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THE IMPACT OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT ON YOUTH: A CASE STUDY OF NQABANE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract. The triad of poverty, inequality, and unemployment has a detrimental effect on the lives of South African youth. A complex web is formed by the interaction of each of these elements, which not only restricts opportunities but also exacerbates the psychosocial issues of young people. A comprehension of the implications of this triad is necessary to address the distinctive requirements of South African youth. This quantitative study used a sample of 100 youth to respond to questionnaires on the extent to which the triple challenges affect unemployed youth in Nqabane, South Africa. The study accepted the alternative hypothesis, which states that youth agri-preneurs are more affected by the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. These findings have far-reaching implications. They emphasise the pressing need for economic institutions and policymakers to encourage young people to pursue entrepreneurship and incorporate agriculture issues into the field.

Keywords: Youth; poverty; inequality; unemployment; agri-preneurship

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JEL Classifications: J1, L26

1. Introduction

The powerful triad of poverty, inequality, and unemployment negatively impacts the lives of South African youth. Each of these elements interacts with the others to form a complex web that not only limits opportunities but also makes young people's psychosocial problems worse. Addressing the unique needs of South African youth requires an understanding of the ramifications of this triad. Even though South Africa has one of the biggest economies on the African continent, poverty is a widespread problem that affects millions of people. Precarious employment conditions contribute to the overall poverty landscape, as evidenced by the many employed people who remain impoverished (Makhalima, 2023). The gender wage gap impacts women since they typically make much less than men and work in lower-paying positions (Makhalima, 2023). The Ministry of Social Development acknowledges that a large percentage of the population lives below the poverty line due to the highly unequal income distribution, which traps young people in a cycle of disadvantage (Zibengwa & Tanga, 2023). Cross-sectional studies that emphasise the impact of poverty on mental health in South Africa show that this widespread poverty has negative psychological effects, including higher rates of depressive symptoms among youth (Zimmerman et al., 2022). This problem is exacerbated by differences in access to resources, which make it harder for young people living in poverty to break free.

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Unemployment, which continues to be one of South Africa's most pressing problems, is closely related to poverty. South Africa has one of the world's highest rates of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment has been shown to have negative effects on social cohesion, increased distress, lower self-esteem, and the likelihood of social unrest, in addition to economic repercussions (Musariwa & Tinonetsana, 2023). These circumstances were greatly worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to millions of young people losing their jobs and their means of subsistence (Brown et al., 2024). There are also worries that young people have difficulty entering the workforce because of their lack of education and real-world experience, which feeds the vicious cycle of unemployment and poverty (Marsay, 2022).

The problems caused by unemployment and poverty are exacerbated by inequality. South Africa consistently ranks among the world's most unequal societies, with young people, especially those from marginalised communities, being disproportionately impacted by income disparities (Aiseng, 2024). Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a select few due to economic inequality, and a sizable section of the youth population faces survival challenges. This disparity affects their access to education and work prospects, resulting in a setting where socioeconomic mobility is hindered from an early age. Young women frequently experience both economic and gender-based disparities, which are made worse by the gender pay gap that currently exists (Makhalima, 2023).

These difficulties have significant psychological ramifications. According to Mamukeyani et al. (2023), young people who are unemployed and living in poverty are more likely to experience mental health problems like anxiety and depression, which can result in substance abuse in a variety of ways as a coping strategy. Interventions must address mental health, well-being, and economic empowerment (Madisha & Skhosana, 2022). Cultural considerations influence the conversation about depression and unemployment, highlighting the necessity of culturally aware methods in youth-focused interventions in South Africa (Odimegwu & Ugwu, 2022).

Additionally, young people from marginalised communities face difficulties and are frequently further excluded from welfare and employment opportunities. Additional forms of marginalisation are experienced by this group, which makes them more likely to engage in risky behaviours just to survive (Ramoshaba et al., 2022). These problems could be made worse by policies that disregard the demographic diversity of young people, erecting structural obstacles that keep these people from having the same access to opportunities as their peers in the community.

