

RESEARCH REPORT

WHOLESALE & RETAIL SETA
LEADERSHIP CHAIR: GAUTENG



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT REPORT 2024

by

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&

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The programme benefitted greatly from several key partners. Konke Business Solutions facilitated the selection of 100 young individuals from over 400 applications, ensuring high-quality candidates. Batho Pele Sales and Merchandising (Pty) Ltd employed the participants as field marketers, providing valuable industry experience. Telkom's provision of 20 gigabytes of data per month was crucial for enabling effective online learning. Star Schools enabled 20 of the students to complete their matric. These partnerships were essential in supporting the participants' educational and professional development throughout the programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the outcomes of a positive youth development (PYD) programme implemented by the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority in South Africa. The programme aimed to equip 100 young people with skills for the retail sector through education and employment opportunities. Using a longitudinal mixed-methods approach, the study tracked participants' progress over one year, analysing completion rates, skill acquisition, and career trajectories. The study employed quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive assessment of the programme's effectiveness and impact.

The key research findings highlight the successes and challenges of the PYD programme. Participants demonstrated substantial gains in resilience, cognitive skills, and social competence, reflecting the programme's effectiveness in fostering personal and professional development. Notably, there was a marked increase in participants' positive perceptions of a retail career and a heightened intention to pursue further education in the field. Despite these achievements, the study reveals critical areas for improvement. Issues such as inadequate internet connectivity and the lack of essential learning materials like textbooks were significant barriers to participants' learning experiences. Additionally, while most participants had positive work experiences, variability in satisfaction levels with support staff and programme structure indicates a need for more consistent and effective support mechanisms.

The research also identifies several critical gaps and areas for enhancement. Infrastructure-related issues, including unreliable internet access and insufficient learning resources, were recurrent themes that hindered the educational experience for some participants. Furthermore, while majority of participants expressed satisfaction with their work experiences and the support provided, there were notable discrepancies in individual experiences, suggesting that improvements are needed to standardise and enhance the quality of support across the programme. The study highlights the necessity for better resource allocation and more robust support systems to address these issues.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the programme's overall positive impact on participants' professional development, while pointing out specific areas needing attention. To optimise future iterations of the PYD programme, it is recommended to conduct a comprehensive dropout study to identify and address root causes. Moreover, enhancing support services, such as career counselling, flexible work arrangements, and technological support, is crucial. Implementing regular programme evaluations and feedback mechanisms will ensure continuous improvement. Targeted recruitment efforts towards the 18-24 age group can engage youth early in their careers. Furthermore, longer-term impact assessments and economic impact analyses should be conducted. Consideration should also be given to extending programme durations to five years or more for more substantial benefits.

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1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The South African retail sector is the second-largest employer after the government and the economy's third-largest sector (KPMG, 2023). The sector contributes a significant amount to the country's gross domestic product. It is estimated that the sector employs more than 20% of South Africa's workforce (KPMG, 2023).

In 2023, the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&R SETA) embarked on positive youth empowerment programme (YEP) in Gauteng. Positive YEPs are programmes designed to empower young people through education, skill development, civic engagement, and mental well-being, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and lifelong learning (Trivedi & Patel, 2023). The principal objective of this YEP was to equip young people in retail areas of sales, marketing, operations, and merchandising. Moreover, the programme sought to provide them with a broader perspective on the multiple careers they could pursue when they select to work in retail and focus on growing in it. It was also expected that the training and skills development programme would equip these young people with new skills and knowledge to enable them to be more successful in the retail and academic sphere by opening up opportunities for them to advance into higher-level qualifications. Furthermore, the W&R SETA chair felt that this would boost young people's confidence to establish and run their own businesses, thereby making a huge difference to their future success. This is because empowerment programmes can create opportunities for young graduates to engage in diverse entrepreneurship activities after graduation, boosting national economic development (Ajani, Khumatake & Gamede, 2023). Positive YEPs of this nature also benefit retailers and the community by reducing recruitment costs, increasing capacity, simplifying onboarding, and fostering community involvement.

Over the last few years, many young South Africans have entered the retail sector via learnerships. The chair identified an excellent opportunity to provide young people with a chance to obtain practical work experience in the workplace while studying at university. Those who performed well in their University of Johannesburg (UJ) qualification could then apply for the UJ's Diploma in Retail Business Management the following year and continue studying. If accepted, students would obtain credits for three modules in the first year of the diploma, including Retailing 1A, 1B, and Personal Selling 1A. It was from this cohort that data was collected using mixed methods through a tracer study that lasted a year.

This longitudinal study was employed to examine the outcomes of the W&R SETA's positive youth development (PYD) programme. In total, 100 young individuals were engaged into the programme – 80 were registered for the Certificate in Retail Management at the UJ and 20 pursued matric education through Star Schools. Star Schools have a great pass rate and reputation. The chair's recruitment partner, Konke Business Solutions, spent a few weeks advertising, and then interviewing

and selecting the 100 young individuals. Over 400 applications were received. Another partner, Batho Pele Sales and Merchandising (Pty) Ltd, employed the 100 individuals as field marketers in the fast-moving consumer goods stores across Gauteng. As the students were studying completely online, they received 20 gigabytes of data per month for the year, courtesy of Telkom. This vital sponsorship went a long way to allow students access to online resources and study effectively without worrying about data costs. The remaining 20 of the 100 selected young individuals did not have matric, or had a poor matric, and were enrolled for a matric completion or rewrite at the Star Schools campus in Braamfontein.

Programme completion data reveals 12 participants successfully attained the Certificate in Retail Management. At the same time, none of the secondary education students completed their matriculation. The attrition rate was substantial, with 53 participants terminating their involvement or absconding. A total of 47 young individuals completed the programme in its entirety.

2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

This section presents the problem statement underscoring the importance of such a project as well as the specific research objectives that guided this study.

2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Interventions focused on promoting positive YEPs play a crucial role in equipping young individuals with essential competencies for their personal and professional growth. These competencies encompass resilience, social competence, emotional competence, cognitive competence, behaviour competence, self-determination, self-efficacy, beliefs in the future, positive identity, and prosocial norms (Shek, Siu & Lee, 2007). This becomes particularly significant considering the current high levels of unemployment in South Africa.

To address this need, the W&R SETA (Gauteng) embarked on a PYD programme aimed at equipping students with fundamental knowledge, understanding, and skills related to the retail industry and retail operations. The purpose of this tracer study was to examine the extent to which participation in this programme and associated experiences contributed to positive development among students, as well as to determine their impact on students' perceptions regarding pursuing a career and formal qualifications in the retail sector.

Moreover, by exploring students' perceptions of careers in the retail industry, the findings of this study aid retailers, who are significant employers of youth in South Africa, in refining their human resources strategies to attract top talent. The central research question guiding this study was: Does participation in a youth development programme focusing on retail intervention among students aged 18-35 lead to more favourable perceptions of retail as a viable career choice?

2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Consistent with the problem statement of the study outlined above, the primary objective of this study was to investigate if a retail youth development programme influences the youth's perceptions of retail as a career and their intentions to enrol for a qualification.

