heterogeneous nature of young people should always be taken into consideration whenever youth-targeted interventions are planned. Moreover, the vulnerability of young people, especially those in rural areas requires a strong understanding from those that are supposed to serve their needs. An understanding of the patterns of exclusion shaped by the past is vital. Equally important is the understanding of the complexity of employability when addressing youth unemployment.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are many factors that shape employability and in South Africa social exclusion serves as a primary determinant. For a theoretical lens to study rural youth's employability the Integrated Model of Employability by McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) and the concept of Social Exclusion will be used. These theoretical frameworks are considered relevant to the current study as they focus on the importance of the involvement of the broader society when it comes to the challenges of unemployment faced by the youth. The concept of Social exclusion focuses on the structural conditions that lead to young people not being able to participate in activities that might enhance their lives.

2.3.1. McQuaid and Lindsey's Integrated Model for Employability

Given the state of youth unemployment in the country and elsewhere, it is evident that a young person's employability cannot only be measured by their own individual attributes. For that reason this study adopted an integrated model designed by McQuaid and Lindsay to examine factors that may hinder or assist employability. The framework emphasizes a holistic view that offers realistic descriptions of factors that affect employability. Three interrelated components that influence employability are identified, namely, individual factors such as skills and attributes, personal circumstances such as social and household circumstances, and external factors, including labour demand conditions (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). This framework stresses that employability is not only about having skills necessary to gain employment but other factors as well. Table 1 below presents the factors that McQuaid and Lindsey argue are to be considered in analysing employability.

Table 1: Integrated model for Employability

Individual factors	Personal circumstances	External factors
<p>Employability skills and attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal competencies • Transferable skills • High-level transferable skills • Qualifications • Labour market attachment <p>Demographic characteristics Age, gender, etc.</p> <p>Health and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Disability <p>Job seeking Effective use of formal search services Ability to complete a CV/Application</p> <p>Adaptability and mobility</p>	<p>Household circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct caring responsibilities • Other household circumstances <p>Work culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work encouraged at home <p>Access to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to transport • Access to financial capital • Access to social capital 	<p>Demand factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market factors • Macroeconomic factors • Vacancy characteristics • Recruitment factors <p>Enabling support factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment policy factors • Other enabling policy factors (child care, affordable public transport)

Source: McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005

Individual factors

According to Lindsey and McQuaid (2005), personal factors include employability skills and attributes such as basic social skills, personal competencies, transferable skills, qualifications and educational attainment, work experience and labour market attachments regarding work history and duration of unemployment. These cover the main aspects of the narrow view of employability where the individual’s competencies are considered as the main driver to their employability. Demographic characteristics include factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity. These Demographic characteristics have an influence in with regards to who gets excluded or included. For example when it comes to unemployment females are said to be more vulnerably compared to their male counterparts, while youth bear the brunt than older adults. These may influence individuals’ motivations to carry out certain jobs. Health and wellbeing factors include the physical and mental health of an individual and the physical ability to do certain jobs. Job seeking refers to how well a person identifies and searches for a job, including the use of formal search services and effective use of social networks as well as the ability to complete a curriculum vitae and application forms, interview skills, and labour market

awareness, including the

appropriateness of the types of jobs sought. Adaptability and mobility refer to the job seekers' awareness of his or her own strengths and weaknesses, a realistic approach to job targeting, geographical mobility, and occupational flexibility.

Personal Circumstances

Personal circumstances include a range of socioeconomic contextual factors related to individuals' social and household circumstances (Lindsey and MacQuaid, 2005). These are said to affect the individual's ability, willingness or pressure for someone to take up an employment opportunity. Household circumstances may involve direct care responsibilities (children or elderly relatives) or other family and caring responsibilities, including financial and emotional commitments to children and family. Work culture refers to the wider social influences impacting on the individual's attitudes and aspirations, such as the existence of a culture in which work is encouraged and supported within the family, among peers and the wider community. Other factors relate to access to resources, including transport, access to financial capital and access to social capital such as family support networks, formal and informal community networks especially those relevant to job seeking. In rural communities, social capital is vital for assisting young people in their job search endeavours. Moreover, what happens in the personal level does not happen in isolation from the broader society. Both spheres have an influence on each other as such external factors that may influence one's employability have to be considered.

External Factors

External factors influencing a person's employability include labour demand conditions and enabling support of employment-related public services. Demand factors include local labour market factors such as the level and nature of local and regional or other labour demand, location issues, remoteness of local labour markets in relation to centers of employment and level of competition for jobs. Rural areas for instance are located in areas that are away from labour markets making it hard for young people in these areas to gain access. Conditions of work and recruitment factors, including employers' formal recruitment and selection preferences, employer discrimination form, and extent of employers use of informal networks to hire new employees.

2.3.1.1. A Model for analysis in the South African Context

With its emphasis on taking into account how individual skills, socioeconomic and institutional factors impact on employability, this model is valuable in the South African context and for the current study. Given the number of challenges that South African youth face, there is no doubt that the employability of young people cannot be based only on their individual skills sets. The broader labour market and socioeconomic circumstances also play a role in youth's employability. This integrated model of employability was used to frame the research questions used in this study, to explore rural youth's perceptions of the factors affecting their employability.

Given the structural inequalities experienced by South African youth especially those residing in rural areas, this model, does not explain the consequences of not being employable. The model was also not developed in the South African context where social exclusion is a strong determinant of opportunity and life chances. Using the concept of Social exclusion can provide a stronger lens with which to analyse the deprivations that young people face because they are not employable.

2.3.2. Social Exclusion Concept

The concept of exclusion is multidimensional and includes different types of disadvantage which interrelate and compound each other. These all relate to some form of deprivation in resources or opportunities that may be important for an individual to actively participate in society or in the economy. As noted by Sen (2000), social exclusion can be placed in the context of deprivation in the form of an individual's inability to do things that matter to them. Employment is one of the core activities in which one has to engage to transition into adulthood and build a life of one's own. As noted in the previous sections, a number of factors affect the ability of the youth to access employment, thus contributing to their social exclusion from participation into full adult life. Sen outlines some of the losses that may result from youth unemployment, from the perspective of social exclusion:

Loss of current output: Unemployment means that the nation's productive power is wasted since there are no employment opportunities.

Skill loss and long run damages: Sen (2000) argues that people not only learn by doing, they also unlearn by not doing, that is, skills may depreciate because of non-practice, thus adding to future exclusion in the job market.

Loss of freedom and social exclusion: Joblessness can result in loss of freedom because without any income the youth may not have the chance to be involved in decision-making and participate freely in the life of the family and community at large.

Psychological harm and misery: Unemployment can cause deep suffering and distress among the unemployed. The unemployed may suffer from a loss of self-esteem due to their joblessness.

Loss of human relations: Unemployment can be disruptive of social relations and social life due to the drop in economic means and the lack of an organised working life.

Motivational loss and future work: The discouragement that comes with unemployment and the general scarcity of jobs may lead to the weakening of motivation and can make the long-term unemployed very disappointed and passive.

Gender and racial inequality: Unemployment can also serve as a trigger to exacerbate ethnic tensions as well as gender divisions. When jobs are scarce, the groups that are mostly affected are the vulnerable ones. For example women are said to experience unemployment more than men.

Weakening of social values: Through continued unemployment, young people can develop cynicism about the fairness of social arrangements and also a perception of loss of independence (Sen, 2000). This may lead to young people turning to crime as a way to make a living.

The concept of social exclusion will be used as a way to view and analyse the consequences of being unemployed amongst rural youth. Taking into account the factors that influence an individual's employability one can thus conclude that young people who are not in education employment or training are deprived of some of the resources that can enhance their standard of living. Lack of resources puts young people in positions where they are unable to contribute to, and benefit from, the wealth of the society, and hence, unable to better their lives (Hilker and Fraser, 2009). It is evident that young people from rural areas that are not in employment, education or training not only lack the skills that are needed to gain employment in order to be employable, but there are also structural constraints, including lack of resources and scarcity of jobs around them, that hinder their employability. Rural NEET youth are faced with socioeconomic challenges that are out of their control, which may lead to them being less employable and thus socially excluded.

Taken together, the integrated model of employability and social exclusion concept thus frame the research and to highlight that the exclusion of rural young people from employment, education and training cannot only be explained as a result of their own doing, but is also due to the broader societal structures around them. These helped the researcher to question whether the youth face the kinds of social exclusion proposed by Sen to be due to their own doing or whether they saw this to be due to the impact of their personal circumstances and external factors. The responses to this question have serious implications on the kinds of policies that are targeted to the youth.

2.4. POLICY AND LEGISLATION

South Africa's has a legislative context provides a vision of a rights based, non-discriminatory society that is inclusive to all who live in South Africa including the youth in rural areas. A range of policies to promote the inclusion and development of young people between the ages of 14 and 35 years have been introduced (Republic of South Africa, 2009). For the purpose of this study the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 and the Further Education and Training Colleges Act 2006 will be discussed.

2.4.1. National Youth Policy (2015-2020)

The National Youth Policy (NYP) 2015-2020, was developed specifically for the youth of South Africa. The policy builds on the National Youth Policy 2009-2014 and updates it according to the current challenges faced by the youth. The policy sees young people as a major resource for the development of the country including its economic expansion (RSA, 2015). The policy acknowledges that the marginalisation of the youth in South Africa is manifested through the high levels of youth unemployment. The policy highlights that a significant number of young people are still not in education, employment or training; involvement in such could translate to economic participation.

The policy calls for the re-integration of marginalised groups such as those in the NEET group through second chance measures and other supportive actions using a multisectoral approach that involves all spheres of society (RSA, 2015). Some of the principles related to unemployment that underpin the policy include access to resources and services crucial for their development.