Despite these obstacles, government and community programs are essential for tackling youth unemployment and empowering young people. Programs that increase youth economic opportunities are crucial, particularly those that encourage entrepreneurship and skill development. To address unemployment and poverty, research emphasises the value of local government initiatives to train and assist young entrepreneurs (Ndebele et al., 2022). Communities can start to address the imbalances brought about by the triad of unemployment, inequality, and poverty by creating an atmosphere that supports youth-driven businesses.

There is a wealth of research on agri-preneurship, but little is known about how the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality impact unemployed youth in Nqabane. This study aims to fill that knowledge gap.

2. Review of selected literature

2.1 The extent to which the triple challenges affect unemployed youth

2.1.1 Poverty

The enduring prevalence of poverty continues to be a significant socioeconomic challenge in South Africa since the democratic transition in 1994. Poverty refers to an insufficiency of essential resources necessary for sustaining

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life (World Bank, 2023). Poverty is conventionally understood through the lens of income; however, as articulated by the United Nations (UN) on its website, it encompasses a broader spectrum that includes inadequate access to fundamental services such as education and healthcare, alongside issues of social exclusion, discrimination, and insufficient participation in decision-making processes (United Nations, 2022). Poverty constitutes a significant societal challenge (Prasetyo & Thomas, 2021).

In 2023, global poverty levels remain influenced by multiple factors, notably the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent economic challenges. In 2022, approximately 712 million individuals were classified as living in extreme poverty, indicating a notable rise from levels observed before the pandemic. The increase in extreme poverty indicates a regression in poverty alleviation efforts, especially in areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty is most prevalent. The World Bank (2023) defines extreme poverty as subsisting on less than $2.15 per day, equivalent to approximately R40.74 in South African Rands, using an exchange rate of 1 USD = 18.95 ZAR.

Despite international efforts to combat poverty, the goal of eradicating severe poverty by 2030 is becoming more and more unattainable given the present rate of economic expansion and the extra difficulties brought on by wars and climate change. Additionally, according to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 485 million people in developing nations live in extreme poverty, which includes several deprivations in areas including health, education, and living standards, while 1.1 billion people remain in poverty (UNDP, 2023). These figures highlight the need to step up international efforts to protect the most vulnerable groups and combat poverty in all its manifestations.

Poverty in South Africa has mostly persisted as a rural issue. Zimbalist (2017 cited in Gumede, 2021) showed that poverty levels were much greater in rural regions compared to metropolitan areas throughout the period from 1997 to 2012. Since Zimbalist (2017) made this discovery, the situation has remained mostly unchanged from his findings. Poverty in rural regions has likely risen because of a declining economy, exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic. Despite the apparent fall in poverty, as shown by Gumede (2021), rural poverty has not significantly diminished. In the most recent NIDS wave, rural poverty was at 45 per cent, and urban poverty was at 19 per cent. Furthermore, female-headed families disproportionately experience poverty, particularly those located in rural regions. This reinforces the position of those who contend that policy actions should not overlook rural areas (Gumede, 2021).

Numerous authors (Wade, 2020; Si et al., 2021; Cumming et al., 2021; Ayoo, 2022; Sutter et al., 2023) indicate that poverty alleviation has progressively emerged as a central theme for scholars in the social sciences, encompassing economics, finance, management, and entrepreneurship. This addresses the gravity of severe poverty and the ambiguous outcomes of poverty reduction initiatives (Han et al., 2023).

Rudin (2022) believes that an increasing number of South Africans are currently experiencing unprecedented poverty. Masuku et al. (2023) claim that South Africa's advanced constitution and legislative framework unequivocally provide the legal basis for equality and non-discrimination. Nonetheless, the problem persists in fully implementing these policies to enhance the living standards of historically marginalised groups, particularly youth, women, and children.

Agri-preneurship, which integrates agriculture with entrepreneurship, significantly contributes to reducing poverty by generating employment possibilities, particularly in rural areas where poverty is often more prevalent. It motivates people to generate sustainable income from their enterprises, enabling them to meet fundamental needs, invest in education, and enhance their quality of life. Agri-preneurs might enhance their output by acquiring new agricultural methodologies and participating in market-oriented initiatives. Moreover, agri-preneurship catalyses rural development by strengthening economic growth and upgrading infrastructure, thus

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creating a more favourable climate for poverty reduction. Agri-preneurship effectively alleviates poverty by generating sustainable livelihoods and promoting economic development in rural regions.

