The Relationship between Skills Development Support and Self-Reliance among the Youths: A Study on Youth Livelihood Program in Lira City, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Uganda, being one of the youngest with a number of rapidly growing population in the world of about 3.7% annual growth rate, poses a great challenge to the government seeing that approximately one million young people enter into job market annually yet the youth unemployment rate remains stack at 30%. One way to reverse the unfortunate situation was adoption of the robust Youth livelihood programme, which was designed as a response to the high rate of unemployment and poverty among the youths in the country. Initially, the program covered 112 districts with a budget of Uganda Shillings 265 billion from 2014 to 2017 intended to facilitate the implementation of the programme. However available studies indicate that several interventions have been supported by government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations but the rate of youth unemployment and poverty continues to worsen. This study sought to assess the contribution of skills development support towards enhancing self-reliance among youth in Lira city, mid-north Uganda. Focus was put on the relationship between skills development support and self-reliance. A sample of 254 was selected using simple random sampling technique and data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Results suggest that youth livelihood program, through skills development support plays a significant role towards ensuring self-reliance among the youths in the region. It was recommended that the government of Uganda rethinks its strategy on poverty reduction among young people from a top-bottom approach to a bottom-up approach where the target beneficiaries take a lead role in the program design, its implementation and evaluation.

Keywords: *Lira Self-reliance, Skills development, Youth livelihood, Youths.*

Highlights of this paper

- Uganda is faced with a fast-growing population with approximately one million young people entering into job market annually coupled with a huge youth unemployment rate.
- The Youth Livelihood Programme is key to achieving youth empowerment.
- Skills development support is the leading precursor for achieving prosperity among the youths.

1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda is one of the youngest with a number of rapidly growing population in the world with 3.7% population growth rate but highest population of which 78% constitute the population of those below 30 years (Kaba, 2020). This poses a great challenge to the government, implying that approximately one million young people enter into job market annually yet the unemployment rate among youth stands at 30%. The institutional well qualified youth are unable to find jobs and the situation is worse for semi-skilled and unskilled ones and those who don't exploit their full potential are often associated with gambling or drug abuse (Ejang, 2020). The study conducted in Kenya by National youth Bunge Association found out that over one million youth were empowered in 2017 in order to increase their employment opportunities and economic capability to create self-reliance (Rapando & Achieng, 2021).

One of the major targets of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is to address the issues of unemployment among youth through provision of vocational skills, increasing the competitiveness of youth within the labour market, building capacities of national institutions to mainstream youth employment, and supporting youth-led enterprises to pilot innovative ideas, all these focus on enhancing self-reliance among youth (Nakiyingi, 2019). Another initiative in Ghana provided training services for the youth especially market-oriented skills training, coaching, mentorship and creating youth networking access to land, finance and other services (Fox & Kaul, 2018).

Youth livelihood programme (YLP) is the government of Uganda finance support programme designed as interventions in response to the high unemployment rate and poverty among the youths in the country and covering approximately 112 districts with a budget of Uganda Shillings (UGX.) 265 billion from 2014 to 2017 to facilitate the implementation of the programme. Youth livelihood programme has been fully accepted and adopted by government, private sectors, civil society organizations and non-governmental organization basing on three pillars ;skills development, institutional support and livelihood support aiming at promoting self-reliance among the youth (Mwesigwa & Mubangizi, 2019). The livelihood support component constitutes (70%) of all the youth livelihood programmes and this include viable income generating activities such as Dairy production, high value crops, poultry/egg production, piggery, aquaculture, animal traction, agro-forestry, post-harvest handling, value addition, trade, service sector projects. All the YLP aim at promoting self-reliance among youth and accelerating in dependability among the unemployed and disadvantaged youth in the community (Mango et al., 2021).