2.3 SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aim of the study, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

- To determine whether participation in a retail youth development programme will lead to higher levels of youth's resilience;
- To determine the influence of a youth development programme as an intervention on the youth's perceptions of retail as a career choice.
- To determine the influence of a youth development programme as an intervention on the youth's intentions to enrol for a retail qualification.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

PYD programmes are designed to build skills, assets, and competencies; foster youth agency; and build healthy relationships to prepare the youth for successful adulthood (Catalano, Skinner, Alvarado, Kapungu, Reavley, Patton, Jessee, Plaut, Moss, Bennett, Sawyer, Sebany, Sexton, Olenik & Petroni, 2019). Such programmes focus on fostering the growth and empowerment of young people through various programmes and initiatives to build resilience, enhance employability, and promote social and economic inclusion (Deane, Harré, Moore & Courtney, 2017; Shek, Dou, Zhu & Chai, 2019).

Over the years, PYD programmes have advanced in theory, research, and design, focusing on promoting social justice in future scholarship and community-based programmes (Lerner, Lerner, Murry, Smith, Bowers, Geldhof & Buckingham, 2021). A scientometric review of the trends of PYD publications (1995-2020) concluded that PYD research primarily comes from Western societies, with interdisciplinary collaboration growing and research hotspots identified from 2010 to 2019. This means much of the existing evidence on youth empowerment interventions is from high-income countries, which leaves a significant gap, particularly concerning emerging markets like South Africa. The lack of comprehensive research and data from South Africa means that existing PYD frameworks may not adequately address the unique challenges and opportunities South African youth face.

3.1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Research demonstrates that several studies have been conducted to investigate PYD in Africa. As shown in Table 1, youth empowerment programmes across Africa exhibit diverse impacts and face

several challenges. Zimbabwe’s programmes have shown potential in reducing youth violence and fostering peacebuilding (Langa, Ndelu, Edwin & Vilakazi, 2017). In Gambia, empowering youth can significantly enhance living conditions and contribute to national development through economic participation (Ogbuleke, 2021). Nigeria’s Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) has been effective in promoting self-reliance and poverty alleviation, leading to sustainable socio-economic growth (Musa, Lawal & Haliru, 2022). The N-Power Agro programme in Nigeria also highlights the positive impact of agribusiness on youth employment and income generation, influenced by demographic factors like age, education, and experience (Ogunmodede, Ogunsanwo & Manyong, 2020).

In Ghana, a structured sport-based positive life skills programme was instrumental in promoting the development of entrepreneurial skills, potentially reducing youth unemployment and improving physical and personal benefits (Ocansey, Nyawornota, Adamba, Tay, Musah, Nyanyofio, Maleté & McCole, 2023). These findings were also consistent with another African study (McCole, Maleté, Tshube, Mphela, Maro, Adamba, Machuve & Ocansey, 2022), which concluded that a programme integrating entrepreneurship and life skills training in sports camps in African cities has developed entrepreneurial tendencies among youth athletes, potentially benefitting job creation efforts in sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 1: Positive youth development in the African context

Title	Takeaway
“The dynamics of youth employment and empowerment in agriculture and rural development in South Africa: A scoping review” (Geza, Ngidi, Slotow & Mabhaudhi, 2022)	Youth in South Africa face challenges in the labour market and a lack of inclusivity in policy formulation, limiting their involvement in agriculture and rural development initiatives.
“Youth bulge as a peacebuilding opportunity for Africa: The case of Zimbabwe’s youth empowerment programmes” (Yingi, 2023)	YEPs in Zimbabwe can help mitigate youth propensity to violence and contribute to peacebuilding in Africa.
“Youths and national development in The Gambia” (Ogbuleke, 2021)	Youth empowerment in Gambia can improve living conditions and contribute to national development by enabling them to contribute to economic growth and contribute to national development.
“The impact of youth empowerment scheme program for self-reliance and poverty alleviation in Nigeria” (Musa et al., 2022)	The YES programme significantly impacts self-reliance and poverty alleviation in Nigerian states, promoting sustainable socio-economic development.
“Youth leadership for development: Contradictions of Africa’s growing leadership pipeline” (Strong & Kelly, 2022)	African youth leadership initiatives face contradictions in their approach, with a tendency towards elite-driven strategies, corporate leadership models, and foreign collaboration, potentially affecting their larger politics and impact.
“Remaking Africa’s informal economies: youth, entrepreneurship and the promise of inclusion at the bottom of the pyramid” (Dolan & Rajak, 2016)	Bottom-of-the-pyramid initiatives in Africa’s informal economies can empower youth, but may reinforce distinctions between past, future, valuable, and productive.
“Unlocking the potential of agribusiness in Africa through youth participation: An impact evaluation of N-Power Agro Empowerment Program in Nigeria” (Ogunmodede et al., 2020)	The N-Power Agro program in Nigeria effectively and positively impacts youth employment and income generation through agribusiness, with factors like age, education, and experience influencing their decision to participate.

Title	Takeaway
“Women’s empowerment in action: Evidence from a randomized control trial in Africa” (Bandiera, Buehren, Burgess, Goldstein, Gulesci, Rasul & Sulaiman, 2020)	Vocational training and life skills education can jump-start women’s economic and social empowerment, reducing teen pregnancy, early marriage, and childbearing.
“The paradox of youth empowerment: Exploring youth intervention programme in Ghana” (Ile & Boadu, 2018)	Youth empowerment in Ghana requires more than marginal involvement in decision-making processes; it requires active participation of youth in policy design and policy implementation.

Source: Author’s compilation.

Table 1 also shows that youth development initiatives reveal underlying contradictions and limitations. African youth leadership programmes often rely on elite-driven strategies and foreign collaborations, which may undermine broader political impacts (Strong & Kelly, 2022). Dolan and Rajak (2016) argued that bottom-of-the-pyramid initiatives in informal economies might reinforce existing socio-economic distinctions. In Ghana, youth empowerment requires more than superficial involvement; genuine participation in policy design and implementation is essential (Ile & Boadu, 2018). Women’s empowerment in Africa benefits from vocational training and life skills education, which reduce teen pregnancy and early marriage (Bandiera et al., 2020). In conclusion, while YEPs hold promise for socio-economic development and stability, addressing systemic challenges and ensuring genuine inclusivity and participation remain crucial for their success.

3.2 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Various studies investigate positive YEPs in the context of South Africa. Table 2 shows 10 studies on youth development in South Africa from 2003 to 2023 selected from literature. The table showcases a diverse range of research methodologies and focus areas. These studies reveal a wide range of research methodologies and areas of focus. From the table, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches have been employed to investigate various areas of youth development. Such aspects included resilience, employment, leadership, and mental toughness, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing PYD interventions amongst South African youth.