2.1.2 Inequality

Inequality represents a pervasive issue, prompting extensive scholarly and policy-oriented efforts worldwide. Nations in the global North and South are contending with the social and economic consequences of persistent and escalating inequality. The universality of the problem may obscure the distinct causes of inequality that exist globally, especially in the post-colonial global South. Inequality continues to be one of South Africa's most significant socioeconomic challenges, enduring throughout the three decades since the end of apartheid. The country exhibits the highest income inequality globally (Sulla & Zikhali, 2023) and significant wealth inequality (Orthofer, 2023).

The World Bank report indicates that South Africa exhibits significant wealth inequality and economic polarisation, especially within labour markets (Masson, 2022). Wealth inequality surpasses income inequality, with estimates indicating that the top 10% of the population possesses 71% of total wealth, while the bottom 60% holds merely 7%.

Inequality among young agricultural entrepreneurs is a significant concern that impacts economic growth and social development. Empowering youth in agriculture may greatly enhance the wealth of their families and communities (Christopher, 2021). Societies must harness the whole potential of their youth as essential elements of human capital (Rickard, 2022). Facilitating equal access to resources and involvement in decision-making for all youth would enhance sustainable economies, benefit communities, and foster social progress (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2023).

Young agricultural entrepreneurs experience considerable economic marginalisation, hindering their access to essential resources and opportunities. An estimated 1.7 billion unbanked persons worldwide face obstacles to financial inclusion that impede their business potential (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2023). The Global Gender Gap Report (2023) indicates that differences in financial asset management and the uneven allocation of unpaid labour perpetuate economic inequities among young agri-preneurs. Access to financial services is restricted in several places, with just 60% of nations offering equitable chances for youngsters (World Economic Forum, 2022/2023). These elements sustain obstacles for young entrepreneurs endeavouring to thrive in agriculture and associated areas.

Inequalities among youth agri-preneurs are worsening in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and other developing nations (World Economic Forum, 2022/2023). Access to financing is essential for families, facilitating investments in long-term objectives such as enterprises, thereby improving their resilience to economic shocks (World Bank, 2023). Royce (2022) asserts that social inequality is fundamentally connected to the concept of poverty despite the distinction between the two. Youth represent a critical component of national development, and promoting economic growth is essential; however, statistics reveal a significant rate of youth unemployment in South Africa.

This scenario exists in a dual-logic economy, defined by a well-developed economic sector alongside a struggling economy. Lubchenco and Haugan (2023) highlight the increasing influence of inequality on economic development and political stability. The relationship between inequality and poverty in South Africa exacerbates the challenges encountered by youth agri-preneurs, as each factor adversely affects the other.

Francis and Valodia (2021) assert that inequality influences the overall rate of poverty reduction, independent of economic growth rates. Stagnant high inequality rates will inhibit pro-poor growth (Francis & Valodia, 2021). South Africa's declining GDP per capita is accompanied by increasing unemployment, poverty, and inequality

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(Zhu et al., 2022). Significant income inequality remains prevalent, largely attributed to increasing labour market disparities, which are estimated to represent between 85 and 91 per cent of overall income inequality in the nation (Leibbrandt & Pabón, 2022). Therefore, a significant issue to consider is the persistent and escalating levels of inequality within society (Lubchenco & Haugan, 2023).

South Africa continues to rank among the most unequal nations globally (Espi et al., 2019; Francis and Webster, 2019; Beinart et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2020; Francis & Valodia, 2021; Hundenborn, 2021; Leibbrandt & Pabón, 2022). The existing inequality levels are a result of the segregation and marginalisation of most of South Africa's population in all facets of socioeconomic development before and during apartheid (Leibbrandt & Pabón, 2022).

In the context of South Africa, poverty and inequality are frequently discussed together (Lee et al., 2023). This results in significant conceptual distinctions between poverty, defined by income levels at a specific threshold, and inequality, characterised by disparities among groups or individuals. Poverty is examined as an individualised metric, specifically the income level of an individual or the status of a multidimensional index about an income or multidimensional poverty threshold (Lee et al., 2023).

