



Challenges and prospects of youth entrepreneurship in Karnali Province of Nepal.

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Abstract

This article locates the phenomena among youth, let's first discuss the youth. UNESCO has defined Youth as a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. 'Youth' is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she leaves compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/ her first employment. Often, Youth age-group is defined differently by different countries/ agencies and by same agency in different contexts. United Nations defines 'youth' as persons between 15 and 24 years of age. The major issues and challenges for the economic prosperity, social change, and development of this province. The economy should be subsistence-oriented and self-reliant, Karnali faces several key development challenges including widespread poverty, lack of physical infrastructure, unemployment, stagnation of agriculture, economic dependency, political instability. Unique natural heritage and cultural splendor, Extensive and unique geographical structure, Diverse climate and weather, Low population density and high demographic dividend, Abundance of original and rich languages, arts, literature and heritage, Practice of indigenous skills, technology and organic production, Availability of valuable mineral resources and mines, Diverse tourist destinations and products, abundance of water, forests, herbs and biodiversity and local production, trade, employment and economic development.

Keywords: Challenge, Prospects, Entrepreneurship, Development, Discourse.

Introduction

In the National Youth Policy-2003, 'youth' was defined a person of age between 13-35 years, but in the current Policy Document, the youth age-group is defined as 15-29 years. Youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5% of the total population of the country (Ministry of Youth Affairs sports, 2014; Unesco). Nepali youth, still plugged into the matrix of unrealistic aspirations, however appear to suffer a great deal more when it comes to actually acting upon these kindling entrepreneurial dreams for the worse. One of these major concerns is access to finance. Banks, cooperatives and traditional financial institutions generally ask for collateral and complex paperwork appears as a task which is mostly unaffordable to youth (Kafle, 2024).

At best, government programs targeted for supporting youth including subsidized loan facilities and entrepreneurship grants are hardly accessed by the intended as a result of bureaucratic red tape branding message poor outreach as well distribution (Shrestha,2024). Youth entrepreneurship is gaining prominence in the development discourse in Nepal as it grapples with the couple challenge of youth unemployment

and underemployment. In Nepal, more than 40% are under the age of 30 (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2015), bouncing on a looming demographic revolution that could well be an asset or an epic opportunity lost. There are simply too many idle youths for traditional sectors such as agriculture, civil service and foreign employment to absorb who enter the labor market each year. This change has led to the promotion of entrepreneurship as a solution for job creation, providing space for youth to demonstrate their potential creating innovations which can contribute to inclusive growth in transition (Ghimire & Chaudhary, 2021).

It is these financial restraints which stop most prospective youth entrepreneurs from turning their ideas into reality. In particular, Nepali youth are more interested in agro entrepreneurship. Due to the increased awareness of modern methods of farming and access to a little government support, younger people are getting into agribusinesses such as organic farming, poultry and agriculture (Devkota et al., 2023). This change not only keeps the youth. After two decades of research, the effect of strategic planning on a firm's performance is still unclear. While some studies have found significant benefits from planning, others have found no

relationship, or even small negative effects. Interpretation of these findings is confounded by the fact that many of these studies base their findings on a small number of firms. Accumulation of previous studies found modest correlations between planning and nine performance measures. Extensive measurement problems suggest that these findings underestimate the true relationship between planning and performance. Other important enablers of youth entrepreneurship include community and family support. This fall back model has served to guide the establishment of many young enterprises (Lose, 2023). The role of informal lending, moral support from relatives and family members and knowledge sharing among local cooperatives is often crucial for ways out of poverty through entrepreneurship. Although this support is not equally distributed, those young people who do not have a wide network or social capital face more difficulties in accessing resources and the push required.

The previous studies of Nepal have highlighted the potential of youth in sectors such as agriculture and small businesses, the lack of coordinated strategies and targeted support structures has prevented many young entrepreneurs from overcoming barriers such as limited financial access, insufficient family and community support, and ineffective government policies (Lose, 2023). Moreover, much of the existing research tends to examine these challenges independently, without exploring the complex interactions between critical factors such as education, social networks, financial resources, and community support that collectively influence entrepreneurial outcomes.