Table 2: Overview of youth development studies in South Africa (2003-2023)

Title, author, and year	Summary of the study	Study type/ approach
<p>“Seeking and finding positive youth development among Zulu youth in South African townships” (Schwartz, Theron & Scales, 2017)</p>	<p>This cross-sectional study examined developmental assets among 505 youth (58% female, average age of 17.1) from rural South African townships. Participants reported vulnerable levels of contextual assets (family, school, community), with variations based on gender, family structure, and school type. Analysis showed that five asset contexts (family, school, community, personal, social) uniquely predicted thriving outcomes. The study discussed PYD in challenging environments among Zulu township youth.</p>	<p>Observational study</p>
<p>“South African, urban youth narratives: Resilience within community” (Mosavel, Ahmed, Ports & Simon, 2015)</p>	<p>This study explored resilience and future aspirations among South African youth in low-income, urban communities facing high-stress levels. Using a phenomenological approach, 14 focus groups with 112 high school students were conducted. Thematic analysis revealed that community connectedness, hope, and altruism were key factors in youth resilience. The findings highlight opportunities for improving community conditions and significantly impact PYD initiatives.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>
<p>“Deepening resilience in youth: Learning from an impact evaluation of a South African youth development programme” (Mkandawire & Chapman, 2023)</p>	<p>This study evaluated a PYD programme in the Western Cape, South Africa, using a quasi-experimental design with 32 programme graduates and 33 non-participants as control. Quantitative and qualitative data showed no significant long-term differences between groups in various outcomes. While short-term benefits were noted, long-term positive outcomes were not evident. Recommendations included improving post-programme services and addressing contextual factors to enhance programme effectiveness.</p>	<p>Mixed methods</p>
<p>“The dynamics of youth employment and empowerment in agriculture and rural development in South Africa: A scoping review” (Geza et al., 2022)</p>	<p>This scoping review examined challenges youth face in accessing sustainable agricultural employment in South Africa. Despite significant investments, youth unemployment remains high. The study found persistent labour market challenges and a lack of youth inclusion in policymaking. While support services exist, implementation has been unsuccessful due to sociopolitical obstacles. Recommendations included better connecting rural youth to support services, increasing youth involvement in policy formulation, and broadening programme focus to accommodate diverse youth skills.</p>	<p>Systematic review</p>
<p>“Quality of life and positive youth development in Grahamstown East, South Africa” (Møller, 2003)</p>	<p>This study surveyed 900 African youth (15-24 years) in Grahamstown East/Rini, Eastern Cape to identify positive development indicators. Despite the region’s poverty and high unemployment, the study found unequal distribution of development opportunities favouring materially advantaged youth. These youth showed higher ambition, risk awareness, well-being, and optimism. The research identified potential youth development initiatives based on youth aspirations, aligning with the international youth research agenda.</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>
<p>“Mechanisms for inspiring action in South African youth” (Waller, Wheaton & Asbury, 2016)</p>	<p>This mixed-methods study examined mechanisms enabling young South Africans to grow and take action on significant issues. It found that non-cognitive competencies (grit, growth mindset, self-efficacy), social support, social capital, and teamwork were crucial for starting and completing social action projects. Socio-economic factors and gender were not significant. The study emphasised the importance of developing non-cognitive skills to promote leadership and action-orientated youth development programmes.</p>	<p>Mixed methods</p>
<p>“Perceptions of South African youth of leadership development programmes: a case in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipal area” (Kanjere, 2014)</p>	<p>This study examined youth development programmes in South Africa, focusing on a small-scale investigation in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. Despite significant investment in various programmes addressing youth challenges, some young people remain disengaged. The research explored participants’ perceptions of leadership development programmes using a mixed-methods approach. Findings revealed that while knowledge gained does not always translate to practical applications, programmes are valuable</p>	<p>Mixed methods</p>

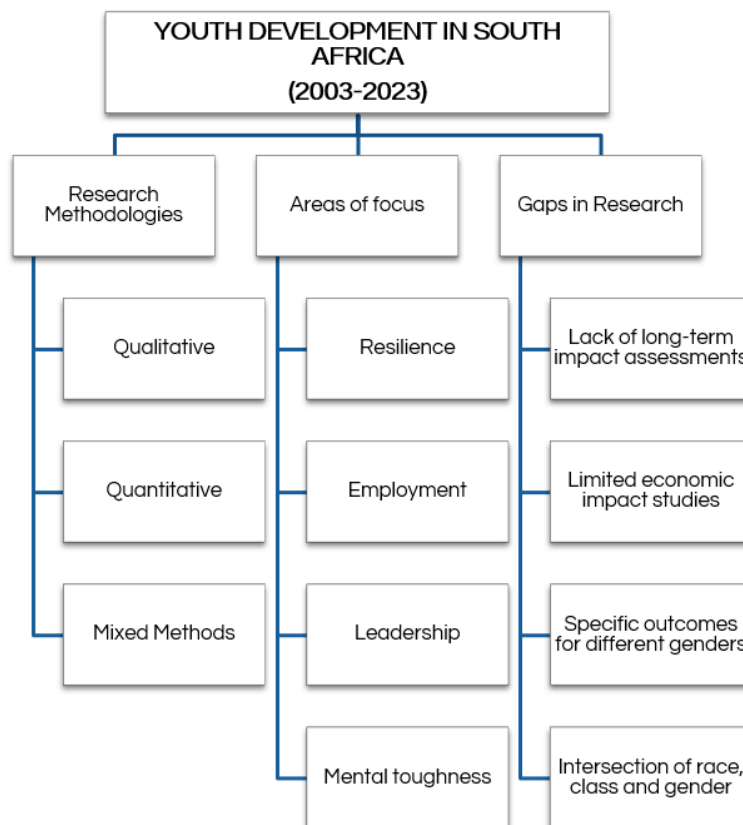
Title, author, and year	Summary of the study	Study type/ approach
	in fostering positive life perspectives. The study recommended establishing rural support systems to assist youth with life challenges.	
“Fostering life-altering change amongst South African youth through non-formal education” (John & Cox, 2018)	This case study examined a non-formal learning programme by World Changers Academy that addresses psycho-social needs of marginalised South African youth. The programme successfully builds psychological career resources through four key aspects: emotions and healing, identity and self-confidence, reflection and mindset changes, and community engagement. The study suggested that lessons from this programme could inform broader youth development initiatives in South Africa and beyond.	Qualitative
“Youth work and youth development in South Africa: An overview” (Weilbach, Peters & Kriel, 2014)	This article reviewed youth work and development in South Africa, highlighting challenges faced by youth and the need for development programmes. It examined past and current initiatives by various organisations, noting questions about their effectiveness. The emergence of gap-year programmes was noted, but accessibility is limited due to cost. The study concluded that despite attention to youth development, programme accessibility and long-term youth involvement remain unclear. It recommended creating liveable communities to foster youth development through leisure activities.	Literature review
“A narrative systematic review of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency” (Chauke & Malatji, 2022)	This study explored the impact of the Mental Toughness Programme on youth development in the Western Cape, South Africa. The programme, developed by the National Youth Development Agency, prepares youth for employability enhancement programmes. Using a qualitative approach with eight participants, the study recommended conducting a longitudinal evaluation and extending the programme beyond five days, incorporating physical toughness to enhance social cohesion.	Literature review

Source: Author’s compilation.

It should be noted that despite the extensive research conducted to cover PYD in the South African context, various gaps remain. Notably, long-term impact assessments are lacking, with many studies focusing only on short-term outcomes. This creates a gap in that the sustained effectiveness and lasting benefits of PYD programmes on South African youth are not fully understood or documented. Without comprehensive long-term studies, it is challenging to gauge the true impact of these programmes and make informed decisions about their development and implementation. Additionally, there is limited research on the economic impact of youth development programmes, the integration of digital skills training, and the specific outcomes for different genders.