The literature indicates that agri-preneurship has the potential to mitigate wealth inequality by enabling historically disadvantaged individuals to engage as entrepreneurs within the agricultural sector. Land reform initiatives or cooperative farming models can facilitate wealth redistribution and promote economic inclusion. Agri-preneurship facilitates job creation, skills development, and income generation, particularly for marginalised groups such as youth. It can promote agricultural entrepreneurship, thereby reducing unemployment and addressing the root causes of inequality. Targeted interventions such as government support programmes, access to microfinance, and capacity-building initiatives are essential to address these inequalities.

2.1.3 Unemployment

Unemployment impacts both uneducated and educated youth. Youth unemployment in South Africa is currently at a critical level, with estimates indicating that approximately 59.6% of the nation's 31.9% unemployed demographic consists of individuals aged 15 to 24 years (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2024). While the South African statistics specifically indicate the ages of 15-24 years, it is important to recognise that unemployment also impacts individuals older than 24 years.

Unemployment represents a significant challenge within capitalist societies, with its severity particularly pronounced in South Africa, rendering it a critical aspect of the nation's social landscape (Bundy, 2020). Since 1994, the South African economy has been marked by poverty, unemployment, and income inequality (Omay et al., 2021), positioning South Africa among the countries with the highest unemployment rates globally (Hartley et al., 2023).

Wage employment constitutes the primary income source for most South Africans. The absence of access to quality employment opportunities perpetuates persistent economic inequalities (Leibbrandt, 2021). The rising unemployment rates, persistent inflation, and lacklustre economic growth present pressing challenges that jeopardise the nation's potential for advancement (Sheefeni, 2022). Zizzamia (2020) posits that rural regions in South Africa experience marginalisation and underdevelopment, remaining remote from economic benefits and opportunities, a situation rooted in the historical context of apartheid. Consequently, young individuals in rural regions encounter diminished employment opportunities and often relocate to urban centres in pursuit of better prospects (Geza et al., 2022). Moreover, PWC (2021) observed that, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, employment opportunities for skilled workers have demonstrated significantly greater resilience compared to those for unskilled and semiskilled positions.

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Thus, agri-preneurship, conceived as a mechanism for alleviating unemployment and fostering economic advancement, can shift the current landscape by generating employment prospects for the rural youth of Nqabane Location and throughout South Africa. Entrepreneurship holds significant importance across all economic sectors, as it propels the economy towards its productive potential and fosters positive contributions to economic development and job creation, ultimately resulting in a decrease in unemployment (Bamford & Bruton, 2019; Bushe, 2019; Govuzela & Mafini, 2019; Blundel et al., 2021; Klofsten et al., 2021; Dhaliwal, 2022). Entrepreneurship fosters the establishment of new enterprises and plays a crucial role in ensuring economic stability and promoting growth, as evidenced by various scholarly contributions (Rezaei-Moghaddam & Izadi, 2019; Arafat et al., 2020; Nagadeepa et al., 2023). It is a fundamental priority within the economic policies of nations worldwide (Nagadeepa et al. 2023). Nagadeepa et al. (2023) assert that addressing the global challenges of poverty and food security is essential for achieving the sustainable development goal of zero hunger, with agricultural development being a crucial factor in this endeavour. In this regard, it is essential to analyse the social and cognitive elements that play a role in entrepreneurship within the agricultural sector (Mulibana & Tshikovhi, 2024).

3. Hypotheses

A statistical analysis was conducted under significant testing where the researchers posed a null hypothesis and attempted to reject that hypothesis (Borenstein, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis was developed: H_0: The triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment do not affect unemployed youth in Nqabane.

4. Methodology

To determine whether a change in one variable was connected to a change in another, this study employed a quantitative research approach with a correlation design to examine predictions or hypotheses that suggested an association or relationship between variables (Kapingura, 2024; Karambakuwa, 2024; Schurink et al., 2024). The research paradigm employed was positivist. To validate priori hypotheses, which are frequently expressed quantitatively, positivism uses the hypothetico-deductive method, which allows for the derivation of functional relationships between explanatory and causative factors (independent variables) and outcomes (dependent variables) (Anakpo & Mishi, 2024; Bartley & Hashemi, 2024; Fouché, 2024). While the ontological orientation was based on objectivism, the epistemological orientation dealt with natural science models in positivist dynamics (Maredza et al., 2024).