Objective and Methodology

The present research article is based on exploratory Qualitative research. This research work is aimed to study the buying behaviour of the young consumers between the age group of 20-35 towards Karnali Youth with reference to young adults of Lekhbeshi. The Qualitative details have been discussed wherever required but the major focus of the researcher is to express the finding through the Qualitative description. This study found out the symbolic relevance of Youth in today's time. It also helps in gaining the understanding of fashion desires and attitude of the youth of globalized Nepal as well as the impact of globalization on the buying behaviour. Lekhbeshi Surkhet district in Karnali Province of Nepal has experienced thriving infrastructure developments over the last decade, including new roads, schools and digital connectivity. However, there are still issues that this region suffers while uneven access to capital, limited youth involvement in economic planning, and an absence of dedicated youth incubation spaces reappear time and again. There has been virtually no empirical research regarding youth entrepreneurship in Karnali and many cannot afford to buy the report. The purpose of this study is to fill that gap by exploring the experiences of youth entrepreneurs in Karnali and to examine how local resources, institutions, and networks shape their entrepreneurial process. We are going to explore mainly youth opportunities and challenges of study area. This research is highly relevant for both scholarly research as well as real-world applications. Scholarly, it seeks

to add to the body of research on youth entrepreneurship by investigating how digital infrastructure, community support, financial resources, and innovation interact with each other. While previous work has studied standalone factors of rural entrepreneurship, this current study aims to provide a complete picture of the interaction and impact of such factors on semi urban Nepal's youth entrepreneurship. Thus, the research serves to complement a gap with fresh insights about how rural young people can be helped better at doing business in an increasingly global and digital age. The policymakers, development agencies, and practitioners at local levels, the study offers useful recommendations on shaping a more facilitative environment for youth entrepreneurs. The findings can be used to inform designing customized interventions, such as developing more advanced digital literacy training, creating stronger networks in the communities, and having greater access to financial resources. Also, the applicability of the research can guide initiatives to build sustainable youth entrepreneurship to address unemployment, increase innovation, and build local economies in Nepal's rural semi urban communities. This study may also be applicable in the situation of other similar rural settings in developing nations with the same challenges.

The theoretical review provides the foundational frameworks that guide the understanding of youth entrepreneurship in this study. Theories help explain the motivations, behaviors, and challenges faced by young entrepreneurs, as well as the resources and environmental factors that influence their success. By exploring established theories, the study gains a structured lens to analyze how individual intentions, available resources, and innovative capacities shape entrepreneurial activities. A recently published meta-analysis of the impact of strategic planning on financial performance omitted a major study of corporate planning practice in Fortune 58 firms. This article briefly reviews that study in light of the results of the meta-analysis. Additional analysis examines performance and firm survival over a longer time period than in the original work. The overall conclusion is that a small but positive relationship between strategic planning and performance exists, and persists.

The study has employed a census sampling method to include all the youth entrepreneurs in Lekhbeshi Surkhet. There are a total of 58 youth-entrepreneurs living in this area, so all 58 entrepreneurs were surveyed to secure full coverage and accurate depiction of the entrepreneurial landscape. Such a method removes sampling error and does not only aggregate data on any and every young entrepreneur in the community, but also emergent opportunities. Using census sampling has allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives and experiences without exclusion, which is particularly important given the relatively small and well-defined population. This method has also ensured that the findings reflected the entire entrepreneurial community in Lekhbeshi, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. This section provides a general overview of the entrepreneurial status of youth in Lekhbeshi, including their prior work experience, types of businesses operated, and the duration of their

business activities. It helps to build a foundational understanding of the local entrepreneurial landscape. This section outlines the demographic characteristics of the youth entrepreneurs surveyed in the study area. It includes information on their age, gender, marital status, educational background, and prior work experience to provide context for understanding their entrepreneurial journeys.

Age group of the Respondents: This presents the age distribution of the respondents to understand the age range in which youth are actively engaged in entrepreneurship in the study area.