Further investigation is also needed into the intersection of race, class, and gender. Therefore, the study recommends extending the W&R SETA Gauteng’s PYD programme over a longer term so that the programme can be effectively refined, ensuring that it meets the evolving needs of youth in Gauteng. Longer-term tracers (five or more years) can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of youth development by informing the creation of more effective interventions and policies. In summary, Figure 1 visualises the key findings from literature depicted in Table 2.

Figure 1: Visualisation of key findings from the literature



Source: Author’s own design.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology for this study are presented below.

4.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study adopted pragmatism as its philosophical foundation. Pragmatism, as a research paradigm, allows for the integration of diverse methodological approaches, adhering to the principle that researchers should employ the most compelling philosophical and methodological strategies to address specific research challenges (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019:1). The selection of pragmatism aligns with the study's mixed-methods approach and its orientation towards real-world marketing practices (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Pragmatism's versatility in accommodating quantitative and qualitative research methods offers a flexible and comprehensive framework for inquiry (Allemang, Sitter & Dimitropoulos, 2022; Feilzer, 2010). This paradigm facilitates the synthesis of strengths from multiple methodological approaches, thereby enhancing the potential for generating socially relevant and actionable marketing knowledge (Cronje, 2016; Feilzer, 2010).

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

A mixed-methods research approach was elected for the study. Mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative data within the same design to strengthen causal inference (Kuorikoski & Marchionni, 2023). This approach organises qualitative and quantitative approaches using specific designs and framing them within theoretical and philosophical perspectives to address limitations inherent in the individual methods (Battista & Torre, 2023). Its primary advantage is that the approach enhances the research findings' robustness, validity, and generalisability by combining complementary methods (Dalpoas & Shermock, 2021).

Kittur (2023) described quantitative research as a systematic investigation of a research topic by collecting quantifiable data and performing mathematical and statistical manipulations on the collected data to produce findings. This approach involves testing hypotheses in novel research and re-evaluating existing theories using deductive approaches (Barroga, Matanguihan, Furuta, Arima, Tsuchiya, Kawahara, Takamiya & Izumi, 2023). As the study involved participants in a youth development programme that lasted over a year, quantitative data using descriptive statistics was more appropriate to describe insights, patterns, and trends.

Contrastingly, a qualitative research approach was employed before and after the programme. Qualitative research involves interviewing, focus groups, and observation to explore and understand participants' perspectives and experiences, with a smaller sample size and varying sampling methods (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). Qualitative research methods are used in social sciences and humanities to complement quantitative approaches in offering valuable insights into human experiences (Bhangu, Provost & Caduff, 2023). In qualitative research, phenomena are often studied

in their natural settings to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people assign to them (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that qualitative researchers work in an emergent way. As a result, the initial research plan cannot be strictly prescribed. Some or all envisaged phases of the study proposed may change or shift after researchers enter the field and begin collecting data. Qualitative research was employed more towards the end of the study because this approach collects non-numerical data to explore human behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and personality characteristics unamendable to quantitative research.

Measures to ensure that the study findings were of high quality were undertaken. These pertained to issues of validity and reliability. Validity refers to whether a study's results accurately represent the phenomena to which they refer (Schurink & Schurink, 2008). In other words, the findings are scientifically backed up (Schwandt, 2007:309). The validity of social sciences research can be established in several ways, including internal validity, which refers to the degree to which we can identify the independent variable that caused the observed effect. Studies that establish causal relationships will have to consider internal validity. Many descriptive or observational studies do not consider it essential (Schurink & Schurink, 2008). A study's external validity refers to how easily its results can be generalised to populations other than those studied. Methodological procedures are employed to determine the external validity (Schurink & Schurink 2008).

Reliability refers to the consistency of measures and the repeatability of findings in a study. Reliability mainly concerns quantitative research. According to Schwandt (2007:262), "An account is considered reliable if another inquirer can replicate it." Several strategies can be used to ensure the study's reliability: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The first set of measures to ensure reliability is *credibility*. Lincoln and Guba (1985:138) outlined various strategies to increase the credibility of qualitative research. These include prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, triangulation of different methods, peer debriefing, member checks, and formalised qualitative methods, such as analytic induction. The second set of measures to ensure reliability is *transferability*. Transferability denotes the ability of the research outcomes to be transferred to other contexts.

4.3 SAMPLING

The sample consisted of young people aged 18 to 35 who were enrolled in the W&R SETA youth development programme at the UJ. The total population for this study was 100 young programme participants. A census approach was adopted, meaning all 100 individuals were invited to participate in the study. The final sample size depended on the number of participants willing to partake in the study. This sampling approach was chosen due to the limited size of the programme population. While most similar studies and statistical analyses typically require a minimum sample size of 250, this study was constrained by the actual number of programme participants. By inviting all 100 young

participants to participate, the researcher sought to gather comprehensive data from the entire programme cohort, subject to individual willingness to participate. This method ensured the most representative sample possible within the given constraints, while also adhering to ethical research practices by respecting participants' right to choose whether to participate in the study.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection involves systematically gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, enabling one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The tracer study on W&R SETA learning programmes was administered to youth who were part of the youth development programme administered by the W&R SETA Gauteng chair. The questionnaire sought to track and record the youth's activities from January to December 2023. Data collection took approximately 30 minutes (maximum) per participant. Data was collected when the UJ granted ethical clearance. The survey was presented to the students twice. Before the commencement of the programme and once the students had completed the youth development programme, all students were informed of the survey in class. The researcher (not involved in the development programme) then asked all students in the class to complete the survey. All information (as per the cover letter) regarding the purpose of the study and participants' rights was supplied to the students so they could make an informed decision regarding participation. The fact that a longitudinal study was being done was emphasised, indicating the need for participants' contact details. Thus, informed consent was obtained from the study's participants.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Because of the multiple methods employed in the study, it is vital to describe how different data sets were analysed.

4.5.1 Analysis of quantitative data

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was employed to analyse quantitative data. This software simplifies data analysis and is suited for statistical analysis and data management. In addition to data management, the package was employed to run descriptive statistics.

4.5.2 Analysis of qualitative data

The qualitative data analysis in the study was conducted using thematic analysis to uncover patterns and insights from participants' open-ended responses. The responses were collected and transcribed to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. Thereafter, the researcher got familiarised with the data by reading through the transcripts multiple times, being immersed in the content, and identifying initial codes representing key concepts or recurring topics. Subsequently, these codes were organised into broader themes that encapsulated the main ideas expressed by the participants. Ideas or concepts became apparent as the researcher reviewed data from in-depth interviews,

memos, and notes. Themes including “resource and infrastructure issues”, “engaging and supportive learning environment”, and “financial challenges” were identified. The thematic analysis process involved iteratively refining these themes to ensure they accurately reflected the participants’ experiences and perceptions, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the employment and matric youth programme.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study obtained ethical clearance from various UJ committees regarding the university’s ethical policy. The data was collected virtually using Google Forms. As Lobe, Morgan and Hoffman (2020) indicated, most essential ethical considerations in online data collection mirror those in face-to-face interviews. Thus, the researcher’s obligation remained to respect the informants’ rights, needs, values, and desires. Consequently, caution was taken to ensure that informed consent was obtained from participants and that the research was not harmful or risky to them. During the study, the researcher maintained honesty and integrity. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study. Voluntary participation was also secured before, during, and after the research. Moreover, the data was stored under long-term retention of personally identifiable information (in paper or electronic form). Backup files were stored securely in locked filing cabinets. Only the researchers had access to the data, which was not shared.