Northern Uganda saw a population growth rate of approximately 3.2% coupled with unemployment rate of 2.4% in 2020 with a percentage increase of 0.72% from 2019 to 2020. This figure translated into a high dependency ratio and consequently exerted pressure on the available resources needed for livelihoods, employment, economic development, and family welfare. In order for youth to be self-reliant and reduce on the high employment rate, the government of Uganda came up with several initiatives such as skilling the youth, Emyooga, poor youth projects, youth empowerment scheme and lately youth loans through the youth livelihood programs. It should be noted that a number of these initiatives have failed due to such factors like corruption and mismanagement of youth projects, lack of ownership and involvement of the youth in the projects among others (Aryemo et al., 2019).

In Lira city, there has been quite a number of activities targeting unemployed youth with the aim of promoting self-reliance among the unemployed youth. Uganda government supports youth in Lira district through many programmes such as Emyooga, Northern Uganda Socio-Action Funds (NUSAF), National Agricultural Advisory

Services (NAAS) Programme and others. The recent livelihood support programme (Emyooga) was targeting strictly youth in the community with the aim of promoting and strengthening self-reliance through financial support (Lira, Robson, & Klooster, 2022). In Lira district, poor living conditions among youth, which is majorly caused by poverty and unemployment due to dearth of skills and experience, tribalism, lack of relevant information on available job, lack of self-confidence, poor decision making and lack of resources to start up the business may be very common. Nevertheless, despite the fact that government and its implementing partners are working hard to enhance self-reliance among youth, the statistics still indicate rapid increase in unemployment rate among youth with 0.7% increment regardless of the efforts put to promote self-reliance. Therefore, this study aims at reviewing the contributions of youth livelihood programme in enhancing self-reliance among youths in Uganda.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The study will base on the programme theory which entails the logic on how programs are built particularly focusing on the program process. The modelling use of three components: program activities or input, the intended outcome and the mechanism of achieving the outcomes is key and so is the process of the program outcome contingent upon must clearly follow the described procedures or channels. The program critical input must describe and define the component of the program, describe how their component will be delivered, define the strength or amount of treatment required and the expected outcomes after accomplishing the project.

The program theory was later supplemented by theory of process which focused on how the project can be implemented by clearly entailing the steps through which an intervention or programme is implemented, and includes steps related to the organisation plan for delivering interventions as well as a service utilisation plan for ensuring use of the programme services (Kadiyala, Rawat, Roopnaraine, Babirye, & Ochai, 2009). The theory further suggested that to ensure the successful implementation of any program targeting the community, the process or mechanism concerning the program must be detailed such as the information about the important steps, links and phases of the expected transformation, the process as well as some of the implementation issues. In addition to that, the output/outcomes must be broken out into the immediate, intermediate and the long-term impact. In respect to the youth livelihood program, the outcomes such as improved capacity of youth, self-confidence, responsibility, employment opportunity, reduced poverty must be clearly entailed in the program. For the past decade, a number of the funding focused on youth employment but there has been limited evidence that those interventions build skills, increase knowledge and create self-reliance among youth in the community.. The numerous research conducted on the youth livelihood programs only merely focused on issues such as empowerment, poverty and unemployment leaving a wide gap on self-reliance.

A study conducted among a number of youths reported low level of confidence especially to implement the problem solving strategies and engage youth in the activities which do not require them directly or with less commitments (Parris, Varjas, Meyers, Henrich, & Brack, 2019). The theory further suggested that, people who design projects must focus wisely on the long-term effects and the project sustainability when the projects kick off. Youth livelihood program focusing on vocational skills training such as tailoring, Hair dressing, Nursery bed management, Modern Agriculture will create more self-reliance in the community and long term impact than the project focusing on distributing money (Okwelle, Deebom, Harcourt, & Okwelle, 2017). The facts remain that during training, youth develop self-confidence, capacity, decision making and they take responsibilities of managing what they own (enterprises).