Table 1: Age group of the Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20–21 years	10	17.2%
22–25 years	15	25.9%
26–29 years	20	34.5%
30–33 years	08	13.8%
34–35 years	5	8.6%
Total	58	100%

Source: Field Study, 2023

All entrepreneurs in Lekhbeshi are young, with 17.2% aged 20–21, followed by 25.9% aged 22–25, 34.5% aged 26–29, 13.8% aged 30–33 and 8.6% aged 34–35. This shows that entrepreneurship is most active during early adulthood. Notably, 17.2% are even younger (20–21), possibly due to limited formal job opportunities or greater access to technology. Only 8.6% are 34–35, highlighting that youth dominate the local business scene. These findings suggest that support and training programs should mainly target those aged 20–35 to effectively boost youth entrepreneurship. This subsection categorizes the types of businesses currently run by the youth entrepreneurs, providing insight into the prevalent sectors and business activities in the study area.

Table 2: Type of Business Currently Operating

Business Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Service-based	18	31%
Retail/shop	15	25.9%
Agriculture/livestock	6	10.3%
Manufacturing/producti on	7	12.1%
Digital/technology	3	5.2%
Other (specify)	9	15.5%
Total	58	100%

Source: Field Study, 2023

The data shows that shop retailed business are the primary occupations for the youth (31.0%), followed by service based enterprises (25.9%) shop and digital/technology

ventures (5.2%). Agriculture/livestock (10.3%) and manufacturing (12.1%) also represent significant shares, while 15.5% belong to other categories. This distribution suggests that along with traditional retail, there are rising probabilities to shift into services and digital entrepreneurship, a reflection of changes in market demand and youth's ability to adapt. This presents the length of time the youth entrepreneurs have been operating their businesses, highlighting the stability and sustainability of their ventures in Karnali Surkhet Lekhbeshi Municipality.

Table 3: Duration of Business Operation

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	27	46.6%
1–3 years	12	20.7%
3–5 years	05	8.6%
Over 5 years	14	24.1%
Total	58	100%

Source: Field Study, 2023

The findings show that a large number of firms (46.6%) have been in business for Less 1 years suggesting a rather new but expanding entrepreneurial environment. And 20.7% are under 3- year-old, indicating recent startup activity, while 24.1% have” been in existence 3 to 5 years. Only 24.1% of them have survived longer than 5 years, which indicates that it is difficult for businesses to survive. In short, the data indicates a young business environment that is still in early stages of development, but one that could grow substantially if nurtured.

Result and Discussion

The policymakers, development agencies, and practitioners at local levels, the study offers useful recommendations on shaping a more facilitative environment for youth entrepreneurs. The findings can be used to inform designing customized interventions, such as developing more advanced digital literacy training, creating stronger networks in the communities, and having greater access to financial resources. Also, the applicability of the research can guide initiatives to build sustainable youth entrepreneurship to address unemployment, increase innovation, and build local economies in Nepal's rural semi urban communities. This study may also be applicable in the situation of other similar rural settings in developing nations with the same challenges.

This section provides a general overview of the entrepreneurial status of youth in Lekhbeshi Municipality Surkhet, including their prior work experience, types of businesses operated, and the duration of their business activities. It helps to build a foundational understanding of the local entrepreneurial landscape. It describes the research design, study area, population, sampling procedures, data collection tools, and analysis techniques used to gather and interpret relevant data. The methods selected ensure that the

study achieves its objectives by providing reliable, valid, and comprehensive information about the factors influencing youth entrepreneurship in the study area. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are utilized to capture a detailed and nuanced understanding of the subject.

Challenges Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs in the Karnali Province: We are going to discuss about the various challenges encountered by youth entrepreneurs in Karnali province Lekhbeshi Municipality Surkhet its representation karnali and Nepal including financial, infrastructural, and social barriers that impact their business growth and sustainability.

Table 4: Challenges Encountered While Running Business

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of startup capital	11	19.6
Difficulty in obtaining loans	8	14.3
Market competition	9	16.1
Lack of mentorship	3	5.4
Regulatory delays	5	8.9
Poor infrastructure	7	12.5
Lack of skilled manpower	8	14.3
Social/cultural discouragement	1	1.8
Other	4	7.1
Total	58	100.00

Source: Field Study, 2023

The study reveals that the most significant challenge faced by youth entrepreneurs in Lekhbeshi Municipality Surkhet is the lack of startup capital, affecting nearly 19.6% of respondents. Difficulty in obtaining loans (14.3%) and poor infrastructure (12.5%) are also major barriers, highlighting financial and systemic constraints in the business environment. Market competition equally poses challenges for about 16.1% of youth, success. Regulatory delays (8.9%), social and cultural discouragement (1.8%), and other minor factors further compound the difficulties faced. Overall, these findings suggest indicating a crowded or saturated market. Other notable issues include lack of skilled manpower (8.9%) and mentorship (5.4%), which point to gaps in human resources and guidance necessary for business that financial access, infrastructure development, and capacity-building support are crucial areas to address for fostering sustainable youth entrepreneurship in the region.