5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the study’s findings in two subsections. First, quantitative results from the pre-programme are presented, followed by qualitative findings. Second, post-programme implementation results are presented, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data.

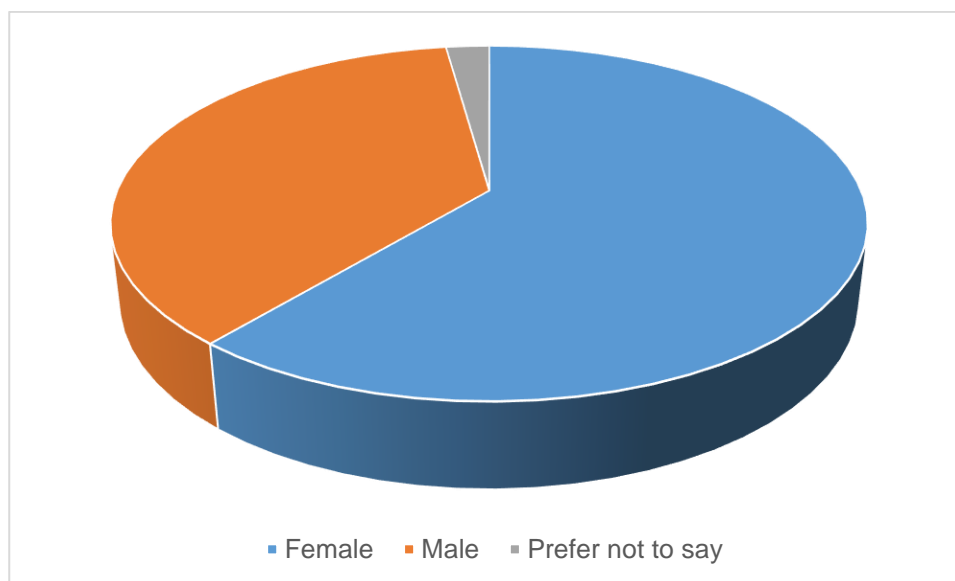
5.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS PRE-YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Results from quantitative closed-ended questions were obtained from 48 of 100 programme participants, giving a 48% response rate prior to programme implementation. The next subsections present measures of central tendency for three critical constructs related to PYD: resilience, perceptions of retail work, and intention to enrol in a retail diploma programme. The following sections provide a comprehensive overview of the descriptive statistics and inferences drawn from the analysis.

5.1.1 Gender

Of the 48 respondents, 58.3% (28 individuals) were women, while 35.4% (17 individuals) were men. One respondent (2.1%) preferred not to state their gender.

Figure 2: Gender of participants pre-programme



Source: Own conceptualisation.

5.1.2 Instrument reliability and descriptive statistics

A reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the items within each construct, with high Cronbach's alpha coefficients across all three sections. The mean, median, and mode were then calculated to understand the central tendency of the data for each construct. Table 3 provides the measures of internal reliability for each construct pre-programme.

Table 3: Measures of internal reliability per construct

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
Resilience	0.936
Perceptions towards career in retail	0.875
Intention to enrol for retail diploma as a first choice of study	0.953

Source: Own conceptualisation.

The reliability analysis conducted on the data set yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.875-0.936, indicating a high level of internal consistency among all items. This coefficient suggested that the items in the data set were highly reliable and consistently measured the same underlying construct. Consequently, the data set was robust and dependable for further analysis and interpretation. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, and mode, for the constructs.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Median	Mode
Resilience	5.8642	6.0175	6.02
Perceptions towards retail work	4.7126	4.8333	5.11
Intention to enrol on a retail diploma	5.4620	5.8750	7.00

Source: Own conceptualisation.

Lee, Cheung and Kwong (2012:1) defined resilience as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation, despite challenging or threatening circumstances. The authors added that when examining resilience, three key factors play a crucial role: (i) experiencing challenging life circumstances and societal conditions that are recognised as substantial threats or severe adversities; (ii) having access to protective elements, such as personal strengths and external resources, that may mitigate the impact of risk factors; and (iii) attaining positive adaptation even in the face of considerable adversity. This study employed 57 items to measure the youth's resilience on a seven-point Likert scale.

The mean resilience score was 5.8642, suggesting that, on average, most respondents demonstrated a high level of resilience. The median represents the middle value in the ordered set of resilience scores. The median resilience score was 6.0175. Drawing insights from the descriptive statistics, it can be deduced that the participants exhibited average moderate to high levels of resilience, as evidenced by the mean score of 5.8642. Furthermore, the median and mode being slightly higher than the mean implied a concentration of participants with scores above 6, pointing to an overall positive level of resilience within the sample.

The mean perception score towards retail work was 4.7126, suggesting that, on average, the participants had a slightly positive perception of retail work at the start of the youth development programme. The median is the middle value in the ordered set of perceptions. The median perception score was 4.8333. Since the median was slightly higher than the mean, it suggests that the data was slightly positively skewed. The mode of the perception data was 5.11. Based on the descriptive statistics provided, we can infer that, on average, the participants had a slightly positive perception of retail work. The fact that the mode was higher than the mean and median indicated that the most common perception score was slightly above the midpoint (4) of the Likert scale.

The analysis of intention scores towards enrolling in a retail diploma programme revealed a mean of 5.46 (standard deviation not provided), indicating a moderate level of intention at the youth development program's inception. The median (5.88) exceeded the mean, suggesting a potential negative skew in the data distribution. The mode (7) was higher than both the mean and median, signifying that this was the most frequent intention score among participants. These descriptive statistics implied a moderately positive intention towards retail diploma enrolment. The higher median relative to the mean indicated a possible concentration of scores above 5.46, while the mode of 7 suggested that a substantial number of participants expressed strong enrolment intentions at the programme's outset.

Main finding 1: These findings highlight that the youth demonstrated high resilience, had a generally positive perception of retail work, and showed a strong intention to pursue further education in the retail sector.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS POST-PROGRAMME

After the programme concluded in December 2023, insights were obtained to determine if respondents' perceptions had changed. The findings below are summarised into travel and logistics, perceptions of teachers, financial, work experience, and overall experience with the W&R SETA Leadership team.

5.2.1 Response rate

The post-implementation phase yielded a notably low response rate ($n = 5$), significantly limiting the generalisability of the findings. This small sample size necessitates caution in result interpretation and may not accurately represent the broader target population. Of the respondents, 60% reported employment at Pick n Pay, while 20% indicated employment at Shoprite. The remaining 20% did not specify their employment status. Given the limited sample, these percentages should be interpreted with extreme caution and are not suitable for statistical inference. As such, majority of results from the five respondents are presented according to each question asked.