2.1. Review of Related Literature

A cross the world, a number of the countries attempt to promote numerous activities among the marginalized or disadvantaged people in the community with an intension of improving self-reliance and reducing the dependability in the society. The person may be considered vulnerable if that person does not have the ability or capability to do something or depend on others. In regard to youth , unemployment and poverty has made ala number of 30% of youth to depend on their parents or relative as a result of lacking what to do or self-reliance. According to the study conducted in Nigeria on Vocational skills acquisition and development of self-reliance, it is found out that graduates from formal educational instructions today are churned out and redundant due to lack of skills to produce things that can make them compete in the labour market than those with high vocational skills (Iroegbu, 2017).The study concluded that acquisition of skills play critical roles in an individual's self-reliance.

A similar study conducted in Nigeria on commercializing Entrepreneurship and scientific skills pointed out self-reliance as a tool which makes an individual autonomous in making decision, mobilizing resources, self-confidence, reliance on resources, human , natural and capacity for autonomous goal setting. In that study, the researcher reported that people with entrepreneurship skills can easily utilize the resources available, create jobs, secure jobs in the industry and become self-reliant. This reveals that people with skills can easily transfer their skills into practical work through producing the existing products into the world or new products as a result of innovation.

Furthermore, a study by Okwelle et al. (2017) revels that youth who acquired skills and knowledge always recovered from poverty and become self-reliant. This is believed to be true through development of self-confidence, effective decision making, responsibility and capacity in solving various problems within the society. The study conducted by Phukanchana (2018) pointed out that skills acquired by individuals provide a platform for innovation and technological excellence for globalization. Training youth with skills enable them to create employment for themselves or they become employers which in turn reduce unemployment, poverty and promote self-reliance in the community since they will be able to make proper decisions and have enough capacity. Similarly, the study conducted by Edet and Atah (2019) suggested that shortages of jobs within the community has been created by the instructions basing on the facts that institutions unveiled the trust to the students about the presence of unemployment in the society and this has tuned a number of the youth that jobs are available within the society after graduations yet limited jobs exist but they can create jobs basing on the skills and knowledge acquired through training.

A study conducted on community adoption and self-reliance found out that community empowerment through training, providing financial support and other support contribute a lot in the development of self-reliance. This can be seen clearly with unemployed youth recruited and trained in tailoring, entrepreneurship skills, Agriculture and financial management who end up developing self-confidence in opening small businesses which later become employers. A similar study conducted shows that Youth livelihood program contribute to youth's empowerment which impact on self-reliance. The programs such as skills development program involves training of youth so that they develop capacity and self-confidence in selecting and starting effective business (Mwesigwa & Mubangizi, 2019).

In addition to that, Windle international Organization implemented vocational skills project in four districts to youth in the community and after the project a number of the youth ended up starting their own enterprises basing on the skills acquired and the capacity gained from the training in the districts of Agago, Adjumani and Moyo. This shows that skills training contributes a lot in enhancing self-reliance among individuals. In support to that, the study conducted in Egypt shows that 64.7% of the household has self-reliance and only 30% were still dependent on others. The study further cited that self-reliance among the community was due to the assistance provided to them through financial support, vocational training skills and other agricultural support (Leeson, Bhandari, Myers, & Buscher, 2020).

One of the studies conducted among the small farm holders on the value chain improvement found out that famers who had training, their revenue increased. The evidenced is that training increases the level of confidence and ability to make self-concrete decision hence self-reliance (Okot, 2018). A related study conducted in Nigeria on the entrepreneurship support skills revealed that the majority of the women who were equipped with skills started their own project immediately after the projects (Jacob & Ariya, 2015). Another study found out that the provision of vocational skills to youth and women allow them to be flexible especially when getting jobs become difficult (Recupero, Marti, & Guercio, 2021). The study further cited that being creative and innovative relate with the individual skills and knowledge. Basing on the numerous literatures reviewed, it has been identified that a number of the research done was not focused in Uganda on the youth livelihood programs moreover even the few studies conducted in Uganda majorly based on youth empowerment not self-reliance.

