

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Family support and school-to-work transition: Perceptions and experiences of university graduates in Kampala city, Uganda**

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**This study explored the experiences and implications of transitioning from school to work without family support for university graduates in Uganda. The research was a qualitative exploratory study in Kampala city, Uganda. The data was collected through in-depth individual interviews with university graduates (first-degree graduates). The research findings showed that young men and women, upon graduation, strongly believe that the family is obliged to support their transition from school to work. The implications of not being supported by the family include prolonged unemployment and the risk of falling into the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) category, engaging in precarious and informal work as they queue waiting for formal employment that matches attained educational qualifications, emotional stress, and the dependence on friends for survival. The graduates' most expected forms of family support include financial support for job search expenses and practical job search assistance through informal networks. However, there is also a strong feeling that the family should support the graduates by providing capital for small businesses (self-employment), which they can depend on during the transition period. The desire for self-employment can be attributed to the fact that many youths in developing countries are self-employed. In Uganda, self-employed young people constitute three-quarters of the working young persons.**

**Key words:** Family support, labour market, school-to-work transition, Uganda, youth transition.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The youth pursue transitions in diverse life spheres such as work, education, family, sexuality, lifestyles, civil life etc. (Biggart and Walther, 2006; Dey and Morris, 1999; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Transitioning from school to work or the labour market is fundamental (Bandara,

2019; Tinashe and Chinyamurindi, 2019). Jones (2002) described the transition from school to the labour market as a transition from youthhood to adulthood. Youth transition into the labour market is a widely researched and much-discussed phenomenon; transition to the

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labour market is essential for the youth to achieve economic independence and transition into adulthood. Several factors play a role in the transition to the labour market; individual factors like gender, disability, ethnicity and educational achievement, the family and social background and the policies that facilitate the youth to transition to the labour market etc. Labour market policies are essential in school-to-work transition (Ryan, 2001) because entry into the labour market depends on education, economic conditions and the labour market policies. Much research has focused on state policies that facilitate the transition of the youth into the labour market and the role that individual characteristics like gender and educational level play. Several studies in the past and recently have pointed out that the family plays a role in youth transitions both in the labour market and other spheres of life (Dey and Morris, 1999; Hardgrove et al., 2015; Kovacheva, 2010). This paper examines the implications of transitioning to the labour market without family support among university graduates in Kampala, Uganda. This paper contributes to post-education transition literature by delving into an area that has not been widely researched in Sub-Saharan Africa and specifically in Uganda. The fact that there is limited research on family support during school-to-work transition in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole means there is little literature for reference purposes.

### **Problem statement**

School-to-work transition studies have concentrated on the employability of labour market entrants and how to increase employment (Denu et al., 2005; Jackson and Wilton, 2017; McDonald, Grant-Smith, Moore, and Marston, 2019; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; Tomlinson, 2012). The International Labour Organization (ILO) carries out the School-to-Work Transition Surveys (SWTS), which captures the characteristics of labour market entrants and generates relevant labour market information on young people aged 15 to 29 years (Alam and deDiego, 2019). In Sub-Saharan Africa, graduates' employment and employability constitute a significant study and research focus. This is partly because of the unemployment experienced by graduates and the youth as a cohort (Ndlovu and Ndebele, 2019). In Africa, the governments, policymakers and researchers have concentrated on employment for the youth, improving the quality of education and youth entrepreneurship as strategies to tackle unemployment (Mueller and Thurlow, 2019; Yeboah and Jayne, 2018). However, in situations where the graduates are employable and have the necessary skills, factors such as gender, disability and family support are essential in school-to-work transition and can determine the duration of the school-to-work transition. This research diverts from the familiar and popular thesis of employability of the graduates to a focus

on family support which is relevant during the transition period. The perceptions of the youth are vital to tailor-made policy design for labour market entrants (Ndlovu and Ndebele, 2019). Family support during the school-to-work transition is not widely researched under the post-education transition studies, specifically in the Ugandan labour market. Upon this background, we carried out this research to explore the implications of university graduates' transition into the labour market without family support in Uganda.