5.2.2 Time spent travelling from home to school (minutes)

The data showed that the average travel time for participants to reach Star Schools on class days was 33 minutes, with a median and mode of 30 minutes, indicating that most participants had a fairly similar travel time. The range of 25 minutes and a standard deviation of 9.6 minutes suggested some travel time variability. This consistency suggested that the school's location was reasonably accessible for most students.

Table 5: Time spent travelling to school

Statistic	Value
Mean travel time	33 minutes
Median travel time	30 minutes
Mode travel time	30 minutes
Standard deviation	9.6 minutes
Range	25 minutes

Source: Author's own.

5.2.3 Daily transport cost to Star Schools

The data revealed that the average daily transport cost for participants to get to Star Schools was R49.2. Costs varied significantly, as indicated by the range of R100 and a high standard deviation of R39.7. This variability suggested that participants' transport costs differed significantly, likely due

to differences in distance, mode of transportation, or individual circumstances. Addressing these disparities could be essential for making future programmes more accessible to all students.

Table 6: Daily transport cost to Star Schools

Statistic	Value (rand)
Mean transport cost	49.2
Standard deviation	39.7
Range	100

Source: Author's own.

5.2.4 Time spent travelling to work (retail store)

The data showed that the average travel time for participants to get to work (their store) on work days was 28 minutes, with a median and mode of 30 minutes. This indicated that most participants had a relatively consistent travel time. The range of 30 minutes and standard deviation of 11.4 minutes suggested some variability in travel times but, overall, the travel duration appeared to be reasonably consistent among the participants.

Table 7: Time spent travelling to work

Statistic	Value
Mean travel time	28 minutes
Median travel time	30 minutes
Mode travel time	30 minutes
Standard deviation	11.4 minutes
Range	30 minutes

Source: Author's own.

Main finding 2: Overall, the findings highlight reasonable accessibility of the school's location, yet the variability in transport costs need addressing.

5.2.5 Experience with teachers at Star Schools

The data indicated generally positive perceptions of the teachers at Star Schools, with most respondents rating their experiences highly (7 out of 7). The mean score of 6.2 suggested that, on average, participants had a positive view of their teachers. However, one respondent rated their experience lower (3).

Table 8: Experience with teachers at Star Schools

Statistic	Value
Mean score	6.2
Mode score	7
Range	4

Source: Author's compilation.

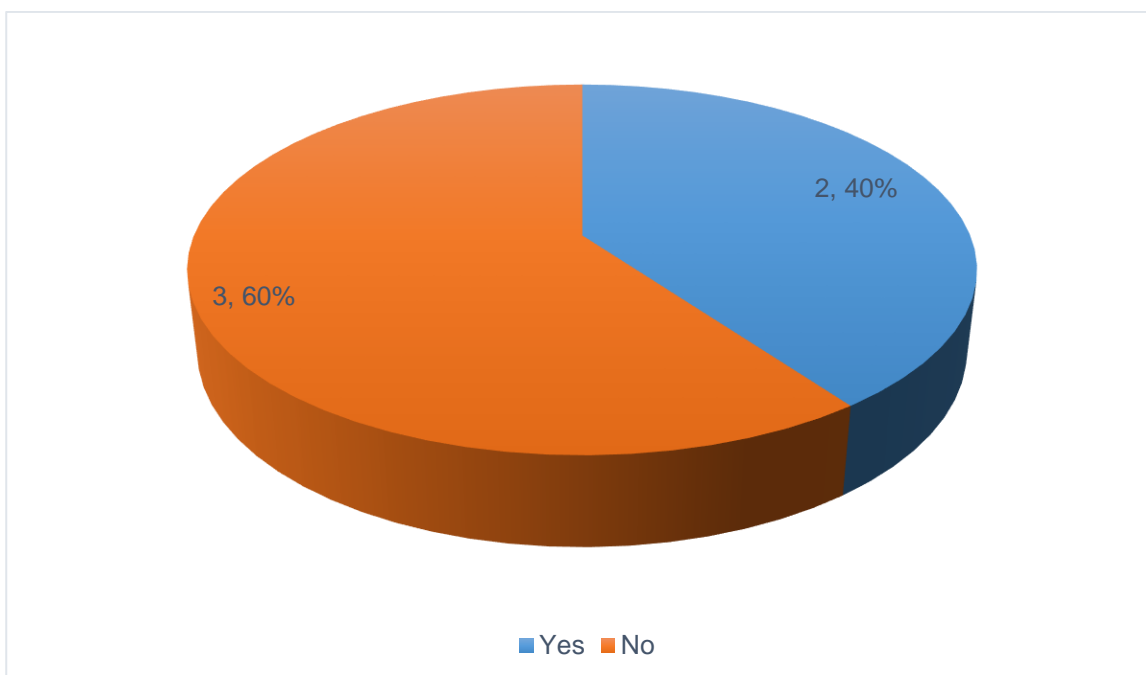
5.2.6 Rating the support staff at Star Schools

The mean score of 5.6 concerning the school's support staff indicated a generally positive but slightly lower-than-average perception compared to the teachers rating. While most participants had positive experiences with the support staff, the variability in ratings suggested that there may be room for improvement in the consistency and effectiveness of support provided at Star Schools.

Main finding 3: Overall, the findings reflect high satisfaction with the teachers and generally positive, but somewhat variable, perceptions of the support staff at Star Schools.

5.2.7 Payment reliability as per contracted pay day

Figure 3: Payment on contracted pay day

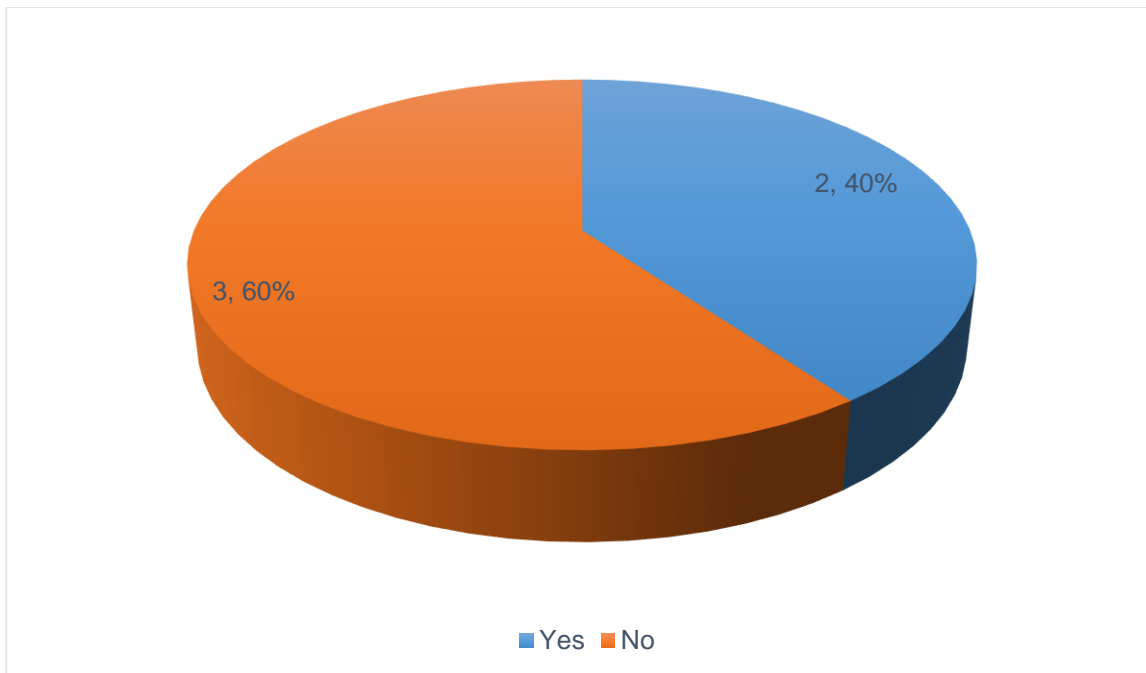


Source: Own conceptualisation.