2.2 Research Gap

Unemployment among youth continues to increase drastically with about 0.7% every year and has become one of the biggest challenges to the government in which approximately over one million young people enter into the job market annually yet 30% of institutional well qualified youth are unable to find jobs and even the situation is worse for semi-skilled and unskilled ones and those who do not exploit their full potential. The youth unemployment rate was 19.7% in 2017 and population employed are more of those aged 30 years and above and approximately 50% of youth are not engaged in any income generating activities but the majority of them are working as self-employed (Asiimwe, 2022). Youth livelihood programs have been designed strategically as an intervention in creating employment opportunities and self-reliance among youth by the government with annual budget of UGX265 Billion (Approx. US$. 100 million) to support programs such as livelihood support programs. The study conducted in Botswana and Nigeria shows that several activities have been supported by government, private sectors and non-governmental organizations but the statistics released still shows rapid increase of unemployment and poverty among the youth. This means that a number of the young people are loitering with no jobs, involving gambling such as sport betting as source of livelihood and alcoholism (Mwesigwa, 2018) in spite of the recent government youth livelihood interventions. This indicates that majority of youth lack self-confidence, poor decision making and lack of responsibilities. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the contributions of youth livelihood programs in enhancing self-reliance among youth in Lira city west division, Lira city.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Study Design

Research methodology entails research techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data and can be explained as a way to systematically solve the research agenda or research problem. This study adopted a descriptive, cross-sectional research design with a quantitative data collection method. This method is powerful when you want to understand the details of a process, problems, needs, or the community and the real context of the subject under investigation. The researcher adopted the study design because of its benefits in providing data that helps in describing the relationship between the YLP and self-reliance.

3.2. Study Area

The study was conducted in Lira City West Division. It covered Amuca ward, Barapwo ward, Omito ward, Kakoge ward, Jinja Camp ward, Anai ward, Ober ward, and Adyel ward. These wards were selected because they accommodate many youth groups which were registered for YLP.

3.3. Study Population

The study respondents were the youths in Lira City West Division in groups that benefited from the YLP. Lira City West Division had a total of 63 active groups. Out of the total, 18 groups with approximately 254 members were selected using a simple random sampling technique, with the lottery method (picking without replacement) and then the sample size was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan formula of 1970. Eighteen groups were chosen since the number was representative enough to accomplish the study.

3.4. Sample Size Determination

The sample size was estimated using Krejcie and Morgan table of 1970. This table was chosen because the total number of groups and the actual number of the youths was known by the researcher.

Table 1. Sample size for the study respondents.

Respondent categories	Sample size	Sampling methods
The youths	254	Simple random sampling
Amuca ward	34	Simple random sampling
Barapwo ward	34	Simple random sampling
Omito ward	34	Simple random sampling
Anai ward	34	Simple random sampling
Kakoge ward	34	Simple random sampling
Jinja camp	33	Simple random sampling
Ober ward	33	Simple random sampling
Total	254	

Table 1 presents the sample distribution among the total sample of 254 respondents. Further, a simple random sampling comprising of representatives from seven wards (also known as parishes) was adopted.

3.5. Sampling Techniques

Based on the study design, a simple random sampling technique using the lottery method was used to select the study respondents. This helped to avoid bias and provide relevant, accurate, and adequate data for the study. Averages of fourteen members were selected per group until the total of 254 target respondents was reached.

3.6. Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire is a document that consists of a number of questions in a definite order. This method is used for gathering primary or first-hand data, which requires the researcher to prepare questions for specific strata of the population. The questionnaires were unstructured, open-ended and developed using the Likert scale to rate the respondents' responses (Very high = 5, High = 4, Moderate = 3, Low = 2, Very low = 1). During the data collection process, questions were read by the researcher or research assistants, who translated them into the local language (Luo) and allowed the respondents to select the best answers in the presence of the researcher or assistants. This closed questionnaire was chosen because of its inexpensive, quick, and efficient way of collecting large amounts of data even in the absence of the researcher.