### **Labour market transition and family support**

The youth in Uganda transit to the labour market in different ways. Some transit without formal education, while others enter the labour market after going through the formal education system upon graduation or without completion (Ahaibwe et al., 2018; Ng and Feldman, 2007). School-to-work transitions vary among countries and individual labour market entrants. The transition from student life to work is a challenge for undergraduate students in Uganda (Kintu et al., 2019). In Uganda, it is estimated that over 400,000 graduates enter the Ugandan labour market each year, yet there is a scarcity of decent employment and a shortage of jobs in general for the graduates (Byamugisha et al., 2014; Nakayiza, 2019). Transitioning into the labour market is not easy; the graduates face many challenges related to employment and stability in the labour market (Clarke, 2018; Ndlovu and Ndebele, 2019). They face more extended transition periods, job instability, indecent jobs and precarious working conditions (MacDonald, 2016; Majamaa, 2011; McDowell, 2019). Majamaa (2011) emphasized that young adults face new social risks (for example, high youth unemployment and instability of labour markets); the labour market and the state should not be the only sources of economic welfare, but the family has a role to play. Hardgrove et al (2015) demonstrated that family support is significant for the youth to navigate the labour market where the stability of work conditions and availability of jobs has declined, and further emphasized the role of family relations in the transition and participation in the labour market. The forms of support that the family is expected to provide during the transition of the youth (school-to-work transition or labour market transition) include financial assistance, provision of accommodation, personal care, which include emotional and moral support, practical assistance, which may include assistance with transport, informal contacts to search jobs and to assist the youth in attaining socially productive roles (Dey and Morris, 1999). Mokomane (2012) stressed that "In many Sub-Saharan African societies, the extended family which is comprised of generations of close relatives- has for years been the social security and the support during times of need and crisis such as when family members are unemployed,

sick, bereaved or aged." This explains the relevance of the family in transition to the labour market; the family is a form of social security in hard times like during unemployment period. Mascherini (2019) stressed that young people or the youth living with their parents are less likely to be NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Chances of the youth to enter the labour market depend on their education, economic conditions and labour market policies (Caliendo and Schmidl, 2016; Lim, 2011). The youth face circumstances that make their access to decent employment difficult (McDowell, 2019; Sparreboom and Staneva, 2014). This justifies the need for programs, policies, and support for the youth during the labour market or school-to-work transition.

In transitioning from school to work, young people face many challenges, including precarious work. MacDonald (2016) explained that there is an increase of precarious work and the youth are at the core, which makes them vulnerable to unemployment, low pay, and high risks of ill health. Youth transitions to adulthood have become fragmented, increasingly individualized, and complex (MacDonald, 2016; McDonald et al., 2019). Despite several factors like the formality of the labour market, education level of the youth and production structure that affect the new entrants in the labour market; the degree of assistance that the family offers the youth in transition to the labour market does influence the nature of employment and employment inadequacy for entrants into the labour market (Furlong et al., 2003). Therefore, the family is essential in helping the youth transition from school to the labour market; the youth, through family support, are less likely to be despondent.

This study focused on the school-to-work transition of graduates who fall in the broad category of the youth (15-29 years). We aimed to explore their experiences of transitioning to the labour market without family support and discuss the implications of transitioning from university to work without family support for the youth in a developing country like Uganda.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was a qualitative exploratory study in Kampala city, Uganda. The data was collected through in-depth individual interviews with young men and women who had graduated from universities (first-degree graduates). A total of 30 participants were interviewed, purposive snowball sampling was used to identify the research participants. The age range of the participants was 24-29 years. The interviews were conducted during a time when 28 participants were employed while two were looking for job opportunities. The reason for using individual in-depth interviews was to have an in-depth understanding of school-to-work transition experiences and perceptions of the graduates especially in the absence of family support. We audio-recorded the individual interviews and later transcribed the voice recordings. The data collected was coded and analyzed using Nvivo software; we did a thematic analysis of the themes that emerged from the coded data. The presentation of the findings follows themes and sub- themes from the data we analyzed through thematic analysis.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The findings are structured under the following headings; graduates' perception of the relevance of family support during school-to-work transition, the expected forms of family support during school-to-work transition, the forms of support that the graduates received during the transition, the reasons for the lack or absence of family support, the alternative sources of support and the effects of the lack of family support during the school-to-work transition.

### Graduates' perception of the relevance of family support during school-to-work transition

Most of the participants vividly empathized that family support is relevant during the transition from school to work. Out of the 30 participants, 27 participants stressed that the family is important and has a role in assisting the graduates in school-to-work transition. The family plays several roles in the transition, making family support a pivot in the transition period (Hardgrove et al., 2015). Family support varies and depends on several factors, such as the family's income status. Some participants recognized the importance of family support even when they did not receive such support. However, they were sympathetic to their families because of what they described as low-income status, which rendered their families unable to support them during the transition period.