A sample of 100 young people residing in Nqabane was taken. We used structured questionnaires to gather data. Because they provided actionable data, protected respondent identity, and covered every aspect of the study's topic, we used questionnaires (Masha & Eze, 2022). Furthermore, we were able to gather data on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and opinions regarding the topic of this study by using questionnaires (Boswell, 2023; Batchelor et al., 2022). Our ability to administer questionnaires to numerous cases was not only faster (Boswell, 2023), but it also enabled us to gather a significant amount of accurate, quantitative, and numerical data (Ali et al., 2022; Masha & Eze, 2022; Struwig & Stead, 2022). In addition to being more cost-effective (Kumar, 2020; Batchelor et al., 2022; du Toit, 2021), questionnaires took less time (Vriesema & Gehlbach, 2021; Jones, 2022; Nieuwenhuis, 2025).

SPSS software was used to analyse the data, and procedures for hypothesis testing were used to process the statistical findings. The Cronbach Coefficient value, which was higher than the necessary 0.70 Cronbach Coefficient was obtained after the reliability of the established factor structure was assessed.

As is customary, we received ethical clearance from Walter Sisulu University (WSU) (Sefotho, 2024). Before the start of data collection, we obtained respondents' informed consent (Anakpo & Mishi, 2024). We promised

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respondents confidentiality and anonymity (Mishi, 2024), told them they could withdraw at any time without penalty (Hume & Baumgardner-Zuzik, 2023), and did not injure them in any way (Cannon & Delahoyde, 2023).

5. Study findings

5.1 Presentation and interpretation of findings of the extent to which the triple challenges affect unemployed youth in Nqabane

The objective of this study was to determine the extent to which the triple challenges affect unemployed youth in Nqabane. Below is a presentation and interpretation of the findings for the study's objective.

This study's questionnaire had a demographic section followed by two sections. The first of the two other sections is tabulated below in Table 1.

Table 1. Items from the questionnaire

Triple challenges	
A1	Youth suffer from poverty as one of the triple challenges
A2	Youth suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges
A3	Youth suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges
A4	The triple challenges can be solved through youth agri-preneurship
A5	Most barriers need to be taken care of to solve the triple challenges

Findings from the questionnaire are found below (Table 2, Table 3 and Figure 1):

Table 2. Triple Challenges (TR)

	Item	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Neutral**	**Often**	**Very Often**
1	A1	0	0	0	30	70
2	A2	0	0	10	50	40
3	A3	0	0	0	40	60
4	A4	0	0	0	50	50
5	A5	0	0	0	70	30

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

	Item	**Low**	**Neutral**	**High**	**mean**	**sd**
1	A1	0	0	100	4.7	0.483
2	A2	0	10	90	4.3	0.675
3	A3	0	0	100	4.6	0.516
4	A4	0	0	100	4.5	0.527
5	A5	0	0	100	4.7	0.483

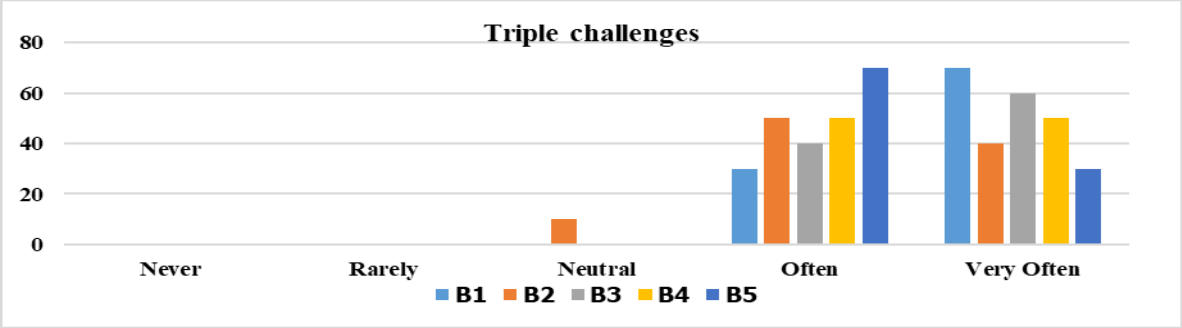


Figure 1. Likert scale plot for triple challenges

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Where:

- A1 = youth suffer from poverty as one of the triple challenges
- A2 = youth suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges
- A3 = youth suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges
- A4 = The triple challenges can be solved through youth agri-preneurship
- A5 = Most barriers need to be taken care of to solve the triple challenges

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for the challenges. The statistics include the "low," "neutral," and "high" values, which indicate the range of responses for each challenge. Additionally, the table includes the mean and standard deviation (sd) values.