Among the respondents, 60% reported getting paid reliably on their contracted pay day, while 40% indicated they did not (as depicted in Figure 3). Investigating the reasons behind the payment inconsistencies reported by some participants could help in addressing potential challenges and ensuring a more consistent and reliable payment process for all involved in future programmes.

5.2.8 Financial problems during time on the programme

Figure 4: Challenged faced during the programme



Source: Own conceptualisation.

From the responses outlined in Figure 4, 40% of participants reported facing financial problems during their time in the programme, while 60% did not. This indicated that a significant portion of participants encountered financial difficulties, which could have impacted their overall experience and participation in the programme.

Main finding 4: Addressing these payment inconsistencies and financial challenges is crucial for improving the programme's effectiveness and participant satisfaction in future iterations.

5.2.9 Work experience in-store

Data on work experience data revealed a generally positive sentiment, with a mean score of 6.5 and both the median and mode being 7, indicating that most respondents rated their experience highly. The low standard deviation (1) and variance (1) reflected a consistent level of satisfaction among participants, though the range of 2 showed some variability with lower ratings (5) present. While most participants had positive experiences with the support staff, the presence of a lower rating highlighted potential inconsistencies in the effectiveness or perception of support provided. There is room for improvement to ensure more uniform positive experiences among all respondents.

Table 9: Work experience in store

Statistic	Value
Mean score	6.5
Median score	7
Mode score	7
Standard deviation	1
Variance	1
Range	2 (5 to 7)

Source: Author's own.

5.2.10 Work experience with Batho Pele

The work experience data ($n = 4$) revealed a mean score of 6.5 (standard error = 0.5), indicating a generally high level of experience working with programme partners, Batho Pele. The median and mode of 7 suggested that the highest possible rating was the most common response. The standard deviation of 1 indicated relatively low variability in the responses. The distribution was negatively skewed (skewness = -2), with a kurtosis of 4, implying a concentration of responses at the higher end of the scale. Further research with a larger sample would be necessary to draw more robust conclusions about work experience with Batho Pele.

Table 10: Work experience with employer

Statistic	Value
Mean score	6.5
Median score	7
Mode score	7
Standard error (SE)	0.5
Standard deviation	1
Skewness	-2
Kurtosis	4
Range	2

Source: Author's own.

Main finding 5: Overall, participants had positive experiences, but the presence of some lower ratings highlights potential inconsistencies in support effectiveness. There is room for improvement to ensure uniformly positive experiences.

5.2.11 Likelihood to recommend programme to friends and family

On the likelihood of recommending the programme to friends and family as a net promoter, the mean (average) was 6.2 and the standard deviation was 1.6. This indicated a high likelihood of participants recommending the programme, suggesting a strong positive sentiment towards the PYD programme. The variation in responses was moderate, as indicated by the standard deviation.

5.2.12 Summary

Table 11 summarises the results from this research study.

Table 11: Summary of various aspects investigated

Aspect	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Travel time to school (minutes)	33	30	30	9.6
Daily transport cost (rand)	49.2	Not provided	Not provided	39.7
Travel time to work (minutes)	28	30	30	11.4
Experience with teachers	6.2	Not provided	7	Not provided
Rating the support staff	5.6	Not provided	Not provided	Not provided
Work experience in store	6.5	7	7	1
Work experience with Batho Pele	6.5	7	7	1
Likelihood to recommend programme	6.2	Not provided	Not provided	1.6

Source: Author's compilation.

5.2.13 Experience with the Wholesale and Retail Gauteng chair team

The data indicated a uniformly excellent experience with the W&R Gauteng chair team, with all participants rating their experience as 7. The mean, median, and mode all being 7, confirmed that every respondent gave the highest possible rating.

Main finding 6: Overall, participants were highly likely to recommend the programme and unanimously rated their experiences with the W&R Gauteng chair team as excellent.

5.3 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AFTER THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In this section, qualitative findings after the youth development programme are presented. The results are divided according to the questions asked of participants.

- **What did you *not* enjoy about your studies at Star Schools? Please elaborate and provide details when answering.**

Findings related to student experiences at Star Schools revealed mixed sentiments. While some respondents (P4) expressed no dissatisfaction, others highlighted specific areas of concern. These included technological issues, such as unreliable internet connectivity (P1), and resource limitations, particularly the lack of textbooks for certain subjects (P2). Additionally, curriculum gaps were noted, with one respondent (P3) mentioning the absence of classes for specific subjects (history and tourism). Answers included:

- “Everything was fine at Star Schools except for issues with the internet connection” (P1).
- “We didn’t get books for some subjects” (P2).
- “I would be lying; there is nothing I can complain about apart from history and tourism, and we did not have classes for them” (P3).
- “None” (P4).

- **How did you cope with managing, working, and studying for your matric? Please elaborate and provide details with your answer.**

Under this question, the predominant theme that emerged from participants in managing work, study, and personal life was the difficulty of balancing multiple responsibilities. Participants consistently described the process as difficult (using synonyms like “hard” [P2] and “not easy” [P4]), indicating a significant strain on time and resources. Insights included:

- “I managed by cutting off certain things such as entertainment so that I can study” (P1).
- “Hard cause you to study and go to work” (P2).
- “When I come from work, I’ll do what needed to be done at home, then thereafter I give myself at least 30 minutes to study at least one subject, but I was practicing [*sic*] maths everyday, so, yeah, it was manageable” (P3).
- “Not easy, but I ended [up] getting use[d] to it” (P4).

Coping strategies varied, including sacrificing leisure activities (P1), establishing structured study routines (P3), and prioritising specific subjects (P3). Despite the challenges, there was an underlying theme of adaptation and perseverance (e.g., “ended [up] getting use[d] to it” [P4]; “it was manageable” [P3]). While the dual commitment to work and study presented considerable difficulties, students developed personal strategies to navigate these demands. These insights suggested that effective time management and adapting to changing circumstances are crucial for students balancing work and study responsibilities.