Participant #2 explained that the family is vital in helping the graduates to transition to the labour market. In his own words, he said that:

*"I think it is very important to help the youth with finances, our dad did a good job to pay our school fees, but he forgot to guide us where to work, with the situation now; every parent must plan how their children get occupied either during or after university, it is something a parent must closely discuss with his son or daughter".*

Although this was a qualitative study, from the sample size of the participants (30), it is evident that graduates expected family support during their transition to the labour market and pointed out the relevance of family support during the transition from school to work. The graduates' perceptions about the relevance of family support during school-to-work transition agree with previous youth studies that delineated family support as important for the youth to navigate the labour market (Hardgrove et al., 2015; Mokomane, 2012). Without a doubt, family support plays an important role directly or indirectly during the school-to-work transition period.

### **Forms of expected family support during the school-to-work transition period**

The major forms of assistance the graduates expected to get from their families in transitioning from school to work include financial assistance to assist them in job search, social networking, emotional and moral support and small capital for starting up small business enterprises to depend on during the job search period or the transition period.

#### ***Financial assistance to assist in direct job search***

During the interviews, financial assistance was the most identified type of assistance that the university graduates expected from their family members to facilitate their transition from school to work. In almost all the interviews, it was the first noted form of assistance that the participants quickly pointed out, followed by another form of support such as emotional support. Participant # 15 stated that after graduation, she expected her family members to offer her financial support to buy newspapers to read about existing job opportunities, encourage her and show confidence in her, and try to look out for opportunities on her behalf. Similarly, Participant # 28, a graduate from Kyambogo University in Uganda, stated that *"I expected my dad and mum to provide financial support that would enable me to use the internet to find job links, send applications, photocopy academic documents and travel"*. The graduates expect family support in the form of financial assistance to facilitate direct job search, which involves buying Newspapers to read about existing job opportunities, internet or data bundles to search for jobs online, printing and photocopying academic documents, transport to interview venues and accommodation in case of travel to outlying areas to attend the interviews. This financial assistance is required because the graduates have no income sources unless they were already employed before graduation.

#### ***Social networking through family social networks***

The graduates expected that their families would use their social networks and connections to help them in job search and to know about the availability of opportunities in line with what they had studied. This included the expectation that the working family members in the extended family setting would share work-related opportunities and take the initiative to actively look for opportunities for the graduates. Participant # 11 stated that *"The family has wider networks and connections to other persons who are already working and who know about the availability of jobs in some places; I expected my family to contact such persons, this would connect me to influential persons. These networks can help you get a*

*job even in a place far from Kampala"*. Several previous studies confirm that social networks play a role in job search (Lorincová, Ližbetinová, and Brodský, 2018; Trimble and Kmec, 2011; Zhitomirsky-Geffet and Bratspiess, 2015). Social networks range from peers, family, relatives etc. In the interviews, the graduates testified of the hardships of getting jobs without what they describe as "technical-know-who". This means getting a job because one has connections to the employers or the persons in charge of the recruitment process. Therefore, beyond being provided with information through the family social networks, the graduates expected their families to use these networks to secure jobs they applied for. In the labour market, getting jobs through 'technical-know-who' puts some graduates at a disadvantage due to the lack of connections and networks to influential persons; making the transition harder and longer.

#### ***Emotional and moral support***

Emotional and moral support is another essential form of support the participants expected from their families during the school-to-work transition period. The youth described the school-to-work transition as a stressful period that needs emotional support from parents and relatives, especially when unemployed or during the first months of working.

*Participant #29 stated that, "I expected my family to support me emotionally and advise me because transitioning from school nowadays is so challenging for young people. The stress is too much, the possibility of making wrong decisions is high, and one can easily give up and settle for non-professional jobs"*.

The longer the graduates wait to start working or get their first jobs, the more vulnerable they become, with depression and stress. Long term unemployment among young people causes social exclusion in society and among peers (Kieselbach, 2003; Pohlan, 2019). For the young graduates to have a sense of belonging to the society, they value employment or working in socially acceptable jobs.