3.7. Data Management and Analysis

Research Data Management (or RDM) is a term that describes the organization, storage, preservation, and sharing of data collected and used in a research project. Data was coded for meaningful classification and kept in personal computer/Laptop before analysis.

3.8. Data Analysis

Data was cleaned, entered and analysed using SPSS (version 20), which is a software package used for interactive, or batch, statistical analysis. Data analysis was done at the level of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate levels. Univariate analysis is the simplest form of data analysis where the data being analysed contains only one variable. Since it's a single variable, it doesn't deal with causes or relationships. The data was presented in the form of %ages, means, frequency, and standard deviation in tables. The bivariate analysis using correlation analysis was performed using Pearson correlation and the multivariate analysis using robust regression was conducted to test the relationship and the magnitude of the relationship between Independent variable (IV) and Dependent variable (DV). This is because the researcher was interested in measuring the strength of the correlation between YLP and self-reliance among the youths in Lira City West Division.

3.9. Data Quality Control

To ensure reliability of the questionnaire, it was piloted using a test-retest procedure. The same questionnaire was administered to 10 youths who benefited from the youth livelihood program within Amuca ward twice (with a two-week interval) under the same conditions. The correlations between the scores at time 1 and those at time 2 were estimated using SPSS (version 20) to determine the Cronbach alpha values. The alpha value was found at 0.895. Since the value was more than 0.7, this implied that the tool was reliable. The researches performed face validity to assess the validity of the questionnaire. To ensure face validity, the researcher forwarded the structured questionnaire to the supervisor, who is an expert in the area covered by the research, for editing and review to ensure that all items constructed could help achieve the aim of the study.

4. PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

The results section stated the findings, without bias or interpretation, and arranged in a logical sequence. This section contains the following aspects: response rate; background characteristics of the respondents; descriptive statistics on skills development support, livelihood support, institutional support, and self-reliance; bivariate analysis; and model diagnostic test.

4.1. Response Rate

A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed to the study respondents. Of those, 249 completed questionnaires were returned, which represents approximately a 98.0% response rate. The distribution of these responses is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Response rate.

Response	Frequency	%
Duly filled and returned questionnaires	249	98.0
Unreturned questionnaires	06	2.0
Total	254	100.0

Source: Primary data (2022).

4.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

A number of questions were asked in regards to the background information relating to age, gender, and level of education, employment status, and religion. As manifested in Table 3, the majority of respondents 134(53.8%) were aged between 25 and 30 years. It can be observed that female respondents 147 (59%) were significantly higher than males 102 (41%); this revealed that more females in Lira city benefited from the YLP compared to males. Regarding

marital status, it is observed that the majority of the respondents 125(50.2%) were married. In terms of education, the majority of them (92.9%) completed primary school, and Christians dominated the study, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	Frequency (249)	% (100%)
Age		
15-18	45	18.1
18-24	70	28.1
25-30	134	53.8
Sex		
Male	102	41.0
Female	147	59.0
Marital status		
Single	102	41.0
Married	125	50.2
Divorce/ separated	22	8.8
Level of education		
No education	57	22.9
Primary	92	36.9
Secondary	84	33.7
Institution	16	6.4
Religion		
Christian	129	92.0
Muslim	20	8.0