The policy places the intent of employment creation at the centre of all youth development interventions. Like many policies in South Africa this policy is well written and its intent towards the inclusion and development of young people is very clear. However, what the policy fails to do is provide clear guidelines as to what and how these developments will be executed. For instance, the policy does acknowledge the problem that we have with the rural NEET youth but it fails to highlight the heterogeneous nature of the young people falling into this category. Without a proper understanding of the groups of young people targeted policies and interventions may not achieve the required results.

The use of the integrated model of employability in examining the factors that influence rural youth's employability in this research will inform policy on how to take into account the personal circumstances and external factors that lead to the unemployment of young people. The voice of the youth in this regard is very important as such the research will inform policy on the realities and experiences of young people in rural areas. Furthermore the use of the concept of social exclusion is useful in creating an understanding of how unemployment impacts on these young people.

2.4.2. Further Education and Training Colleges Act (Act no 16 of 2006)

There is no doubt that youth unemployment can be addressed through an improved schooling system that caters for the needs and realities of the youth of South Africa. According to the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), children from the ages of 7 to 15 years should be at school. Many out-of-school youth are at a stage in their lives where the general schooling system may not be a good fit for them because of their age. Attending a Further Education and Training institution may be the best path for such youth to take. The TVET Colleges Act provides for the establishment, governance and funding of public TVET colleges and related matters (Republic of South Africa, 2006). TVET colleges provide learning and training programmes leading to qualifications at levels 2 to 4 (equivalent to grade 9-12) or vocational training programmes of the National Qualifications Framework or such further education and training levels determined by South African Qualifications Authority. This is an attempt by government to broaden the options for youth to re-enter education (Swartz et al., 2012). The preamble of the Act mentions ensuring access to further education and training and the workplace by persons who have been marginalised in the past, such as women, the disabled and the disadvantaged. The youth in South Africa, especially those that are NEET and reside in rural areas, form part of the groups that have been marginalised and disadvantaged and as such the Act applies to them. The Act serves to enable students to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied vocational and occupational competences required for employment, entry to a particular vocation, occupation or trade or entry into a higher education institution (RSA, 2006). TVET Colleges are required by the Act to respond to the needs of the country, the labour market and the communities which they serve. To date, these institutions have been distributed evenly across the nine provinces in South Africa.

However, these attempts by the government through policies have also had mixed results. A growing number of youth still does not have the information about what programmes are offered and how to access these opportunities. TVET colleges have the potential to act as a mechanism for employability in rural areas. However, many young people residing in rural areas have no idea as to which paths to follow. Therefore this study will give clarity to the kinds of pathways that rural youth would like to follow as they transition into adulthood. The study will also speak to the different needs that rural youth have when it comes to education and training to provide insights for skills training institutions opportunities for them

2.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the literature on youth as a period of transition, the state of youth in South Africa, challenges faced by rural youth as well as literature on the NEET youth in South Africa. The literature pointed to a number of causes and consequences of youth unemployment. This helped broaden the researcher's understanding of what factors are involved as young people transition to their adulthood roles. A theoretical framework appropriate to the research was proposed to provide a set of lenses to understand the causes of unemployment. Understanding the role that unemployment plays in exacerbating the vulnerability of young people to social exclusion is important. This qualitative study of the perceptions of rural NEET youth will bring about the voices of the youth. This could have clear insights for designing policy interventions to enhance rural youth's employability. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed in the study. The use of an exploratory qualitative research design to understand young people's perceptions of factors that affect their employability is explained. Followed by a discussion on how the respondents were selected using a snow ball sampling approach and the design of the interview instrument to elicit the perceptions of the factors that affect young people's employability. The data collection apparatus and data collection procedure used are also discussed in detail. The approach used to analyse the data, data verification, the ethical considerations, limitations of the research as well as reflexivity are also described.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Babbie and Mouton (2001) define research design as a plan that describes how a researcher collects and analyses data. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research design was used. A qualitative research design is an approach to social research that attempts to study human action and experiences from insiders' perspectives. This is done to gauge the meanings people attach to their own experiences (De Vos, et al 2011). The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of NEET youth from a rural community of the factors that influence their employability. Using a qualitative approach was therefore appropriate to engage the youth to illuminate their subjective views of the factors affecting their employability.

3.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.3.1. Study Population

Burns and Grove (2003) describe a study population as all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion. The research respondents were drawn from a population of youth based in a single site, Tsazo location, in Engcobo. Tsazo location is a rural community located in the Manzana administrative area of the small town called Engcobo, in the Eastern Cape Province. Results from the census in 2011 showed that the population of Engcobo is at 155 513. The population is predominantly black African with IsiXhosa as the most spoken language. The Manzana administrative area is filled with agricultural households where

rearing livestock and poultry and vegetable growing occur. Tsazo location is situated 10 kilometres away from the town of Engcobo, which means that one has to travel by car to get to the town area. As with the rest of the country, Engcobo is also reported to have a very youthful population, with a very high youth unemployment rate of 55, 3% and high levels of school dropout rates (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Some of the youth that were born in these communities have gone to urban areas in search of a better life, through education or employment. This study sought to share an account of young people who, due to a variety of circumstances, have found themselves stuck at home as NEET youth.

3.3.2. Sampling Technique, characteristics and procedure

For the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling was used. In non-probability sampling, researchers use their judgment to select the subjects to be included in the study based on their knowledge of the purpose of the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The type of non-probability sample technique used in the study was snowball sampling. This technique involves collecting data on a few members of the population and then asking those individuals to suggest other individuals who meet the same criteria (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The researcher targeted youth between the ages of 18 and 35, not in education employment or training and residing in Tsazo location during the period of the study. To establish initial contact with the respondents, the researcher sought assistance from a local youth leader who is knowledgeable about the community, and helped identify the first two young people. The two youth that were identified were then used as informants to identify other youth that would qualify for inclusion. The same procedure was repeated with the next group of respondents until the required sample size was reached.

The researcher was hoping to interview at least twenty 20 male and female youth between the ages of 18 and 35. The sample size of 20 was selected as feasible for an exploratory study of this nature. However, owing to difficulties related to time constraints and the schedules of the respondents, the researcher managed to complete 19 interviews. The sample consisted of 19 black African IsiXhosa speaking male and female youth between the ages of 18 and 34 years. The majority of the respondents were in their early 20s. Eleven of the respondents were female while eight were male. The reason for this difference in male and female respondents was due to the snowballing technique; young women identified other young women while the male respondents identified other males. Although by definition in

South Africa, NEET refers to young people between the ages of 18 and 24, the researcher, purposefully included young people in the 25-35 age cohort. Adding the older youth cohort would allow the research to determine whether the youth's experiences and perceptions regarding the factors affecting their employability varied with age.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1. Data Collection Approach

In-depth individual interviews were used to collect the data. An in-depth individual interview is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher asks open-ended questions orally and records the respondents' answers. These can be done face-to-face or via the phone. For this study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. One of the advantages of conducting this type of interview is that, with the interviewer on site, it is easier for the respondent to be able to ask questions and clarify some of the terms they might not have understood on their own (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The presence of the interviewer also decreases the number of "I don't know" answers, as the interviewer will be able to probe for the answers and, in this way, rich data can be collected. The presence of the researcher proved to be beneficial as the researcher was available to clarify any confusion that the respondents had about the questions. Furthermore, in-depth interviews are less structured, which makes them different from survey interviews. Unlike survey interviews, in-depth interviews are flexible, continuous and are not cast in stone (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The interviewer must be fully familiar with the subject and potential questions, and plan so that things proceed smoothly and naturally. The researcher understood the subject and studied the interview schedule to ensure that the interviews ran smoothly, which they did.

3.4.2. Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to use as a guide to the interviews. A semi-structured interview schedule is a set of predetermined questions that can be used as an appropriate instrument to engage the respondents (De Vos et al., 2011). The questions asked were focused on exploring the experiences of the young people based on McQuaid and Lindsey's integrated model of employability. The questions were structured in a way to gauge on the individual, personal circumstances and external factors that influence the respondents' employability. These questions helped the researcher as a form of cue and at

the same time, did not limit her from asking further questions to probe for more information as answers were given. According to Babbie and Mouton, (2001) it is the respondent's answers to the initial questions that should shape the subsequent questions. The researcher was able to probe using the respondents' answers. The interviewer also needs to be able to listen, think, and talk almost simultaneously. To assist the researcher with this, a data collection apparatus was used.

3.4.3. Data Collection Apparatus

In addition to the semi- structured interview schedule, a digital recorder was used to record the interviews to enable the researcher to focus on the interview and to record what was being said correctly and accurately. The digital recorder allowed the researcher to listen to the interviews once the interview process was complete. Permission was sought and obtained from the respondents to use this method of data capturing. The digital recorder allowed the researcher to be able to listen attentively and observe non-verbal cues and be more attentive, without worrying about taking notes during the interview process. This method also allowed for the free flow of information without many interruptions. According to the counter on the digital recorder, the shortest of the interviews was twenty minutes while the longest was an hour-and-a-half.

3.4.4. Data Collection Procedure

Through the snowball sampling approach the researcher would approach new respondents either to conduct the interview or to arrange a meeting, depending on their availability. Some of the interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes, while others were conducted at a private venue secured by the researcher. This process continued smoothly for the first few days until there was some disruption due to heavy rain in the area. When the rain had subsided, the researcher continued with approaching the respondents. On good days the researcher managed to conduct two to three interviews, while on some days it was only one interview. Not all the 19 youth were interviewed during the same period due to time constraints on the researcher's side. The first 15 interviews were conducted between the 8th and the 17th of April 2015, while the rest were conducted in March 2016. During the interview process, it became evident that the researcher would have to use both English and the home language of the respondents, IsiXhosa, to conduct the interviews. The use of these two languages was not a problem as the researcher's home language is also IsiXhosa. Thus,

the interviews were conducted using a mixture of both IsiXhosa and English to accommodate those who did not understand some of the concepts.