#### ***Startup capital for small businesses***

The expectations of some graduates were linked to self-employment or capital for establishing businesses. Family support for the youth increases the likelihood of starting a business (Maleki et al., 2021). The startup capital is also financial assistance but different from the financial assistance used in the direct search of jobs. This is specifically meant to start up small enterprises that the graduates can survive on during the job search. The expectation for financial assistance to start businesses

can also be attributed to the fact that because Uganda is a highly informal economy, it is easy to start businesses without registering especially small-scale businesses. The majority of the Ugandan youth prefer to live and work in urban areas, and the country has witnessed a high rate of youth rural-urban migration (Tulibaleka et al., 2021). The urban informal economy in Uganda is mainly made up of self-employed workers or own-account workers. With the difficulties that graduates face in getting jobs in the Ugandan labour market, some graduates are attracted to self-employment to avoid prolonged unemployment during the school-to-work transition. Several graduates had expected financial support to start small businesses while they searched for jobs that match with their acquired educational qualifications; for example, Participant #18 stressed that *"Nowadays it is challenging to get a job immediately after graduation. Therefore, I expected that dad would give me some capital after graduation to start a small business where I would be getting some money for my living and to use in searching for a formal job; unfortunately, he thought this was not right for me"*. In developing countries, the youths are highly attracted to self-employment (Acquaah, 2016; Tshuma and Jari, 2013). Therefore, it was not surprising that some participants were attracted to self-employment even after graduating from university and expected capital from their families for business startups. As explained by the graduates, self-employment offers a temporal panacea to unemployment as they wait and search for formal employment in line with their educational qualifications. In Uganda, the youth have an increasing desire to work as self-employed workers (Awiti, 2016; Kisubi et al., 2021). It is by no surprise that the graduates expect family support in the form of financial assistance to work as self-employed workers as a temporary solution to unemployment during the transition or as a preferred form of employment.

### **Forms of family support received during the school-to-work transition**

While the participants were highly expectant that upon graduation, they would be supported by their families with financial assistance, emotional and moral support, social networking, and capital to start operating small businesses, over three-quarters of the participants expressed their disappointment that their families did not offer support during their transition from school to work. The received forms of assistance or support were mainly social networking, emotional support, and financial assistance for job search assistance, which they described as "insufficient financial support". No participant reported receiving capital to start up a small business. However, it was recorded among the expected forms of family support.

### **Reasons for the absence of family support during the school-to-work transition period**

The major reasons that the graduates gave as reasons for their families not offering them support during the transition include the low-income level of the families, negligence or ignorance of the family about the necessity of supporting them during the school-to-work transition period, large family size with the parents concentrating on those who were still in school and the lack of social networks especially for persons in formal employment whom the family members would connect them to. Most participants empathized with low-income family backgrounds as the major reason their families did not support them during the transition period. They pointed out that being from a low-income family means limited financial support and social networks in the labour market. The Participants noted that poverty hindered their family members from offering them support.

### **Alternative sources of support in the absence of family support**

The graduates demonstrated heavy reliance on friends, especially those who were already employed, for assistance during their transition from school to work. Friends were pointed out as the immediate and alternative source of financial, emotional, and moral support during the school-to-work transition period. The narratives of the graduates indicated their reliance on friends, as explained by some of the participants below:

Participant # 27 said that:

*"Through my network of friends, I was able to get some money from them that helped me during the time I was looking for a job after graduation; my friends were also so comforting and encouraging and told me to be patient while searching for the job. I stayed at my friend's house because she was already working and was financially stable. This is how I had to cope with the lack of family support during that period."*

Participant #9 stressed that:

*"I had to depend on my friends who were employed, once, in a while, they would send me money for survival and to use in job hunting. They were also important in sharing opportunities for application in different organizations and public service commissions. This was how I had to manoeuvre during the time I had just left school"*.

The graduates also reported the dependence on self-employed friends, especially financial dependence. This account contributes to the feeling of being self-employed or starting up businesses to work as self-employed

workers during the transition. Working as self-employed or own-account workers relieves graduates of financial dependence as they queue or wait to get jobs in line with their educational qualifications.

### **The effects of lack or absence of family support during the school-to-work transition period**

The major effects for graduates transitioning from school to work without family support include exploitation and poorly paying jobs, missing job opportunities, prolonged employment search, the risk of falling into the NEET category and feeling abandoned or stressed during the transition period.