4.3. Contributions of Skills Development towards Enhancing Self-Reliance Among the Youths in Lira West Division

As manifested in this study, the descriptive statistics revealed that significantly high numbers of youths benefited from skills development supports such as hair dressing (Mean = 4.09, Standard Deviation (SD) = 0.809), fashion and design (Mean = 3.96, SD = 0.914), brick laying (Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.522) and carpentry and joinery (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.945). Furthermore, statistics show that some young people benefited moderately from support such as nursery bed and tree planning (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.185), electrical appliance repairs (Mean = 2.67, SD = 1.28), block laying and concrete practice (Mean = 2.81, SD = 1.678), and computer use and appliances (Mean = 3.13, SD = 1.151). Finally, some of the youth's support skills, such as video auditing (Mean = 2.0, SD = 1.179), craft work (Mean = 2.43, SD = 1.522), agro-processing (Mean = 1.97, SD = 1.184), and borehole repair (Mean = 1.65, SD = 1.056), had low mean scores. Generally, the overall mean of 2.81 and standard deviation of 1.272 implies that the youth moderately benefited from skills development support from the government, as shown in the Table 4.

4.4. Relationship Between Skills Development and Self-Reliance

To determine the relationship between the YLP and self-reliance, Pearson product correlation was used to establish the relationship. The correlation results were interpreted on the basis that when two variables are related, they vary together negatively or positively. It was found that skills development support was significantly correlated with self-reliance (r = -0.196, p 0.01). The study further pointed out that both youth livelihood support and skills development support correlate with the institutional support as in the Person r correlation of (r = 0.227) and (r = 0.030) respectively.

Table 5 presents the relationship between skills development support and self- awareness. It is indicated that improving self-reliance among the youths and the type of support is associated with one another.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on skills development support.

Variables	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Interpretation
Hair dressing	249	1	5	4.09	0.809	High
Fashion and design/ tailoring	249	1	5	3.96	0.914	High
Video and audio editing	249	1	5	2.0	1.179	Low
Nursery bed and tree planting	249	1	5	2.88	1.185	Moderate
Brick laying	249	1	5	3.51	1.522	High
Craft works	249	1	5	2.43	1.162	Low
Electrician appliance repairs	249	1	5	2.67	1.28	Moderate
Carpentry and joinery	249	1	5	3.74	0.945	High
Block lying and concrete practice (BCP)	249	1	5	2.81	1.678	Moderate
Computer used and appliance	249	1	5	3.13	1.151	Moderate
Agro-processing	249	1	5	1.97	1.184	Low
Borehole repair	249	1	5	1.65	1.056	Very low
Leathery	249	1	5	1.73	1.207	Very low
Average				2.81	1.272	Moderate

Note: 4.21-5.0 (Very high); 3.41-4.20 (High), 2.61-3.40 (Moderate); 1.81-2.60 (Low); 1.00-1.80 (Very low).

Table 5. Correlations.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Skills development support	-0.196	0.030	0.149	1.00

Note: Significance at 0.01 level.

4.5. Robust Regression to Determine the Effect Skill Development on Self-Reliance

A robust regression analysis was performed to determine the effects of skill development on self-reliance. The findings in Table 6 produced an adjusted R^2 value of 0.111, which meant that together, the constructs of the skills development contribute to about 11.1% of self-reliance among the youths in the community. The study findings revealed that there was a difference of about 11.1% in self-reliance among the youths who benefited from skills development supports. The study findings revealed positive significant effects of skills development support on self-reliance among the youths (Coef =-0.490, p-value 0.000) at 95% confidence interval. This implies that the YLP that teach skills play a significant role in increasing youth's self-reliance. The livelihood support (Coef = 0.159, p-value 0.0025) were found to be having positive effects on self-reliance and there was no relationship between institutional supports and self-reliance (p-value > 0.05, 95% Confidence Interval) as shown in the Table 6.

Table 6. Regression analysis on the YLP and self-reliance.

Self-reliance	Coef.	St. err.	t-value	P-value	95% conf.	Sig.
Constant	41.797	4.982	8.389	0.000	31.980	***
Skill development supports	-0.490	0.100	-4.887	0.000	-688	***
The youths livelihood supports	0.159	0.070	2.256	0.0025	0.20	***
Institutional supports	-0.038	0.0058	-0.657	0.512	-0.152	

Note: Summary.
Adj. R2 =0.111
Significance p< 0.05 ***.