It did not come as a surprise to the researcher that some community members who were not in the youth category but also experiencing unemployment showed an interest in being interviewed; however, the researcher could not include them as they did not meet the criteria of the research. The interest of these adults over the age of 35 to participate in the research goes to show that in rural areas, unemployment is a non-generational curse, with both young people and adults experiencing it. Simply growing older did not mean that one would then be able to gain employment; it just meant that they were not youth anymore but were still experiencing the same challenges. This growing out of a certain age group is the same with what is experienced by the older youth cohort that is not included in the definition of the NEET youth. This adds to the challenge that young people in rural areas face: with regards to not having older people to look up to and ask about job opportunities, as they are not employed either.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data” (De Vos et al., 2011:333). The data collected were analysed using the adaptation of Tesch’s method (1990 as cited in De Vos, 2011). The process used comprised the following steps:

1. First, the researcher transcribed all the 19 interviews conducted in IsiXhosa from the digital recorder verbatim, while also translating them into English. The researcher then read through each of the transcriptions twice.
2. During this process, the researcher made notes on the prominent and common ideas as they emerged from all the transcripts.
3. The researcher clustered these around the major themes in the interview schedule.
4. The researcher then began grouping together the common elements from all the interview transcriptions. The researcher spent some time arranging and rearranging the common ideas into meaningful themes and categories. The researcher then wrote codes next to the main themes throughout all the transcripts and used colour codes to identify them.
5. The themes were named using the research questions as a guide; others were named using the words of the respondents themselves as a guide. Related themes and

categories were then grouped together under the different headings.

6. The identification of the themes and categories provided a great deal of information, and the researcher spent some time determining the relevant themes. Much collapsing and regrouping of these elements was carried out until the researcher was confident with the way they were grouped.
7. After this, a framework of analysis was developed using the themes and categories that emerged from this process. In the discussion in the next chapter, the researcher has linked the themes from the interviews with findings discussed in the literature review and then used actual quotations from the transcriptions to substantiate the claims.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a researcher, it is important to ensure that care is taken to deal with participants in a respectful manner. Research is guided by ethical principles to ensure that no harm comes to the participants of a research project (De Vos, et al 2011). From the beginning the researcher made sure that ethical considerations would be incorporated in the process of conducting this research. Ethical clearance was granted by the ethics committee from the Department of Social Development of the University of Cape Town. The following ethical considerations were incorporated into the research:

No harm to participants

Harm to participants may include both physical and emotional harm. The researcher had foreseen that there might be some emotional harm to the participants. The research questions touched on the sensitive issue of unemployment among the youth, which may have triggered some feelings such as anger, depression and despair. During the interviews, the participants were assured that they could withdraw at any point if they felt uncomfortable to continue with the interview and that they had the right not to answer questions that they did not want to answer. None of the respondents displayed emotional problems during the interview process.

Informed consent

Accurate and complete information about the research, its purpose and process were given to respondents so that they could give informed consent. Where clarification was required, the researcher provided the information. To accompany this information, a consent form

with information about the research was given to each of the respondents, and they were all asked to give written consent to take part in the study, which they all did.

Confidentiality

For this study, the participants were asked to use pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity during the interview process. At the start of each interview, the researcher asked the respondent to provide a pseudonym they would like to be used during the interview. The respondents were assured that the interviews were confidential and that their responses would be presented under these pseudonyms during the write-up process. The researcher conducted the interviews in a private venue that the researcher secured, and with some, at a quiet location in their homes.

No deception of the participants

The respondents were given sufficient information about the researcher, her background, location and research objectives.

Co-operation with other stakeholders

Full ethical clearance was granted by the Department of Social Development at the University of Cape Town before this research was conducted. The participants were informed that the research was for the completion of the researcher's master's thesis and that all information gathered would only be shared in a report and with a supervisor from the university without disclosing their names.

3.7. DATA VERIFICATION

According to Tutty, Rothery and Grinnell (1996), data verification is a process of ensuring that the data collected is, in fact, valid data. At this stage, researchers have to use a different lens when appraising, assessing and judging qualitative data. The evaluation is not about researcher objectivity but about data objectivity. The verbatim transcriptions of the interviews will form part of the paper trail as evidence of the interviews for the purpose of verifying the data, and as such, both the transcriptions and recordings will be submitted with the research report. All aspects of the process used to analyse the data have been kept on record for reference. In addition to the meetings with the supervisor to discuss an analytical approach, the researcher attended a three-day course on qualitative data analysis to help

guide her in scientific analysis.

3.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The limitations of the research will be discussed in relation to the sample size and gender composition. The initial plan for the researcher was to interview twenty NEET respondents from the rural community, both male and female. However this was not possible as one of the respondents was not available for the interview even though they had committed to participating in the study. As a result the researcher ended up interviewing 19 respondents. The sample was composed of more females than males for the reasons described above. The overall aim of the study was to gain an in-depth account on the perceptions of the respondents regarding their employability which could be achieved through a small sample. This could inform larger scale studies in the future.

3.9. REFLEXIVITY

In research, reflexivity is built through the acknowledgement of the ideological and historical power that dominant forms of inquiry exert over the researcher and the researched. The researcher is in the mid-20s, the same age group as the older age group cohort, which made access to and building trust with the respondents easier. The familiarity with the social context and language of the respondents also worked to the researcher's advantage. The fact that the researcher was coming from a university also gave her some form of authority and the respondents were able to trust her intentions with the research. The researcher had some assumptions as to the choices that some of the youth have made, but had to guard against not putting words into the respondents' mouths and had to be aware of biases and assumptions throughout the process.

3.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodology used in this research study on exploring the perceptions of rural youth of factors that affect their employability. The research questions sought to find the perceptions of rural youth on their NEET status, their employment aspirations and the skills that they perceived themselves to possess, the resources they found at their disposal and the barriers perceived towards reaching their employment endeavours. The sampling approach and the research instrument used to elicit the information on perceptions of the factors that affect the respondents' employability were discussed. An

adaptation of Tesch's method to analyse the data using the main research questions was described. The limitations of the study were discussed in relation to the sample size and gender composition.

The following chapter will focus on the analysis and discussion of findings

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings from the qualitative interviews with 19 youth that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) of the factors that influence their employability. Firstly, the profile of the respondents will be presented and discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the respondents' NEET status. A framework for the discussion of the findings will then be presented (Table 3). After that, the findings will be discussed using a layered analysis approach. The analysis will be based on the key questions of the study which include the respondent's experiences of their NEET status, their employment aspirations, the perceived skills and resources they have at their disposal and the perceived barriers to their employment.

4.2. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents to provide the context in which to understand their responses.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

VARIABLE		NUMBER	PERCENTAGE (%)
Gender	Males	8	42
	Females	11	58
Age cohort	18-24	13	68
	25-35	6	32
Average age	18-24	22	
	25-35	28	
Race	Black	19	100
Highest grade completed	Grade 8	1	5
	Grade 9	4	21
	Grade 10	1	5
	Grade 11	8	42
	Grade 12	3	16
	TVET	2	11
Average school leaving age		19	
Family structure	Nuclear family	0	0
	Single Parent	0	0
	Extended family	19	100
Community type	Rural	19	100
	Urban	0	0
SAMPLE SIZE = 19			

The majority of the respondents in the study were female (58%), while 42% were male. All the respondents were black South Africans and IsiXhosa speaking. The average age of the respondents in the 18-24 age cohort was 22 years with 68% of the participants in this cohort. The average age amongst the 25-35 age cohort was 28 with 32% of the participants falling into this cohort.

The average school leaving age of the respondents was 19 years. The highest level of education achieved amongst the majority of respondents was grade 11 with eight (42%) of the respondents having left school just before grade 12. Two of the respondents cited having obtained a qualification from a Technical and Vocational Training College (13%). While two respondents reported completing grade 12 (13%); four respondents completed grade 9 (21%), one respondent completed grade 10 (5%) and one respondent completed grade 8 (5%). Studies have shown high levels of attrition from secondary school are major contributors to the NEET problem in South Africa, especially after grade 10 (DHET, 2010b). These results suggest that there may be some major challenges that cause young people to leave school before grade 12, and particularly after grade 11. The respondents in this study mentioned numerous reasons for leaving school, which will be discussed in the sections to follow.

All the respondents live in the rural community of Tsazo in Engcobo. Twelve (63%) of the respondents have children of their own. Having dependents is one of the main reasons that the respondents want to gain employment; so that they can provide for them financially. Having dependants is a personal circumstance as noted by McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) that has led to the respondents feeling pressure to gain employment. None of the three male participants who shared that they have children were living with their children; all the children were reported to be living with their mothers. The fact that only the female participants who are parents live with their children, goes to show how women carry the burden of child-rearing.

None of the participants lived in a nuclear family structure; they all resided in extended family set ups with their parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, children and their nephews and nieces. This pattern concurs with the findings by Stats SA (2016) which reveal that, in

South Africa, young people are more likely to live in extended households than in any other household type (Stats SA, 2016). Studies have found that living in extended family set ups may be very beneficial for those that are unemployed as through these relatives unemployed youth are able to receive financial support and address some basic needs (Klasen and Woolard, 2008). This form of familial capital received by the youth through support, finances and other needs may be one of the important benefits of living in rural areas.

For the 25-35 age cohort, living in a nuclear family with a spouse and a child or children is one of the fundamental characteristics in transitioning to adulthood. However, none of the six male and female respondents in the 25-35 age cohort reported living in such conditions. This delay in starting own families shows that, due to their unemployment status, their transition to adult roles has been postponed.

The description of the respondents confirms the typical characteristics of the unemployed in South Africa: they are more likely to be female than male, young and black with low levels of education and residing in rural areas (Stats SA, 2014; Mncwango, 2016). Hence the focus on rural areas in this study.