#### **Exploitation and poorly paying jobs**

Working in jobs that the participants considered exploitative and characterized by low pay was one of the effects of school-to-work transition without family support. As a result of lack of family support in the form of direct job search assistance, guidance during the job search period and the social networks or connections to the job opportunities, the graduates settled for poorly paying jobs or what they described as exploitative jobs in a bid to secure entry-level employment. This was pointed out in the participants' responses during the interviews. For example: Participant #23 stated:

*"I think I was exploited, in terms of poor employment benefits. I could not cope with poor salaries but instead searched for further study opportunities abroad. I think it is important to help the youth with finances during their transition from school to the labour market".*

Similarly, participant #21 stated that:

*"the major effect of not being supported by my family after graduation or during the time I searched for my first job was that I made wrong life choices; I became willing to settle for any job, and I ended settling for a less paying job with poor working conditions and with delayed payment, it was not even related to what I studied, but I had to just endure for the sake of survival as I kept looking for a better job related to what I had studied".*

Without support such as financial support or moral support from their families, the graduates risk working in precarious jobs, especially the first jobs after school. Working in exploitative and low-paying jobs is for survival purposes and to avoid unemployment for a long time. Working in exploitative conditions such as working without pay or low pay is a characteristic of precarious work (McDonald et al., 2019; McDowell, 2019). The pressure that the graduates face without family support pushes them to work in precarious working conditions or

precarious jobs in the labour market.

#### **Missing job opportunities**

The account of missing job opportunities is an experience that several graduates associated with the lack of family support during their school-to-work transition. The missed opportunities were due to the inability to send applications, travel to attend interviews, and lodging expenses in places far from their residential areas. With family support, the graduates can be guaranteed financial support to assist in their job search. However, without family support, the graduates can miss job opportunities because of the inability to finance the job search, including attending interviews. Participant # 8 narrated that he missed several jobs because of the lack of financial assistance. He stated that *"I missed out on several opportunities because I did not have financial assistance from my family, there is when I requested my father to assist me with money to photocopy my certificate and transcript, but he was unable to provide"*. Searching for employment opportunities or jobs is a process that requires financial assistance. Without financial assistance from their families, the unemployed graduates without any source of income are vulnerable in their search for job opportunities. They face situations that require finances like transport for interviews, buying Newspapers, photocopying and printing academic documents. Even with the right academic qualifications, the lack of financial assistance can make the graduates miss many opportunities.

#### **Prolonged job searching and falling into the NEET category**

The youths stressed prolonged job searching as one of the effects of transitioning from school to work without family support especially financial assistance for travelling and photocopying documents and other basic needs like accommodation during the job search period. Without family support, the graduates also are at risk of falling into the NEET category due to being out of school and not working. Prolonged job search is a major effect that the graduates associated with the lack of family support such as financial assistance, practical job search assistance using family networks and emotional support. Participant #4 narrated the ordeal of a prolonged job search due to the lack of family assistance. He stated that *"I took long to get a job, and it was also difficult to get a good job easily. I, therefore, settled for a job that does not match what I studied at university. It affected me because I would not get the job I wanted to take on, yet I had pressure on me because I had no source of earning"*. The participants associated the long job search periods with the absence of family support to enable them aggressively search for jobs. The lack of social networks

or connections to employment opportunities was associated with prolonged employment search, yet such links can be from the social networks of family members. Graduates whose families did not have social networks to access formal employment opportunities expressed disappointment because they were unable to receive such assistance.

### ***The feeling of being abandoned and stressed***

The feeling of being abandoned that came along with stress, anxiety and depression was another effect that the participants experienced due to lack of family support during the school-to-work transition period. Several participants stated that they felt depressed and stressed that they looked for jobs, but their families did not support them.

*Participant #3 stated that "It is like since I finished school my family does not care about me; this has caused me regrettable mistakes and a feeling of being ignored by my own family, which drains me emotionally. I have widened my circle of friends and connections with people, making my job search easier".*

The graduates delineated the school-to-work transition as challenging, especially when it involves a prolonged unemployment period. This period requires emotional and moral support, especially from the immediate family members who can encourage the graduates. Unemployment causes social exclusion and the feeling of not contributing to society. For these reasons, the graduates require support from their families, including financial support to start small businesses that they can survive on or keep themselves busy while searching for the desired jobs in the labour market.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

There is a firm conviction among most graduates that upon graduation from universities, the family should facilitate their transition to the labour market/transition from school life to working life. Biggart and Walther (2006) explained that an increasing proportion of the youth need support as transitions have become longer and complicated. The youth expect to depend on their families for support during their transition and integration into the labour market, which prolongs parenting. Millar and Warman (1996) described parenthood as a lifelong relationship with unconditional obligations. Financial support was the most expected form of assistance that the participants expected to receive from their families. However, less than a quarter of the participants confirmed to have received financial assistance from their families during the school-to-work transition. Biggart and Walther (2006) emphasized that young persons have to

cope with prolonged economic dependency and uncertainty during their transitions. Therefore, families are expected to provide support for a more extended period as the youth transition to work and financial independence (Biggart and Walther, 2006; Dey and Morris, 1999).