Challenges Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs and Strategies for Overcoming Them

Additionally, navigating bureaucratic processes like business

registration and licensing poses significant hurdles. Entrepreneurs described these procedures as slow, confusing, and discouraging, with some resorting to help from experienced business owners or government training programs to manage these complexities. Youth entrepreneurs in Karnali Lekhbeshi Municipality Surkhet face numerous obstacles, the most common being lack of startup capital. Many have solid business plans but struggle to secure financing due to the absence of youth-friendly loan options or collateral. As a result, they often rely on informal borrowing, which can be risky and restrict long-term growth.

Market challenges also weigh heavily on young entrepreneurs. Small customer bases and inconsistent incomes make it difficult to meet demand and sustain operations. Competition from larger or more established firm's forces many to adapt by offering customized services, expanding product lines, or embracing digital marketing to stay relevant. Many entrepreneurs also highlighted gaps in essential business skills and mentorship. Lacking formal training in budgeting, customer service, and team management initially hampered their progress, though some improved through online courses and workshops offered by NGOs and youth clubs. Technological limitations, such as poor internet access and low digital literacy, further complicated efforts to grow via online platforms.

Social and logistical barriers add to the challenges. Family pressure and societal expectations often discourage youth from pursuing entrepreneurship, especially when salaried jobs are seen as more respectable. Entrepreneurs overcame this through persistence, family support, and demonstrable success. Supply chain issues and fluctuating raw material costs forced many to develop direct supplier relationships or collaborate on bulk purchases. Managing employees was another unexpected challenge, requiring entrepreneurs to develop leadership skills through experience. Despite these difficulties, youth entrepreneurs in Lekhbeshi show remarkable resilience, adapting creatively and persistently to build their businesses and contribute to the local economy. Lack of startup capital and limited access to formal financing, Complex and slow business registration and licensing processes, Inconsistent consumer demand and strong competition, Insufficient business skills and lack of mentorship, Poor internet connectivity and low digital literacy, Social and familial discouragement towards entrepreneurship, fluctuating raw material prices and long supply chains and Challenges in managing and motivating employees are interesting and thoughtful problems of Youth of Karnali, Nepal.

This study mainly examines the phenomenon of youth entrepreneurship in Karnali, Nepal that centered on finding barriers experienced by young entrepreneurs, local opportunities and government support provided to them. The results indicated a nuanced, yet promising environment where young people are interested in doing business notwithstanding a number of obstacles. Foremost among the challenges is inadequate startup capital, which was identified as most significant barrier to starting and scaling the

businesses by many respondents. On top of these, borrowing challenges and red tape may discourage these small businesses, preventing growth and longevity. Poor infrastructural facilities and inadequate mentoring opportunities exacerbate these challenges, necessitating holistic support structures for young entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the study points out some promising possibilities that young entrepreneurs in Lekhbeshi can explore. Rapid population influx to the area and easy accessibility by road has increased local markets and availability of resources, thus ensuring a favorable environment for business establishment. In addition, digital technology such as social media and mobile applications have changed the game by improving marketing and communication channels, and supporting online sales and delivery service functionalities. In the world as a whole, we have entered a period of high modern technology, cut loose from its moorings in the reassurance of tradition and in what was for a long while an anchored "vantage-point" (both for those on the "inside" and for others)-the dominance of the core power. Although its originators looked for certainties to replace pre-established dogmas, modern effectively involves the institutionalization of doubt. All knowledge claims, in conditions of modern and modernity, are inherently circular, although "circularity" has a different connotation in the natural as compared to the social sciences. It concerns the fact that science is pure method, such that all substantive forms of "accepted knowledge" are in principle open to being discarded. The social sciences presume a circularity in a twofold sense, which is constitutively fundamental to modern institutions. The knowledge claims they produce are all in principle revisable, but also become "revised" in a practical sense as they circulate in and out of the environment they describe. These have been enabled by technology allowing young entrepreneurs to come up with novel approaches, for example digital payment systems and eco packaging that distinguishes them amidst a crowd of competition. These are further underpinned by a robust local demand in sectors such as groceries, eateries and ICT thus demonstrating a potential for viable small scale entrepreneurship development.