4.3. RESPONDENTS' NEET STATUS

The respondents were asked questions to determine their NEET status. The questions included enquiries about when and why they dropped out of school. Most respondents (33%) cited financial reasons for early school leaving: there was not enough money for them to continue schooling, so they ended up dropping out of school. Some of the respondents dropped out of school before the introduction of no-fee schools in South Africa. However, even though the South African government might have introduced no-fee schools as a way to make sure that young people attend school, there are other financial needs that school going youth have, including money for transport to school, school uniforms and other necessities. The narratives below illustrate how financial constraints in the respondents' homes led them to drop out; as they could not afford some of the necessities they needed for school.

Things got difficult at home, there were three of us and my grandmother had to take care of all three of us so she couldn't afford to take all of us to school, so I decided to drop out. (Myoni, male, 23)

It was hard for me to go to school because I didn't have some of the things that are needed at school, like uniform and having to pay school fees because back then we were still paying and I could not afford to. (Siphokazi, female, 34)

These narratives show how personal circumstances (McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005) can affect employability status. Had these youth's families been able to afford their schooling they would have gained higher levels of educational attainment. This would help them be more employable, however this is not the case as they lack the educational requirements needed to gain employment. Pregnancy was also among the reasons cited for leaving school early. Four (36%) of the eleven female respondents cited pregnancy as the reason they dropped out of school. For them, the main aim was to drop out and seek work to support their children. However, this did not succeed as they did not possess the required skills or educational attainment needed to gain employment.

I fell pregnant and had a child, so I stopped going to school thinking I would go and work so that I can have an income to raise the child. (Sinazo, female, 24)

...for example I stopped schooling in grade 11, but I am not going to say I dropped out because there was no money to continue, it's because I fell pregnant and had a baby. (Chulumanco, female, 24)

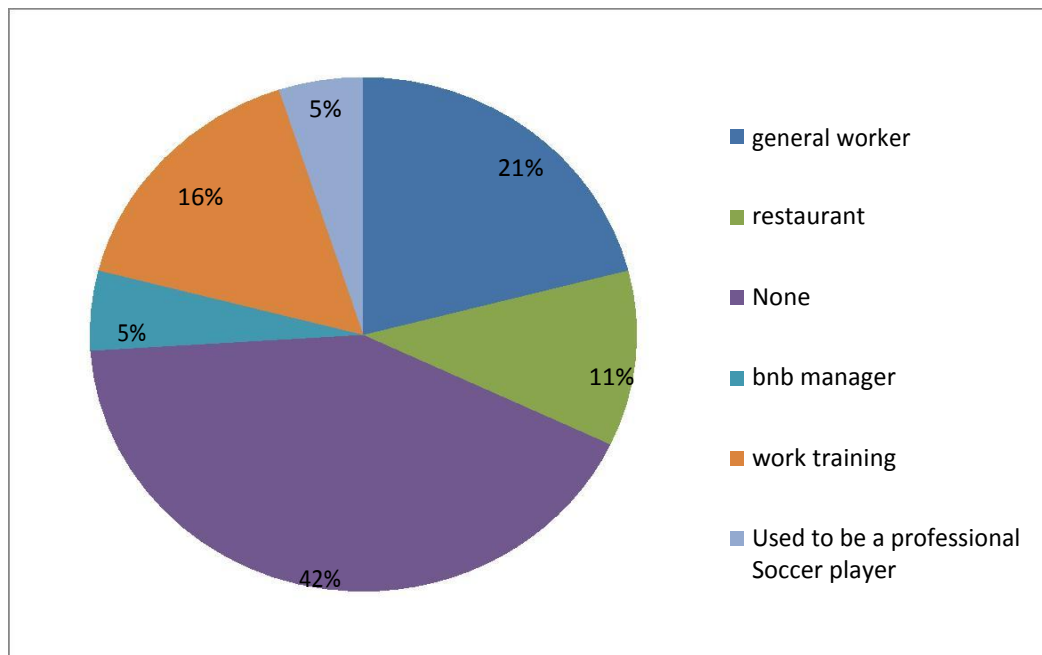
Pregnancy and economic constraints are some of the main reasons that lead to many youth leaving school. According to Grant and Hallman (2008), in South Africa, most schooling disruptions are attributed to economic constraints. For many female learners school disruptions can also be attributed to pregnancy. These were the main causes of school disruptions amongst the rural respondents in the study. The South African Department of Education (2007) reported that 30 percent of non-enrolled and non-matriculated 15-18 year-old females name pregnancy as the primary reason for not continuing their education. This finding is in line with what Strassberg et al. (2010) found in their study on school dropouts in South Africa where financial pressures and social processes such as teenage pregnancy were amongst the causes of dropping out of school. Pregnancy and finances have a high impact on whether an individual continues to attend school or goes to find work to support a new family. Although measures have been put in place to try and ensure that young people remain in school, it is also important to consider other social pressures such as school uniforms, transport fares and who looks after the young people's children when they decide

to go back to school. These are important factors that may have an influence on whether one continues to study.

One reason for not being in school came from those that had obtained college qualifications: they were unable to find employment and, as a result were now back at home as NEET youth. None of the respondents received skills training through skills training programmes, even though they seemed to know about the availability of such programmes. There are a number of reasons that lead to young people being in the NEET status. These reasons have to do with access to opportunities and financial constraints and responsibilities of the youth. It shows that not all youth in the NEET category have dropped out of school, or are without the required qualifications. Some youth possess more valued qualifications like a Matric or TVET qualification but still cannot gain employment. It is therefore, important to note that one's NEET status may not only be attributed to individual deficits only but to their personal circumstances and external factors like the unavailability of jobs.

Figure 1 below, depicts the respondents' work experience. About 42% of the respondents have never had any form of work experience. The fact that a large number of these young people have never had any form of experience reflects on the low labour demand in their local town. This may be a contributor to their not being able to gain employment. Four (21%) male participants have worked as general workers on the construction sites around Tsazo location.

Figure 1: Work Experience of Respondents



Two (11%) of the female respondents have worked in restaurants in the Engcobo town. The three (16%) respondents that had enrolled for TVET qualifications managed to gain some form of work training through the practical component of their programmes. The fact that these respondents were able to gain this kind of experience shows how education can open opportunities for young people. This work training was, however, still not enough to help these respondents gain employment even after they had received their college qualification. Studies have shown that some TVET college graduates struggle to find employment as many employers hold poor images about TVET colleges (Mlatsheni, 2012). Another observation one can make from these results is that, in rural areas, the world of work is gendered. This gender disparity is seen by the kinds of jobs that the female respondents have done (working in restaurants), while their male counterparts work in construction.

4.4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section analyses the respondents' responses to the key questions of the study. The responses will be presented according to their responses to the experiences and perceptions of unemployment, their employment aspirations, their perceived skills and supportive resources as well as the perceived barriers to their employment status. The framework of analysis in Table 3 was developed using the responses from the respondents.

Table 3: Framework for Analysis

THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
Experiences and Perceptions of Unemployment	Sense of inadequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling unworthy - No value - Loss of dignity
	Loss of Independence & Self-Reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having to ask for money to buy necessities - Loss of autonomy
	Unable to provide for loved ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not being able to provide for parents - Children
	Involvement in Risky Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transactional sex - Alcohol Abuse - Crime
Employment Aspirations	Local labour market driven employment aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Types of jobs - Optimism about their own capabilities
	Own businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening own farming business - Selling clothes
	Important characteristics for job acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary - distance - Transport costs
Perceived Skills and supportive resources	Work seeker attitudes towards work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of gaining experience - Adaptability
	CV as Job seeking tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of curriculum vitae (cv)
	Word of Mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friends - Family - Community
	Culture of work at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation - Advice
Perceived Barriers to accessing desired jobs	Explanations for unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General scarcity of jobs - Low education attainment - Expectations from employers - Lack of information about alternative pathways
	Attitudes towards job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bad treatment from recruiters - Employers don't give work seekers a chance to compete - Family name
	Lack of resources to start own businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No financial support - Inadequate information sources - No employment opportunities after training

4.4.1. Experiences and Perceptions of Unemployment

When asked to share their experiences and perceptions of unemployment, various responses came up. In particular, a sense of inadequacy, loss of independence and self-reliance, and propensity to engage in risky behaviour were highlighted.

4.4.1.1 Sense of Inadequacy

One of the common sentiments expressed by the respondents was the sense of inadequacy and concern about how they were perceived by others due to their unemployment status. This concern was shared in statements that expressed feelings of loss of dignity, feeling unworthy and of no value to others because they did not have money.

The times we are living in money talks, if you don't have money you are a nobody. So to be someone you have to work and make money. Not having money makes you lose your dignity, you are nothing. (Lavuvu, male, 22)

Being unemployed affects you very badly because you are constantly thinking about where you will get money, and people just treat you like you are a nobody who is just wondering around. (Luthando, male 21)

It's not good to be young and unemployed because you don't have anything, and people don't even pay attention to what you have to say, you just don't matter. (Anga, male, 23)

These narratives show how young people who are not employed place much value on having money. Young men, in particular, see having money as a way in which they can gain respect, social acceptance and recognition from their families and the community at large. However, their unemployment status makes this impossible. This significance put on having money translates to the belief that for the unemployed, without money, they cannot be respected or hold any form of dignity within their families and communities. These findings concur with the work of Noble, Ntshongwana, and Surrender (2008) whose research showed that people place high regard on paid work, and its significance in promoting one's dignity. Being employed means that one can earn money and be able to contribute to the family and be recognised as someone useful within the community. Sen (2000) further states that joblessness may lead to loss of freedom because without any income, youth may not have the chance to be involved in decision making.

4.4.1.2. Loss of Independence and Self-Reliance

The respondents also attribute their perceived loss of independence and self-reliance to unemployment. In a sense, the respondents felt that they could not do anything for themselves without asking for money from someone else first.