Therefore, this means that the YLP is positively correlated with self-reliance among the youths however it constitutes only 11.1% in self-reliance among the youths. This implies that 89.9% of what make the youths self-reliance is not investigated in this study.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the study findings, the youths in Lira city west division benefited moderately from skills development support provided by the Ugandan government through the youths livelihood (Mean = 2.81, SD = 1.272).When compared to other skills training in Uganda, the study findings show that tailoring, hairdressing, block

laying and concrete practice (BCP), carpentry and joinery (CJ) were provided to the youths in Lira City West Division. This implies that some of the youths forcefully joined those training program based on the fact that there was no alternative for them to acquire the training they needed.

In regard to the statistics, it was established that a high number of the youths benefited from program through the youths livelihood and included hair dressing (Mean = 4.09, SD = 0.809), fashion and design or tailoring (Mean = 3.96, SD = 0.914), brick laying for both males and females (Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.522) and carpentry and joinery, especially among males (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.945). The high number of beneficiaries could be attributed to the availability of training program and also required a short time for an individual to be skilful. This study found out that some of the skills development support such as nursery bed and tree planning (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.185), electrical appliance repairs (Mean = 2.67, SD = 1.28), block laying and concrete practice (Mean = 2.81, SD = 1.678) and computer use and appliances (Mean = 3.13, SD = 1.151) benefited a moderate number of the youths in Lira city west division.

Furthermore, the study established that video auditing (Mean = 2.0, SD = 1.179), craft work (Mean = 2.43, SD = 1.522), agro-processing (Mean = 1.97, SD = 1.184), and borehole repair (Mean = 1.65, SD = 1.056) had low mean scores. This indicates that low number of the youths who acquired the skills and training on those skills support was not available in the program targeted by the government of Uganda. The Pearson product correlation performed revealed that skills development support was strongly correlated with self-reliance(r = -0.196, p< 0.01). The acquisition of skills among the youths enables them to become independent, create employment opportunities and promote self-reliance since the youths will be in position to make their own decisions, become financially stable and own assets among others.

As study is in line with a study conducted by Mwesigwa and Mubangizi (2019) which reveals that with the skills development support such as hair dressing, tailoring, block laying and concrete practice, brick laying, and carpentry and joinery, Uganda can be sure of self-reliance among the largest part of its population. Another study conducted in Nigeria on the acquisition of vocational skills and the development of self-reliance, graduates from formal educational institutions today are churned out and redundant due to a lack of skills to produce things that will allow them to compete in the labour market with those with high vocational skills (Iroegbu, 2017). Also, the findings support the program theory, which entails the logic behind how programs are built, with a particular emphasis on the program process for successful implementation. As argued by Pearson et al. (2020) to ensure the successful implementation of any program targeting the community, the process or mechanism concerning the program must be detailed, such as the information about the important steps, links, and phases of the expected transformation, the process, as well as some of the implementation issues. This could be one of the strong reasons why the youths benefited from some skills support more than others.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was set to investigate the contribution of skills development support towards enhancing self-reliance. It was concluded that a high number of the youths benefited from some of the skills development support such as hair dressing, fashion and design, carpentry and joinery, and brick moulding among both males and females. Nursery bed and tree planting, electrical appliance and repair, block laying and concrete practice, computer use, agro-forestry, craft work, and borehole repair were not common, and only a small number of the youths benefited.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the review, it is encouraged that:

a) The government of Uganda rethinks its strategy on poverty reduction among young people from a top-bottom – to a bottom-up approach where the target beneficiaries take a leading role in both the design and implementation of a program.

b) The notion of self-reliance be deconstructed within the framework of the specific target groups such as the youths, women, and unemployed graduates.

c) Apart from skills training, the youths need to be empowered in the area of behavioral change from the traditional thinking to a business thinking.

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