- **What did you enjoy about your studies at Star Schools? Please elaborate and provide details when answering.**

To assess student satisfaction, we asked participants to elaborate on what they enjoyed about their studies at Star Schools. Responses varied widely, revealing both positive experiences and areas for improvement:

- “I enjoyed everything, they took us and our studies as a priority” (P1).
- “Nothing” (P2).
- “The teachers will bring projects and teach us using pictures and videos it was exciting cause u get to understand things easily” (P3).
- “They give use [*sic*] time to write and see if you understand or not; if [yo]u don’t understand, they make sure you [do]” (P4).

The above findings revealed a generally positive sentiment among participants. The use of multimedia resources (e.g., “pictures and videos” [P3]) was highlighted as particularly effective in facilitating comprehension. The institution’s commitment to ensuring student understanding (P4) further underscored a student-centric approach. However, the presence of a neutral response (i.e.,

“Nothing” [P2]) indicated potential areas for improvement or variability in student experiences. This outlier warrants further investigation to understand underlying factors contributing to this perception.

- **If you were in charge of this employment and matric youth programme, what would you do the same or what would you do differently?**

Participants offered suggestions for improving the employment and matric youth programme. While some would maintain the current structure, others proposed changes, such as adjusting the schedule to allocate more time for academics and less for work. One participant emphasised balancing work and study time to prioritise academic success: “I would change only the schedule of attendance, more time to go to school and less for work because academics are more important” (P4). At the same time, another participant focused on personal improvement and engagement strategies. The responses reflected a consensus on the value of maintaining practical elements of the programme, but highlighted a desire for better scheduling to support academic priorities.

- **Additional feedback and comments from participants**

Under this investigation area, various suggestions were proposed to enhance the programme, including adding resources and improving structure:

- “I suggest tablets with data for matriculants to help research” (P2).
- “Not being at work from 8 to 5 b[ut] 8 to 2 so that you’ll have time 2 [sic] catch up from [yo]ur schoolwork” (P3).

Participants recommended providing tablets with data to facilitate research for matriculants and adjusting work schedules to offer more time for schoolwork. These suggestions reflect a need for better educational resources and more flexible scheduling to support students’ academic needs and improve overall programme outcomes. Responses to this question indicated that some participants felt all relevant aspects were covered, with no additional input needed. Others mentioned personal challenges, such as pregnancy, which affected their ability to fully engage with the programme. The focus on individual circumstances suggested that while the programme structure was generally appreciated, personal issues can significantly impact participants’ experiences and outcomes. The main finding below summarises key insights from the youth who undertook the programme.

Main finding 7:

- *Mixed sentiments on studies at Star Schools:* Participants had varied experiences, with some reporting no issues, while others cited technological problems like unreliable internet, lack of textbooks for certain subjects, and absence of classes for specific subjects.
- *Challenges in balancing work and study:* Managing work, study, and personal life was difficult for participants, with many describing it as hard and requiring sacrifices like cutting out

entertainment and establishing study routines. Despite the challenges, participants developed coping strategies, indicating adaptability and perseverance.

- *Positive experiences with teaching methods:* Many participants enjoyed their studies at Star Schools due to the use of multimedia resources and the institution's commitment to ensuring understanding. However, one participant expressed no enjoyment, indicating areas for improvement.
- *Suggestions for programme improvement:* Participants proposed adjusting the schedule to allocate more time for academics and less for work, reflecting a consensus on the value of practical elements, but a desire for better scheduling to support academic success.
- *Need for additional resources and flexible scheduling:* Recommendations included providing tablets with data for research and adjusting work hours to allow more time for schoolwork. These suggestions highlight the need for better educational resources and more flexible scheduling to support academic needs and improve programme outcomes.

6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study warrant careful consideration when interpreting the results. The most significant constraint is the small sample size, which severely impacted the statistical power and generalisability of the findings. Initially, the study included 48 participants prior to the programme, but this number drastically reduced to only five participants post-programme. The substantial attrition rate (89.6%) critically limits the reliability and validity of the longitudinal analysis.

The sample was drawn exclusively from young participants in the W&R SETA programme at the UJ, potentially introducing sampling bias and limiting the generalisability of findings to broader youth populations in similar programmes across South Africa. To mitigate some of these limitations, peer debriefing was employed to enhance the reliability of the findings. This process involved critical review and validation of the analysis by multiple researchers, aiming to reduce individual bias and increase the robustness of interpretations. Furthermore, engagements with the other stakeholders will prove insightful to the improvements of this project in future.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes several recommendations to improve the effectiveness of future PYD programmes. These include to:

- Conduct a comprehensive dropout study to identify and address the root causes of student dropout rates. This research should explore the effectiveness of different coping mechanisms and their influence on academic and professional outcomes. It is crucial to understand why students drop out of retail programmes and develop support systems that aim to assist students in these programmes.

- Enhance support services, including career counselling and advising, to help students balance academic and work commitments. Implementing flexible work arrangements and support systems can enable students to manage their dual responsibilities more effectively. This also encompasses technological support to support students' learning and work-related activities. This includes providing access to essential digital tools and reliable internet connectivity.
- Implement regular programme evaluations and feedback mechanisms to improve youth development initiatives' effectiveness continuously. This iterative approach ensures early detection of attrition and challenges faced by students to devise strategies to combat them.
- Target recruitment efforts to the 18-24 age group to engage youth early in their careers. Individuals in their early 20s have a better chance of finding work than those in other age groups. This strategy will address the possibility of low visibility, as evidenced by the fact that most of the programme recruitment is through referrals, and will target the 18-24-year age group so that they are engaged early on and do not waste four to five years attempting to establish themselves only to pitch up when they are 25 and above for the Work-Based Learning (WBL) programme.
- Conduct longer-term impact assessments to evaluate the sustained effectiveness and lasting benefits of PYD programmes. Expand research to include economic impact analysis and consider extending programme durations to five years or more for more substantial benefits and insights.

Other recommendations pertaining to various aspects of the project are provided in Table 12.

Table 12: Other programme recommendations

Aspect	Recommendations
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a more rigorous recruitment process with clear criteria and candidate benchmarking. • Conduct recruitment in the year prior to programme rollout to avoid late admissions and registration issues.
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the nine-day orientation to assess student commitment. • Limit student replacements to the orientation period, before academic year commencement. • Provide catering throughout the orientation period.
Employer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear communication protocols for student absences or terminations. Require detailed reports on stipend discrepancies with supporting evidence. Implement bimonthly or quarterly detailed progress reports. • Expedite uniform distribution post-placement.
UJ Retail Management Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline the admission process by notifying relevant internal stakeholders of qualifying criteria. • Confirm lecturers well in advance of programme commencement. • Offer additional tutoring support, increase lecture frequency, and provide consultation days. • Integrate exams into the official exam schedule. • Improve stipend payment processes through early stakeholder notification.
Student motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate engaging activities, such as fun days and competitions, for top achievers. • Maintain consistent student engagement, addressing socio-economic challenges as they arise.

Source: Author's compilation.

8 CONCLUSION

The PYD programme demonstrates significant effectiveness in enhancing key competencies and improving retail career perceptions among youth. However, the study identifies opportunities for programme refinement, particularly in addressing gender disparities and resource-related challenges. By implementing targeted interventions and optimising support mechanisms, W&R SETA can further enhance the programme's impact and better prepare participants for successful retail sector careers.

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