It's not good to be young and unemployed because now every time when you need something you have to ask from someone else, whereas if you were working you would just buy yourself whatever you want. Now it hurts because if you want

something you have to go ask someone. (Ayanda, female, 18)

It's not right because you end up not having a lot of things and you have to ask for money whenever you want to do something for yourself. That is not a nice feeling. (Myoni, male, 24)

It's very difficult because it's not nice to ask people for things all the time. As a young person you just want to be able to do things on your own. (Lavu, male, 22)

The responses above show that the respondents experience some form of emotional difficulty from knowing that they are unable to rely on themselves financially. They always have to go through someone to be able to finance their needs. Being unemployed to them means that they have to be financially dependent on someone else for anything they need; this includes being able to buy clothes and other necessities for themselves. Sen (2000) describes this as a loss of freedom where young people must be materially supported all the time as a result of joblessness. Being materially and financially supported clearly affects the decision making of the youth because without their own income they have to depend on someone else's approval or assistance to be able to participate in activities or buy things they enjoy. Research findings by Klasen and Woolard (2008) also show that such dependence places a burden on those who support the youth and may have considerable effects on their poverty status.

4.4.1.3. Unable to Provide for Loved Ones

In turn, the respondents expressed frustration at being unable to provide and take care of their parents at their current age.

It is very difficult to be unemployed at this age because you look at yourself and think I should be contributing something at home and not asking parents for money because they also have to take care of younger siblings too. I would like to see myself with my own things and be independent. (Nyameko, male, 22)

Being young and unemployed makes you to not feel well because as young people we need money to be able to feel like we are people that matter too. And there are certain things that you can't always be asking your parents for. Even for parents it's a good feeling to know that if they have just mealie meal, they can count on their child to bring something to eat it with. So now if you are just sitting at home they can't even rely on you. (Mzi, Male, 24)

Yes, because now I cannot move forward with my life. I cannot do stuff for myself, like if I need something I must first go and ask from my grandmother. If my child is

sick I must ask grandmother for money to take the child to the doctor. Whereas if I was working I would just take money from my own pocket and take the child to the doctor (Chulumanco, female, 24)

These young people feel strongly that at this stage, they are the ones who should be taking care of the financial needs of their families. They are also unable to take care of their own financial responsibilities towards their children. This kind of responsibility towards family is what is expected by society as an individual transition into adulthood. These social positions have a huge role in how youth view themselves. Being able to provide for one's family is one of the markers of transitioning to adulthood (Honwana, 2014). However, for these young people their unemployment status hinders them from taking on this adulthood role.

4.4.1.4. Engagement in Risky Behaviour

The respondents also attributed their involvement in risky behaviour to being unemployed. These behaviours included transactional forms of relationships, substance abuse and involvement in criminal activities.

For me it affects me because I end up doing things I shouldn't be doing because I don't have anything to do. I end up going to places and be happy doing things I shouldn't be doing like drinking and getting drunk. Sometimes you go and find some guys at a shebeen and then they will buy you alcohol. In return you have to give them your body. (Sinazo, female, 24)

It's very hard to be young and unemployed because you end up doing things you would not be doing if you were working. Like mixing yourself with the wrong crowd, drinking and doing all these wrong things. For example, when I was working, I was not drinking. (Ayakha, female, 28)

It's very bad because you end up doing things you did not want to do. Like you go out and then you meet a guy that you don't even love and you sleep with them not because you love them but because you want them to do something for you. (Athi, female, 26)

It does affect you because you end up not being the same person that your family raised you to be and you turn to crime. Because you want money and sometimes when I ask some people they would say they have been looking for work for a long time and the reason that they have turned to crime is because they have no money and things to do with their time. (Ben, male, 24)

The narratives show how not being in employment, education or training has led these young people into risky behaviours. Firstly, the young people attribute their reasons for drinking with not being in employment. Ayakha, above even goes on to state that when she was working, she was not drinking, but now that she no longer works, she finds herself drinking

which means that this is something that she does to escape her reality and occupy her time. Sen (2000) notes that unemployment can lead to psychological harm and misery amongst those that are unemployed.

The young women mention getting into relationships as a way to gain something in return, whether financial or getting someone to buy them alcohol. Due to their unemployment status, it seems that these young women use sex as a commodity so that they can meet their material needs. Research has shown that the transactional nature of relationships is a feature that appears in contexts of poverty with no jobs. For instance, Selikow, Zulu and Cedra (2002) found that the combination of poverty and materialistic or consumerist culture amongst the youth means that having money or the lack of money occupies a key part of the world of youth; as a result they would do anything for money. This behaviour is, however, not a very safe practice especially in the time where the risk of HIV/AIDS infection is high, as it puts these young people at a risk of contracting the virus and unplanned pregnancies.

Some of the respondents shared that being unemployed can lead to resorting to crime as a way to make money. Because young people are deprived of material needs as a result of their joblessness they may resort to criminal acts. This is consistent with Sen's (2000) work, who explained that young people that are not in employment may feel excluded from making an honest living and thus turn to criminal activities to make money.

The unfortunate circumstances in which these respondents found themselves, however, do not mean that they do not have any aspirations. The following section will look into the employment aspirations of these NEET young people. Even with such challenges, the youth still have aspirations with regard to gaining employment.

4.4.2. Employment Aspirations

The respondents were asked about their employment aspirations, in particular, questions about what kind of jobs they pictured themselves doing, whether they believed they could gain such employment and what steps they had taken to find these jobs. The responses reflected two trends: job aspirations that were largely driven by the local town's labour market; and a few who wanted to work for themselves. This was accompanied by the optimism they had in their capabilities. The important characteristics they looked for in a job were also explored to reflect their aspirations.

4.4.2.1 Local labour Market Driven Employment Aspirations

The respondents mentioned a variety of jobs that they pictured themselves doing. Table 4 below categorises these jobs by sector. Some of the respondents mentioned more than one job. The majority of the respondents' job aspirations were informed by the kind of employment opportunities available in their local town which is characterised by work in retail and wholesalers as well as work on construction sites.

Table 4: List of Job Types by Sector

Job type	%	Age group		Gender
		18-24	25-35	
Construction and maintenance	37	6	1	6 male and 1 female
Self-employment	16	1	2	female
Services sector	11		2	female
Wholesale	11	2		female
Any type	26	3	2	4 female and 1 male
Professions (doctor, teacher social worker)	11	2		female
IT sector	5	1		Male

The majority of the respondents mentioned that they would like to work in the construction and maintenance sector as painters, plumbers, tilers and brick layers; these were mostly male respondents. Another two expressed the desire to work in the wholesale sector and two in the services industry, one as a hotel manager and the other as a bank teller. Some youth alluded to opening their own businesses in order to make a living. Three of the participants expressed the desire to start their own businesses. Two of the participants stated that they aspired to work as professionals such as being a doctor, teacher or social worker. These reflected on the high aspirations of these two youth with regards to gaining employment with a profession status. One respondent shared a desire to work in the Information Technology sector as a software developer. About five of the participants mentioned that they could do any kind of work that was offered to them, showing that they were not picky about the kinds of work they would do.

Most of these responses were jobs that the young people could find in their local town. Although the type of jobs that the respondents aspired to do were influenced by their local labour market, the fact that they were able to identify and decide on the appropriateness of the jobs sought shows that these young people possessed job seeking abilities. This ability

to decide on the appropriate job is one of the individual attributes that McQuaid and Lindsey (2005), state as important for one's employability status. This shows that the youth do have an idea of their capabilities and what they would like to do with their lives given the chance.

4.4.2.2. Optimism about Own Capabilities

About eight of the respondents shared that, had there been enough employment opportunities in their surroundings, they would be able to gain employment; however, they were discouraged because they knew there were no opportunities available to them. This optimism from the respondents shows that these youth were confident about their own capabilities but were restricted by the scarcity of jobs in their town. This reflects on the impact of external factors such as the scarcity of jobs on an individual's employability (McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005).

4.4.2.3. Own Businesses

Some of the respondents shared the idea of starting their own businesses through selling clothes or starting their own farming business.

I can do any job where I'm doing something for myself, like a job where I can be self-employed and sell stuff for myself. I could even sell clothes. (Siphokazi. Female, 34)

As I have said before, I am now attracted to farming so the main aim now is to focus on farming and start doing things on my own and start ploughing fields. (Ben, male, 24)

The narratives show that these respondents prefer working for themselves to working for other people. These respondents seem to be opting for a way in which they can make things work for themselves without expecting someone else to create work for them. One of the self-employment ideas that these respondents mentioned had to do with agriculture and farming. The willingness to be involved in agricultural and farming activities is there but the mechanisms to create these kinds of jobs for rural young people are missing. The National Youth Policy (RSA, 2015) has acknowledged that a lot needs to be done to promote and support youth participation in the agricultural sector, particularly issues such as access to land, implements and inputs, business skills, access to information, opportunities and markets. Given that these youth have shown some interest in agricultural activities, this could help rural youth to be able to participate in the economy without having to leave their rural homes for urban areas.

4.4.2.3. Important Characteristics of a Job

When asked about the characteristics they considered most when looking for a job the most common sentiment mentioned by the respondents was the amount of income they would earn. This was followed by transportation cost and the distance from home to work. The financial aspect of the job was particularly important to the respondents as they did not have any other form of income. This is also largely because earning one's own money is associated with adulthood. The sentiments about earnings are consistent with findings of Mncwango (2016) in a study about work seeker attitudes: unemployed individuals were found to be concerned most about earnings when looking for work.

This was followed by how they would then spend that money through paying for transport costs, hence the consideration of the distance between the place of work and their homes. For many people living in rural areas, transportation costs can be a burden since their workplaces are normally away from the rural areas and in the towns. Findings from the research by the Western Cape Youth Commission (2008) showed that people living in rural areas are burdened by paying for transport to get to their places of work as these are normally in town and away from their communities. The fact that people living in rural areas have to travel to get to work means that a portion of their earnings have to be spent on transport costs which can be a huge burden, especially for those that do not earn a lot. As a result, the amount that one earns has to be measured against the distance and traveling costs in order to make the decision whether to take the job or not. This is an important aspect to consider when looking into employing people from rural areas as their decision making is affected by it.