For challenge A1, the responses range from 0 (low) to 100 (high). The mean response is 4.7, indicating that, on average, respondents perceive the challenge of youth suffering from poverty as relatively high. The standard deviation is 0.483, suggesting a relatively low variability in responses.

For challenge A2, the responses range from 0 to 100. The mean response is 4.3, indicating that, on average, respondents perceive the challenge of youth suffering from inequality as relatively high. The standard deviation is 0.675, suggesting a higher level of variability in responses compared to the other challenges.

For challenge A3, the responses also range from 0 to 100. The mean response is 4.6, indicating that, on average, respondents perceive the challenge of youth suffering from unemployment as relatively high. The standard deviation is 0.516, suggesting a moderate level of variability in responses.

For challenge A4, the responses range from 0 to 100. The mean response is 4.5, indicating that, on average, respondents perceive the potential solution of youth agri-preneurship to the triple challenges as relatively high. The standard deviation is 0.527, indicating a moderate level of variability in responses.

For challenge A5, the responses also range from 0 to 100. The mean response is 4.7, indicating that, on average, respondents believe that most barriers need to be addressed to solve the triple challenges. The standard deviation is 0.483, suggesting a relatively low variability in responses. The construct reliability metrics are tabulated and expatiated below (see Table 4).

Table 4. Construct reliability metrics

	Alpha	rhoC	AVE	rhoA
Triple	0.661	0.784	0.512	0.828

Where:

Alpha: This column represents Cronbach's alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency reliability. It assesses the extent to which items within each construct are correlated with each other. Higher alpha values indicate better reliability. For example, TRIPLE has an alpha of 0.661.

rhoC: This column represents composite reliability (rhoC), another internal consistency reliability measure. Like alpha, higher values indicate better reliability. For example, TRIPLE has a rhoC of 0.784.

AVE: This column represents the average variance extracted (AVE), which assesses the amount of variance captured by the construct compared to the measurement error. AVE values above 0.5 are generally considered acceptable. For example, TRIPPLE has an AVE of 0.512.

rhoA: This column represents the construct's composite reliability (rhoA), which is another measure of reliability. It indicates the proportion of true score variance in the construct relative to the total observed variance. Higher rhoA values indicate better reliability. For example, TRIPLE has a rhoA of 0.828.

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The Cronbach Alpha method, which measures how well items in a set are positively correlated with each other, is often used. Using general criteria, reliability less than 0.60 is considered low, reliability in the range of 0.70 is considered acceptable, and reliability above 0.80 is considered good (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020; Pallant, 2020). To achieve sufficient reliability in these investigations, the author raised the reliability threshold above 0.60. Cronbach's alpha values for most of the constructs are above 0.70, which indicates that they have good internal consistency reliability. This means that the items in each scale are measuring the same construct consistently.

The reliability metrics in Table 5 below generally indicate acceptable levels of reliability for most constructs, as reflected by the high alpha.

Table 5. Indicator reliability (loadings^1)

Triple challenges		
A1	Youth suffer from poverty as one of the triple challenges	0.013
A2	Youth suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges	0.842
A3	Youth suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges	0.806
A4	The triple challenges can be solved through youth agri-preneurship	0.702
A5	Most barriers need to be taken care of to solve the triple challenges	0.194
A1 and A5 have not been considered for tests of significance because they have Cronbach Alpha of lower than 0.70		

The loadings^1 values indicate how well each indicator loads onto its respective latent variable. In general, the loadings^1 values in this table are relatively high, which indicates that the indicators are reliable measures of their respective latent variables. The study's hypothesis testing is shown below (see Table 6).