Key development issues and challenges of Karnali

The major issues and challenges for the economic prosperity, social change, and development of this province. The economy should be subsistence-oriented and self-reliant, Karnali faces several key development challenges including widespread poverty, lack of physical infrastructure, unemployment, stagnation of agriculture, economic dependency, political instability. The quality, professional and skilled human capital, safe road infrastructure, multidimensional poverty and income-based absolute poverty are high, Youth and intellectual migrate, weak revenue base and low internal revenue, access to infrastructure, services, and facilities, weak development management and good governance, Public service delivery, structure and investment are not strong, competitive, transparent and people-friendly, the impact of climate change and the persistence of disaster

risks, including seismic risk, failure to timely reconstruct and recover from damage caused by earthquakes, floods, landslides and other disasters, Increasing urbanization and existing settlements are major challenges and development issues of Karnali .

Key development prospects and opportunities of Karnali

The main prospects and opportunities for economic prosperity, social change, and development of this province. It is believed that it will make a meaningful contribution to the areas of expansion and sustainable development, as well as the promotion and enhancement of Karnali's unique language, culture, literature, and art. Unique natural heritage and cultural splendor, Extensive and unique geographical structure, Diverse climate and weather, Low population density and high demographic dividend, Abundance of original and rich languages, arts, literature and heritage, Practice of indigenous skills, technology and organic production, Availability of valuable mineral resources and mines, Diverse tourist destinations and products, abundance of water, forests, herbs and biodiversity and local production, trade, employment and economic development.

"Prosperous Karnali Prosperous Karnali people" The vision is to develop Karnali Province into a province of happy citizens living in a safe and clean environment with high economic growth and basic physical facilities by 2100 BS, with respectable employment for all. The long-term goal is to implement the long-term vision of a prosperous Karnali and a prosperous Karnali people by achieving rapid economic growth through inclusive, balanced, and sustainable development based on social justice. For this, the following goals of prosperity and prosperity have been determined. Identification and mobilization of potential economic sectors, universally accessible modern equitable distribution human capital development and full utilization of potential Sophisticated and refined life, sustainable production and product development based on a green economy. To achieve rapid economic and social development by achieving special achievements in basic infrastructure construction, education, health production, and employment. Based on the 11 indicators of prosperity and 23 indicators of happiness determined by the Government of Nepal, a strategy has been adopted to achieve the vision of making Karnali Province a prosperous Karnali with its own unique characteristics: happy Karnali people by increasing investment and collaboration with the public, private, cooperative, community sectors and development partners. This long-term strategy is planned to be completed in 25 years through five five-year plans. To manage governance to achieve sustainable development goals, develop sustainable and reliable physical infrastructure, ensuring quality and accessible education and health services, increase production and productivity and industrialize based on a green economy, to conserve and appropriately mobilize human resources and natural resources (water, forests, land, herbs), and strengthening the public service delivery system.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this article emphasizes that even though the youth entrepreneurship in Lekhbeshi is significantly promising, the potential of youth remains limited by financial, infrastructural and institutional blocks. They said tackling this problem would have to be multifaceted, and would include greater financial inclusion, targeted skills development, and better mentorship programs. In addition, creating stronger partnerships among public authorities, the private sector and youth entrepreneur networks can create a more enabling environment for innovation and business expansion. Through seizing local market potential and the power of technology innovation, young entrepreneurs can make their positive contributions to economic growth and job creation in the region. Finally, the investigation also shows the significance of the development of an enabling environment that will prepare the youth for the challenges and opportunities at hand. Enhancing government policies, and infrastructure and knowledge sharing platforms will be critical in sustaining growth of young people led enterprises in the study area. It's efforts such as these that won't just generate other success stories, but help the larger socio-economic landscape flourish in Nepal by leveraging the youth pool that much more.

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