4.4.3. Perceived Skills and Supportive Resources

The respondents were then asked questions relating to what skills they thought one should possess to gain employment and the supportive resources they had in their job search endeavours. Their responses had to do with the importance of looking for work to gain experience, how they obtained job information, and motivation to look for work from their personal networks and the use of curriculum vitae (CVs) to look for work.

4.4.3.1. The Importance of Gaining Work Experience

Having some form of work experience can be useful when it comes to gaining employment. When asked about the skills needed to get work most of the respondents indicated that one had to be willing to do any form of work in order to gain skills and work

experience.

It depends on the kind of job you are doing because, for example as labourers, people earn 80 rands per day. So if you have told yourself that you want to learn a certain skill, you can actually accept whatever job you get in the hope that you will gain skills and experience to help you secure other jobs. (Mzi, male, 24)

There are no skills needed in order to work, you just have to be able to work. You must be someone who can work under pressure and be dedicated to your work no matter what the situation. (Ayakha, female, 28)

I think a person's personality is important, because if you are dedicated to your work, even if you didn't have the skill, you can still learn and gain experience. So if you are active and don't look down on yourself, you can do anything. (Lavu, male, 22)

What is emerging from these narratives is that young people are willing to adapt to any working environment in order to increase their capabilities through gaining work experience. For these respondents having a skill beforehand was not the main aim as they believed that one learns through doing; it was getting a job and learning from it that would help them secure more opportunities and be employable. This outlook also had to do with the kind of attitude that young people have when it comes to work. Having a good and ready-to-learn attitude was important. McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) assert that being able to adapt in the work environment is an important personal attribute to aid one's employability. The respondents seem to possess the important attributes, positive attitude and adaptability but they lack the networks to access scarce job opportunities.

4.4.3.2. Existence of Culture of Work at Home

In addition to the above, the existence of a culture in which work is encouraged and supported within the family served as a way of motivation for the respondents to want to look for work and make something of themselves.

I do have people at home that give me advice about work and motivate me and sometimes my friends do help. (Nyameko, male, 22)

Yes, having people that have jobs at home does motivate me because I sometimes think if I could be working like them I would also be fine. (Ayanda, female, 18)

Having people that are doing something with their lives in my life helps me because they motivate me to be strong in what I want to do. (Ben, male,

24)

*Having someone that works at home does motivate me because she works for herself and I also want to work so that I can have my own things.
(Chulumanco, female, 24)*

By seeing what their relatives were able to do for themselves when they were working served as an encouragement for the respondents to want to look for work. The presence of people that can motivate and give advice to unemployed youth plays a vital role in their ability to find a job. For instance, having family members that have gone to school or have jobs makes it easier for young people to have someone to look up to and ask questions about career paths and employment as is evident in the above statements. These findings refute findings by Klasen and Woolard (2008) which showed that the unemployed get stuck in rural households to get support from relatives and thereby reduce their search and employment prospects. These young people gathered some form of motivation to look for work from their working relatives. Hoppers (2002) states that the socio-economic background to which one belongs has an impact on one's ability to find a job. However, one could argue that sharing a home with people that work serves as a form of safety net for the unemployed, as they do not have to carry the burden of having to buy groceries and other basic needs even though they would like to contribute.

4.4.3.3. Word of Mouth

When asked about where they found information on employment opportunities, most of the respondents shared that people from their personal networks helped them with information regarding openings; this included friends, family and people from the community.

*I mostly hear from my friends and then go to where they say the jobs are available.
(Margaret, female, 27)*

I have a WhatsApp group where myself and my friends will send each other messages in terms of job opportunities and sometimes we just call each other to share that information. (Tenzolution, male, 27)

I listen out from the people in the community when they share that certain places are looking for employees. (Anga, male, 23)

It's important to have people like family that can assist you or be on a lookout for you with job searches because sometimes I might not see the post and they see it and then they tell me about it. (Nyameko, male, 22)

I hear from people, so someone might say they are taking CVs at a certain place and I take my CV there too. The Internet is not something we have access to, so I have never used it. (Chulumanco, female, 24)

So you will hear from people in the community that there are hiring at Spar or Shoprite then I run and take my CV there. (Ayakha, female, 28)

The narratives show that these young people rely on word of mouth to obtain job information. This reliance on word of mouth places their search in the hands of the people in their immediate circle and community. This, however, has some form of limitation as these young people can only get this information from people close to them. For example, when one is in employment or involved in some form of training or education it is easier to gain access to people who might have information about work, as their circles and reach are broader. But for young people, who are out of school, training and employment this is not the case, as their circles are more limited and this further puts them in a vulnerable position. McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) in their three fold employability framework stress that access to resources including social capital such as family support networks and formal and informal community networks especially those relevant to job seeking is one of the most important contributors to one's employability. The UNDP (2014) highlights the importance of social networks, arguing that young people face social exclusion in the labour market not only because they lack work experience but because they lack social networks. The respondents may have family and friends to help them with information, but their position does not give them broad access to the right networks.

McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) explain that the use of formal search methods like the internet and job search agencies is important in the job search process. None of the respondents mentioned using such resources to help find employment; as a result, this has a high impact on whether these young people will find the right information on opportunities available for them, hence their unemployment status.

4.4.3.4. CV as Job Search Tool

In addition to the use of personal networks, the respondents valued the use of curriculum vitae (CVs) as a tool to sell themselves to prospective employers. Completing a CV and submitting it to prospective employers is an important part of the job search process as one has to be able to showcase one's skills and achievements. On top of the use of employment agencies and the internet methods for finding employment, McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) add that being able to compile one's own CV is a good personal skill to have. It is, however,

important to note that, in a CV one has to showcase one's educational attainments and some form of work experience. With the majority of the respondents having dropped out of school and also possessing no work experience one can safely assume that their CVs might not be very useful in their job search. For the respondents the CV is used as a way to get their contact information to employers so that when there are openings they can be contacted.

This section has shown that the respondents possess some of the important individual attributes that are needed in order for one to be employable. This is however coupled with poor work search strategies and not enough relevant social networks to inform these youth about available opportunities.

The following section discusses how the respondents perceive as the barriers to accessing jobs.

4.4.4. Perceived Barriers to Accessing Desired Jobs

The respondents were asked questions relating to the perceived barriers to their employment endeavours. It was important for the researcher to ask these questions to understand perceptions about the local labour market, as these could motivate or discourage individuals to participate in the wider labour market. Furthermore, these perceptions have the potential to influence an individual's decisions to search for employment. The responses ranged from a set of main reasons why they thought they were unemployed, which were then subdivided into categories including explanations for unemployment, attitudes towards work seekers and lack of supportive resources.

4.4.4.1. Explanations for Unemployment

The respondents were asked questions related to what they thought were the main reasons that they were unemployed. The main barrier mentioned is the general scarcity of jobs in their local town. About seven (37%) of the respondents cited this reason for their unemployment status. Three respondents mentioned that they had no idea why they could not find work as they had been looking, making the unavailability of jobs the main reason. This was followed by the low levels of education, which the respondents believed was another contributor to them not gaining employment, with most of them putting emphasis on not having a matric certificate as a barrier.

4.4.4.1.1 Scarcity of jobs

I haven't found work because there are no places where one can find employment here, like if I could have money to go somewhere else to look for work maybe I would find a job, but here there is nothing for us. (Zimkhitha, 19)

The main reason I have not found work is because I am always being told that there are no jobs available, or they are already full. Sometimes they will say they want men only or people with certificates or with a matric. (Siphokazi, female, 34)

The above narratives show that the general scarcity of jobs in the local town is perceived to be the main reason that the respondents have not found work. As can be seen from these narratives, the youth are eager to find work, as they keep on looking, but they are always met with the response that there are no jobs available. This places the key obstacle on the external factors related to the labour market rather than on youth not willing to look for work. Noble, Ntshongwana, and Surender (2008), similarly found that the main barrier to finding employment among the youth was a lack of jobs. The fact that not enough jobs are being created to meet the demands of the unemployed is therefore one of the greatest barriers to finding employment, and young people are aware of this.

4.4.4.1.2. Low levels of education

A significant number of the unemployed are reported to be under-skilled or inadequately educated. Most of the respondents attributed not being able to gain employment to their low levels of education, particularly not having a matric certificate. The following narratives highlight this situation:

There are some challenges you encounter when looking for work. For instance, my friends will tell me there is a job but then when you go to apply they will ask if you have a matric certificate and if you don't have it, then that means no work for you. (Luthando, male, 21)

Most job opportunities require that you have a matric, I have never seen any job advert that says you must have grade 7. So I think grade 12 must be the minimum. (Tenzolution, male, 27)

Marock (2008) states that education plays an important role in an individual's ability to find employment. As a result, the fact that many of these youth have left school before completing their matric puts them at a disadvantage, as many jobs nowadays require one to have a matric certificate or more skills sets.

4.4.4.1.3. TVET College as the Preferred Route

The respondents were aware that education was an important factor for them to gain employment but they had reservations concerning under what conditions they would go back to school, especially concerning going through the general schooling system where they would have to wear school uniform.

No, I can't go back to wearing uniform, maybe if I were to study on my own and then go write at the end of the year. But not go back to wearing uniform. (Asanda, female, 26)

I wouldn't go back and sit behind a desk at school wearing uniform. I can go to other schools like night school, but not during the day with young school kids. (Sinazo, female, 24)

Yes, I would like to go back to school, but not at a school where I would wear uniform, maybe to a place where I can gain some skills to help me make a living. (Siphokazi, female, 34)

From the narratives above it seems that the respondents are looking for alternative routes to gain education or skills to make themselves employable. The narratives also show that the likely route these youth would like to take is what can be offered in a technical and vocational training institution. Swartz (2012) has stated that TVET colleges are an attempt by government to broaden the options for youth to re-enter education. However, none of the youth mentioned this path. The fact that these youth did not mention what they would like to do exactly shows that these aspirations are clouded by the lack of information on what these institutions can offer them.