Table 6. Testing hypotheses

	Triple challenges	**Original estimates**	**T Star.**	**2.5% C1**	**97.5% C1**	**Decision**	**Remark**
H_{02} **B2**	Youth do not suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges	0.918	19.811	0.808	0.958	Reject Ho	Significant
H_{03} **B3**	Youth do not suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges	0.898	17.522	0.788	0.964	Reject Ho	Significant
H_{04} **B4**	The triple challenges cannot be solved through youth agri-preneurship	0.838	6.553	0.492	0.927	Reject Ho	Significant

The interpretation of Table 4.5 is found below.

For each hypothesis (Ho), the table provides the following information:
H_0: The null hypothesis being tested, states that a particular factor is not required for the success of youth entrepreneurship.

Coefficient: The estimated coefficient for the factor being tested.
t-value: The t-value obtained from the hypothesis test.
Standard error: The standard error associated with the coefficient.
p-value: The p-value obtained from the hypothesis test.
Decision: Whether to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis based on the p-value.
Significance: Indicates whether the factor is found to be significant for the success of the youth agri-preneurship.

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This study employed a deductive logic approach, in which the researcher began with null hypotheses and subsequently collected data to ascertain whether empirical evidence supported the hypotheses, thereby enabling logical analysis and conclusions to be drawn based on the relationships obtained from the related variables (Dube & Shawe, 2022; Manzini & Mhakure, 2022; Ugwuanyi, 2022). Therefore, a statistical analysis was conducted under significant testing, in which the researcher posed a null hypothesis and endeavoured to refute it (Borenstein, 2021). In this case, some null hypotheses ($H_{02,}$ H_{03}, H_{04}) are rejected based on the obtained p-values, indicating that all the factors tested are found to be significant for the success of youth agri-preneurship.

The coefficient of 0.959 suggests a positive correlation between the success of agri-preneurship and req_1. The coefficient is statistically significant, as evidenced by the t-value of 6.669. The calculated p-value is 0.839, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (req_1 not required) is denied, indicating that req_1 is indeed critical for the success of youth agri-preneurship.

The table outlines various hypotheses concerning the impacts of youth agri-preneurship on poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The hypotheses underwent testing through statistical analysis, yielding estimates, t-statistics, and confidence intervals.

The hypotheses (H02 to H04) investigate the influence of youth agri-preneurship on poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The values range from -0.201 to 0.992, indicating various levels of positive correlations. The t-statistics and confidence intervals demonstrate that only some estimates are statistically significant, while others fail to achieve significance. This suggests that young agri-preneurship has substantially aided in alleviating the threefold issues of poverty, inequality, and unemployment in certain instances but not in others.

6. Interpretation of findings

This study's questionnaire had a demographic section followed by two sections. The discussions that follow below are for the first part of the two sections.

- B1 = youth suffer from poverty as one of the triple challenges
- B2 = youth suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges
- B3 = youth suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges
- B4 = The triple challenges can be solved through youth agri-preneurship
- B5 = Most barriers need to be taken care of to solve the triple challenges

The reliability metrics generally indicate acceptable to good levels of reliability for most constructs is reflected by the high alpha. In this case, B1 and B5 have not been considered for tests of significance because they have Cronbach Alpha of lower than 0.70.

Therefore, findings from the questionnaire indicate that on average, most youth (90%) suffer from inequality as one of the triple challenges, all youth (100%) suffer from unemployment as one of the triple challenges, and all youth (100%) agree that the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment can be solved through youth agri-preneurship.

To test hypotheses, the t-statistics and confidence intervals indicate that only B1 and B5 failed to reach significance, while other estimates are statistically significant. This implies that youth agri-preneurship has a significant positive impact on alleviating the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment in some cases. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the triple challenges of poverty inequality and unemployment do not affect youth agri-preneurs to a greater extent is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis that the triple challenges of poverty inequality and unemployment affect youth agri-preneurs to a greater extent is accepted.

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The category of problems affecting young people in South Africa without jobs frequently referred to as the "triple challenges" of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, constitute a collection of issues that are intricate and interwoven and therefore need in-depth analysis.

Poverty plagues society (Prasetyo & Thomas, 2021). Many arguments surround poverty and inequality definitions, metrics, and concepts (Gumede, 2021). On a 1 USD = 18.95 ZAR exchange rate, the World Bank (2023) defines extreme poverty as living on less than $2.15 a day, or R40.74 in South African Rands.