4.4.4.1.4. High expectations from employers

Furthermore, the respondents shared that employers have high expectations of them in the sense that, while they are out there looking for work to gain experience, employers are also looking for people with experience.

It's a difficult situation because when you are looking for a job, you are looking for experience but now they also want to employ someone with experience. So I guess this is where your educational attainment comes in and how you sell yourself. (Ayakha, female, 28)

Some places will ask for experience that is more than what you have even though you have a certificate. I believe I could if I boost my experience by doing odd jobs here and there. (Nyameko, male, 22)

Yes, problems like going to a place and asking for a job and then they ask you what skill or experience you have and you tell them you don't have any skills or experience you are looking to learn and then they just leave you there. That never sits well with the job seeker because you feel neglected. (Mzi, male, 24)

The narratives show how the expectation for them to have work experience blocks them from gaining employment. For these young people finding employment means that they will be able to gain experience; however, employers also require them to be experienced, leading to a catch 22 situation. This need for experienced workers further marginalises the unemployed youth. Booyens and Crause (2012) found the same results in their study with unemployed youth where the age-old chicken-and-egg situation of some jobs requiring the applicant to have work experience; with the reality being that not only are these young people not in employment, but many of them have no labour market experience.

4.4.4.2. Attitudes towards Job Seekers

The youth were then asked questions relating to how they experienced looking for employment. Their responses related to attitudes that were directed towards them by recruiters, and the issue of family names. The respondents shared that sometimes the attitudes they receive from employers when looking for work makes things even harder for them.

4.4.4.2.1. Recruiter Attitudes towards Work Seekers

It's very hard looking for employment because some people will shout at you, some ignore you and others will just say there is no work. (Sinazo, female, 24)

The experience seemed to be difficult for me in the sense that I went there to submit my CV and then they say they are not taking CVs, I must just come back when they are looking for general workers. So in that way my qualifications will not be working. I would just be doing any kind of work that is thrown at me. So because of that I just decided I am not going to go back there. (Tenzolution, male, 27)

Sometimes when you get into these offices they will direct you to a note on the door detailing that there are no jobs and they ask you if you can't read. (Margaret, female, 27)

It was very hard because when you get to a place looking for a job, they don't even give you a chance to say what you came for they just say, "We don't have any work." (Ayakha, female, 28)

The above narratives show that on top of being unemployed, many of these young people still have to deal with ill treatment from those from whom they seek employment. They are not given a chance even to have their voices heard nor have a fair chance to compete for jobs in the labour market as they are welcomed with rude remarks. This kind of treatment demonstrates the amount of marginalisation and exclusion that young people experience due to being unemployed (Sen, 2000). Despite not feeling valued in their homes and communities young people have taken the chance to go out and look for work, but are faced with greater marginalisation within the labour market. McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) mention the recruitment style of employers as important to the employability of individuals. This includes employer's formal recruitment and selection preferences and employer discrimination form. The treatment that these youth are experiencing from prospective employers could have a damaging effect on them with regard to continuing to look for employment.

4.4.4.2.2 Family Connections

Attitudes of employers can also be influenced by the issue of family names, where one's family can help give someone recognition in the job market, as shared by the respondents below:

People get hired because they are known or if they come from a known family, you don't just get a job this day and age, you have to know someone, (Asanda, female, 26)

You go to a place looking for a job and then they tell you there are no jobs, as soon as you walk out and someone else comes in looking for the same job and they get it. So they look at what family you come from or who you are connected to. (Lavu, male, 22).

The above instances show the importance of social networks in gaining employment. Having networks puts one at an advantage of being recognised. For these respondents, not coming from a well-known family and not having connections put them at a disadvantage in being considered for work. This also shows that not having connections at the right places may also put young people at a disadvantage. Thus, simply having the skills and qualifications to gain employment may not be enough for one to find employment. Simmons (2009), like McQuaid and Lindsey (2005), states that an individual may be employable because of their skills, abilities and qualities but may still not succeed in obtaining employment due to relative conditions in the economy and labour market. This section has shown that being

employable does not only require one to have the right qualifications; who you know, what is available in the labour market and how employers treat job seekers all have an important role to play in deciding the employability of young people.

4.4.4.3. Lack of Support Resources

Another factor that the youth perceived as a barrier to their gaining employment or creating employment for themselves was the fact that they had no access to resources such as formal information sources, opportunities where they could put their skills to use and capital to start their own businesses.

4.4.4.3.1. No Access to Capital

Even when the youth opt for starting their own businesses, there are some barriers related to accessing financial capital.

I am a person who is able to work with her hands, like I can do your hair and I can design clothes... If I could get a job in a salon or open my own salon... I would need someone to give me some capital to be able to open my own or a place where I can design clothes. (Margaret, female, 27)

I must have money for capital so that I can go buy the first batch but now I cannot do that because I do not have the money for capital. (Siphokazi, female, 34)

Like there's a garden where I stay that it has been abandoned, I don't know why. So if government could assist with something and have us revive it and people can have something to do... (Ayakha, female, 28)

The responses above show that the youth have thought of starting their own businesses, however, the lack of finances and assistance is prohibiting them from doing this. These findings echoed a study conducted among youth in the Western Cape in which a shortage of capital was cited as the main reason for not starting a business (Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008). It is important that young people are supported to achieve their aspirations. The youth mentioned that the government could play a role in assisting them with these challenges.

4.4.4.3.2. Inadequate Information Sources

Furthermore, the respondents also relayed that the manner in which they received the information could act as another barrier towards their job search endeavours.

You don't even hear from the ward committee that there are openings at the municipality; we must take our CVs there. You just find out after a long time that they were recruiting. No one tells us anything here. (Margaret, female, 27)

Sometimes when there's a place where they are hiring and then I don't get the information until the last day when I don't even have my CV ready or even the money to print the CV. (Ayakha, female, 28)

The above narratives show that the youth placed importance on having information sources that are timely and reliable to be able to provide them with adequate information on job opportunities. However these did not exist in their community.

4.4.4.3.3. No Work after Training

Related to the concern on lack of resources, the respondents also shared concerns about the kinds of training programmes that were brought to their community and the lack of job opportunities thereafter.

Before sending the people to training, they must make sure that there are enough job opportunities in that field. It is motivating to know that when I am done with this training this is where I am headed so that people don't go to school or for training and then come back to sit at home. (Ben, male, 24)

My understanding is that when you train for a certain skill, it's supposed to empower you to be able to do something. So when you are doing skills training you are the same as someone who is practising for a match, but with these ones some people don't get jobs because they are not enough for all the people that have been trained. (Mzi, male, 24)

It seems from the narratives above that even after having gone for skills training to help themselves to be marketable, the youth are still faced with unemployment. This might mean that they youth are trained in skills that are not useful for the labour market in their surroundings or there is not enough job opportunities for everyone.

4.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher presented the findings of the study. The findings reflected that the three factors that McQuaid and Lindsey (2005) put forward as influencers to an individual's employability do have an impact on rural youth. The following chapter presents the main conclusions and puts forward some recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The content of this chapter will focus on the main conclusions of the research, with regards to rural NEET youth's perceptions of factors affecting their employability. This will be followed by a discussion of the recommendations regarding what can be done to enhance rural NEET's employability. This study was conducted in the rural community of Tsazo location in the Manzana administrative area of Engcobo in the Eastern Cape. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of rural youth that are not in education, employment and not in training, on the factors that they think affect their employability. It was important to gain such insights from the youth as these would influence their decision making towards pursuing attempts to access the labour market or to engage in education and training. Nineteen young people between the ages of 18 and 34 were interviewed. The research questions had to do with how the youth experienced their unemployment status, their employment aspirations, and the skills they possessed supportive resources and perceived barriers to their gaining employment.

5.2. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions will be discussed in relation to the deficiencies faced by the respondents due to their unemployment status and with regards to McQuaid and Lindsey's threefold employability model. Table 5 below summarises the respondents' responses of the perceived factors that influence their employability using the integrated model of employability by McQuaid and Lindsey (2005).

The respondents alluded to a loss of self-worth, independence and self-reliance due to their unemployment status. Being unemployed means that youth cannot fulfil their financial responsibilities to themselves and to their children, for those who have children. This shortfall on their duties has led to their distress. Moreover they attribute their involvement in risky behaviours to their unemployment status. The risky behaviours include alcohol abuse as a way to occupy their time and involvement in transactional relationships and criminal activities to make money. Youth's involvement in these behaviours threatens their prospects of successful labour market outcomes.

Table 5: Respondents’ responses using McQuaid and Lindsey’s integrated model of employability

Individual factors	Personal circumstances	External factors
<p>Employability skills and attributes Possess Essential attributes (Basic Social skills) Willingness to work)</p> <p>Qualifications Low educational attainment</p> <p>Personal competencies Positive attitude to work Confidence in abilities</p> <p>Labour market attachment Insufficient work experience</p> <p>Demographic characteristics Females experience more unemployment</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Good</p> <p>Job Seeking Use of cv as a tool to look for work Lack of formal search services No access to the internet</p> <p>Adaptability and mobility Willing to learn attitude adaptable Rural location hinders mobility</p>	<p>Household circumstances Financial struggles in the home led to their NEET status Financial commitment to children and family Access to safe secure housing</p> <p>Work Culture Work encouraged in the home</p> <p>Access to Resources Lack of access to resources Lack of access to financial capital</p> <p>Access to Social Capital Access to personal and family support Limited access to formal community networks</p>	<p>Demand Factors Scarcity of jobs Rural Setting hinders the job search</p> <p>Recruitment factors Unfair Recruitment practices High Expectations from employers (Experience) Lack of information about alternative pathways No employment opportunities after completing training</p> <p>Enabling support factors</p> <p>Employment policy factors No access to public services and job matching facilities Limitations on training received (No work afterwards)</p> <p>Other enabling policy factors Child care present Transportation costly</p>

Individual Factors

On the individual level the findings from this study show that rural NEET youth possess some of the important individual attributes considered to play a role towards an individual’s employability. They have a high level of confidence when it comes to their abilities. Their attitude is that of people who are willing to work and would adapt to any kind of work environment. The respondents also show the ability to look for the appropriate work using tools such as curriculum vitae as an important tool to market themselves. However their low levels of educational attainment coupled with the ineffective work search strategies without the use of formal search services and the internet serves as hindrances towards their employability.

Personal Circumstances

The findings show that for many of the youth the reason of their NEET status has been due to their personal circumstances, relating to early pregnancy and lack of finances in their homes. Financial constraints in the home for instance have led to the youth dropping out of school before acquiring the needed qualifications. The youth however seem to have a good familial support structure, with regards to assistance in the provision of basic needs and emotional support. Work is also encouraged within their homes as such they receive information about work opportunities from their families and friends.

One of the barriers for their employability would be the lack of own personal finances to assist in their job search as this can also be a financial burden. Another challenge is the unavailability of formal networks to help share information about opportunities as these youth are not exposed to spaces where they can receive that information. The fact that the youth are at different stages in their lives also serves as a determinant as to whether they will look for paid employment or want to continue with education and skills training.

External Factors

The most cited reason for the respondents' unemployment was the general scarcity of jobs in the local town. This played a major role with regards to the respondents trust in finding work in their town. This places the key obstacle with the labour market rather than the youth not having the competencies. This unavailability of work is coupled with the unfair recruitment practices of the employers where family connections seem to help in getting one employment compounds the youth from gaining employment. Employers were also accused for having high expectations by looking for employees with work experience whereas the youth possessed none due to the scarcity of jobs. The way in which youth experience the job search process also has an effect on whether they continue looking for employment.

The fact that these young people reside in a rural areas also serves as a hindrance to their employability as there is a lack of opportunities and services in rural areas. Services such as job matching facilities to give information to unemployed youth are absent in this rural community. For some of the youth the decision to accept a job was measured against the amount they would pay to and from work. This shows that the geographical location of a job compared to where one resides also serves as an integral component to an individual's employability.

The findings suggest that personal and external factors have a high influence on rural youth's employability compared to individual factors. This means that more work has to be done on a policy level to enhance the development of young people in the rural areas. An integrated approach to enhancing the employability of young people is thus crucial as a number of factors influence their prospects in intersecting ways. The measures which young people take as a way to feel included may pose as a threat to their employability. The employability and inclusion of young people are thus not only dependent on the individuals but on the support from communities, government and employers as well.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested based on the conclusions above. These recommendations focus on the role that can be played by young people, their families and communities, local agencies, the government and employers to enhance the employability of young people.

- NEET youth are not a homogenous group; interventions targeted at them must consider their different realities and needs. Policies have to differentiate groups of youth and look at causes of unemployment holistically.
- When looking at factors that influence individuals' employability, the individual's competencies, their personal circumstances including their needs as well as labour and economic factors have to be taken into consideration.
- Measures have to be taken to look into the emotional well-being of unemployed young people.
- Society has an important role in moulding youth that are confident and able to contribute to society at large. There needs to be a careful consideration of the message that is sent to the youth about their shortcomings both from employers and communities as these may not only be their own doing but a manifestation of the structural barriers that they experience.
- Efforts should be directed to improving the job prospects of the unemployed, either through enhancing their education and skills or access to finance for self-
- Although TVET colleges have been strategically placed in many rural towns as a skilling mechanism, many youth still believe that access to those is unattainable. It is imperative that TVET colleges start a system where information about what they offer is available to everyone in the communities that they serve.
- In as much as personal networks are useful in the gaining of information about employment they can also be restrictive, especially in rural areas and for those that

are not in education, employment or training. As a result, provision of access to formal information systems, including the internet and centres for job seekers, is important.

- Given that the youth are interested in paid work for reasons related to their personal circumstances, it is important that job opportunities are brought into close proximity to where young people reside, and if not, transportation subsidies have to be considered in work packages.
- Furthermore, the creation of jobs that meet the needs and skills sets of the communities is important. Considering that some of the youth showed interest in farming activities the government could capitalise on the willingness to be involved in agriculture and farming by creating these kinds of opportunities for rural young people.
- Considering that the sample was small, there is a need to carry out the same research on a larger scale. This would give a broader and more in-depth insight into the realities and needs of NEET youth residing in rural areas.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Schedule

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Semi Structured Interview Schedule

1. Demographic Information

What name would you like us to use for the purpose of this interview? How old are you?

How would you describe yourself in terms of race? How would you describe yourself in terms of gender? Where do you live?

Were you born here?

Did you move around in the past five years?

How would you describe your community in terms of: Racial composition housing type?

Do you think your community is a safe place to live in?
your own words how would you describe life in a rural area?

2. Family Background Characteristics

Who do you live with?

How long have you lived with them?

What is your home life like?

a. Does everyone get along? What does getting along look like?

b. Is there a lot of fighting? Can you give me an example?

Do you have any children of your own/ dependants?

Section B

This section aims to find out the young person's NEET status in terms of education, employment and training

3. Determining The Youth's NEET Status

The government regards young people between 18-24 who are not in school, employment or training as NEET youth. Do you know anything about this term?

How does it make you feel knowing that there is a label for such youth?

Over the last 6 months:

- a. Have you been enrolled in any school or TVET college)?

Till what grade did you go to school?

How old were you when you left school?

Would you please share with me why you had to leave school/college?

- b. Have you been involved in any training programme?

What is your understanding of a training programme?

Does your community have any such programmes?

Do you think it would be a good idea to have such programmes in your community?

Would you want to be part of such programmes?

- c. Have you had any form of work?

Have you ever been employed before then?

If yes, what kind of work was it? Why did you leave this job?

Would you like to work?

What is the main reason you would say you want to be work?

Have you looked for a job? If no why/if yes, how was the experience?

Section C

4. What perceptions do NEET youth have regarding unemployment?

Can you describe for me how it feels to be a young unemployed South African?

Is being unemployed something you think about a lot?

(Please share what kind of thoughts come to mind)

In what ways does being unemployed affect your life? Please explain.

Please share with me what your normal day looks like (what do you do with your time)

5. What aspirations do young people have with regards to employment?

What kind of work do you picture yourself doing? (Please explain why that kind of job)

Do you believe that you can gain this kind of work? (If yes how/ if not what are the reasons for not believing?)

What factors do you consider when you look for a job?

What steps have you taken to find this type of employment?

6. What skills and resources do they believe they have at their disposal?

Please tell me about your education and what you learnt at school that can help you secure a job.

What value do you think the education you have has in finding you employment?

Are you planning to go back to school? If yes, When? Why do you think that it is important to go back to school?

Please tell me about the skills you think one needs to have to be able to get work.

Do you think you possess these skills?

If no, why not/ if yes, how did you get them?

A number of people use different ways to look for work (e.g. Facebook, newspapers, friends, posting CV's); can you tell me about the set of sources you use to look for jobs?

7. What supporting resources do the youth have in their endeavours to find employment?

Tell me about the resources that you think act as supporting factors in your job searches? (Personal networks)

Are there any people employed in your household? What type of jobs do they have?

How is your relationship with these people since you are unemployed?

Are any of your close friends employed?

Can you describe the type of jobs they have

Would you describe you close friends as supportive people that may be willing to recommend you certain employment opportunities?

How would you describe your area in terms of accessibility to places of employment?

Can you tell me about the accessibility of your home to transport routes?

How much would it cost you to get to places where you can look for employment?

Tell me about the people in your community in terms of their employment status

Are you part of any social or community organizations (e.g. church, sport etc.)?

Would you say there are support structures in your community for unemployed youth? If yes Please give examples

8. Perceived BARRIERS (personal and external) to accessing the kind of jobs you want?

What would you say are the main reasons you are not employed?

Are there any specific challenges you experience with looking for employment? Please share these with me

What kinds of jobs are available in your area?

Tell me about the:

Required skills levels for these jobs

Location of job compared to where you stay

Level of competition for jobs

How the payment is

Conditions of work

Working hours

Would you take any job offered to you?

How much pay would you be willing to accept?

Would you be willing to migrate for any job offer?

9. What kind of provision would you like to be made for people in your position in terms of gaining education, employment or training?

In your own view do you think that enough efforts are being made by the government to help young people like you gain employment?

If you were to change one thing about the current situation of the youth what would it be?

What are your views on how youth unemployment can be combated?

Tell me about your future plans if any regarding gaining education training or employment

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX B: Participant Consent form

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Participant Consent Form

Exploring the perceptions of employability among NEET youth from select rural communities in South Africa

I _____ hereby agree to participate in the research.

I understand that the research is confidential and that my identity will not be disclosed in the research paper.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

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Isivumelwano sokuthabatha Inxaxheba

Exploring the perceptions of employability among NEET youth from select rural communities in South Africa (Uphando malunga nokufuna ukwazi nzulu nge ngcinga zokukwazi ukufuna nokufumana umsebenzi kulutsha olungasihambiyo isikolo, ulungaphangeliyo kunye nolungekho kwingqesho yomsebenzi, kwenye yelali zase Mzantsi Afrika)

Mna _____ ndiyavuma ukuthabatha inxaxheba koluphando.

Ndiyaqonda ukuba incoko yethu izakuba phakathi kwethu, kwaye amagama am awazukusetyenziswa xa kubhalwa ngoluphando.

Kutyikitywe ngu: _____ Ngomhla: _____

Umphandi _____