More South Africans are poorer than ever (Rudin, 2022). Masuku et al. (2023) say South Africa's progressive constitution and legislature guarantee equality and non-discrimination. The difficulty remains in implementing these policies to their maximum potential to enhance the lives of the historically disadvantaged, notably women, youth, and children.

Global poverty levels remain affected by the COVID-19 epidemic and economic issues as of 2023. In 2022, 712 million people lived in extreme poverty, up from pre-pandemic levels. This increase in extreme poverty shows a reversal of poverty decrease, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Youth agri-preneurs face significant economic exclusion, impacting their ability to access vital resources and opportunities. A large percentage of unbanked individuals, estimated at 1.7 billion globally, experience barriers to financial inclusion that hinder their entrepreneurial potential (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2023). The Global Gender Gap Report (2023) highlights that disparities in financial asset management and unequal distribution of unpaid work contribute to persistent economic inequalities among young agri-preneurs. In many countries, access to financial services remains limited, with only 60% of nations providing equal opportunities for youth (World Economic Forum, 2022/2023). These factors perpetuate challenges for young entrepreneurs striving to succeed in agriculture and related sectors.

South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (Francis & Webster, 2019; Espi et al., 2019; Beinart et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2020; Francis & Valodia, 2021; Hundenborn, 2021; Leibbrandt & Pabón, 2022). The current levels of inequality are the legacy of the segregation and marginalisation of most of its citizenry in every aspect of South Africa's socioeconomic development before and during apartheid (Leibbrandt & Pabón, 2022).

Unemployment affects not only uneducated youth but also educated youth. Youth unemployment is noted to be at its worst in South Africa, with estimations that about 60,7% of the country’s 32,6% unemployed population is youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years (Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), 2024). Loosely translated, these rates show that almost one in every two young people of working age is unemployed (StatsSA, 2024). Although the South African Stats only stated the ages of 15-24 years, unemployment also affects more than 24 years.

The ever-increasing unemployment rates, inflation, and the sluggish growth of the economy are immediate challenges that pose a threat to the country's growth potential (Sheefeni, 2022). According to Zizzamia (2020), rural areas in South Africa are marginalised, underdeveloped, and distant from economic advantages and opportunities because of the legacy of apartheid. Thus, youth in rural areas face poorer employment prospects and migrate to cities to seek opportunities (Geza et al., 2022). Furthermore, PWC (2021) found that since the COVID-19 pandemic began, skilled employment has been much more durable than unskilled and semiskilled jobs.

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Conclusions

This paper discusses the little-known facts regarding the effects of the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality on unemployed youth in Nqabane. The alternative hypothesis, which states that youth agri-preneurs are more affected by the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, is accepted to test the null hypothesis, which states that these issues do not have a greater impact on them.

These findings have far-reaching implications. They emphasise the pressing need for economic institutions and policymakers to encourage young people to pursue entrepreneurship and incorporate issues of agriculture into the field. Additionally, by bringing attention to the aspects of agri-preneurship and encouraging stakeholders to think about ways to use agri-preneurship to combat the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty, the study adds to the body of literature.

The confluence of unemployment, poverty, and inequality greatly impacts the environment of youth agricultural entrepreneurship. Young agribusiness owners face significant obstacles because of these socioeconomic factors, especially in developing nations where opportunities and resources are frequently scarce. A comprehensive approach to agricultural entrepreneurship is necessary to address the complex problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. It also calls for a dedication to improving infrastructure, educational opportunities, and a policy environment that supports young people. This strategy can produce wider economic gains by empowering the upcoming generation of agri-preneurs and promoting more sustainable agricultural practices.

The study admits its shortcomings, including the fact that it used a quantitative method to gather data. Future research might think about employing a mixed methods approach to get participants to provide detailed descriptions. In summary, poverty feeds a vicious cycle of young people not doing much business. Many young people experience high rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly those who have graduated from agricultural schools. This reduces their chances of starting profitable agribusinesses. One of the most important factors in encouraging youth agricultural entrepreneurship is education. Enhancing educational programs and information access, according to several studies, can have a big impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions and encourage them to pursue careers in agriculture.

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