Graduates who transit from school to work without family support are vulnerable to prolonged job search and working in precarious jobs due to the lack of financial family support during the transition from school. Graduates miss out on job opportunities because of the inability to travel to distant destinations to do interviews, photocopy academic documents, buy newspapers to read about existing job opportunities. They further take up jobs that are not related to what they studied; work in low paying and exploitative jobs in the process of transitioning into working life. A prolonged search of employment and working in precarious jobs are attributed to the lack of support from the family during the transition period. Long job search without success results in falling in the category of discouraged NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Discouraged NEET is a heterogeneous cohort of the youth but includes those who have given up on job search (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019; Vancea and Utzet, 2018). The failure to get jobs for a long time discourages the graduates from searching for jobs. Prolonged unemployment increases the risk of social exclusion in society and among peers (Kieselbach, 2003; Pohlan, 2019). Therefore, the graduates without family support during the school-to-work transition risk falling into the NEET category and being socially excluded.

Stress and feeling abandoned are other effects that the graduates attribute to school-to-work transition without family support. Graduates feel depressed and stressed looking for jobs without family support. A prolonged search for employment is stressful for young graduates. In Uganda, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016), the transition period to the labour market is still longer (an average of 3 years when the direct transition is excluded) and a period of 9 to 12 months to the first job after completing school. In Europe, studies have shown that one year after leaving school, many youths stay unemployed (Kogan et al., 2011; Quintini et al., 2007). The period between school-to-work transition or labour market transition needs emotional and moral support for the youth. Emotional and moral support from the family helps the graduates to navigate the school-to-work transition period with minimal stress and depression. It also ensures that the graduates do not feel socially excluded in society. Unlike the graduates whose families have no connections and informal contacts or do not use such links and informal contacts to assist them in job search, those whose families use informal contacts find it relatively easier to get their first jobs or navigate the labour market after school. Dey and Morris (1999) described the use of informal contacts to assist the youth

in the search for jobs as practical assistance by the family. Family knowledge and connections are important in youth transitions; therefore, the youth can overcome hard situations through family support (Furlong et al., 2003). School-to-work transition without family support limits the network of informal contacts for the youth through which they can find job opportunities.

The inability of families to support the graduates during the transition is a result of ignorance of the family/parents about the need to provide the graduates with support, parents' lack of informal networks for job connections and low financial status of the families. The family's socioeconomic status is a critical determinant in the willingness and capability of the family to provide financial support during the school-to-work transition (Blustein et al., 2002; Dey and Morris, 1999). Families with low socioeconomic status are less likely to provide for those transitioning from school to work when they have other children to take care of. This means that in a country like Uganda, where several households fall into low-income status, the youth from these families are less likely to receive support especially financial support during school-to-work transition. Poverty alleviation among low-income families is vital as this enables the families to support the youth for a long time, even after graduation during the school-to-work transition.

Starting to work as a self-employed or own-account worker is quite simple in a highly informal economy like Uganda. With no family assistance in the search for formal employment, the graduates are attracted to self-employment as a temporal panacea to unemployment. They start operating small scale businesses with capital raised either through family or friends. A survey in 2016 showed that self-employment rates in Uganda are lowest among youth with university-level education (Awiti, 2016). However, through this research, the graduates emphasized that self-employment was an important channel of getting financial assistance to facilitate the job search process due to lack of family support or fear of overburdening their families for assistance. Therefore, it is not surprising that graduates expect that their families should help them start-up small businesses to act as a source of income and livelihood as they search for formal employment. This shows a feeling by the youths to be assisted to be economically independent while depending on their parents to achieve this independence immediately after school. This is the parenting of young adults who occupy the status of being both independent and dependent on their parents (Bradley and Devadason, 2008; Dey and Morris, 1999). In Sub-Saharan Africa, young people are attracted to self-employed (Fox et al., 2016; Gough, 2016). According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016), 75% of working young persons are self-employed workers in Uganda. In such an economy, self-employment is an option that many young people are attracted to. The youth entrepreneurship fund by the government of Uganda should be expanded and

designed to support entrepreneurship initiatives of university graduates as a partial solution to graduate youth unemployment.

In the absence of family support, the graduates mostly rely on friends (an informal support network) during the transition period. Several graduates rely on friends as the immediate source of support. Informal sources of support such as friends and family are essential in school-to-work transition (Dey and Morris, 1999; Kogan, 2011). However, the graduates' heavy reliance on informal sources of support during the transition shows that the formal program of job search assistance designed to assist the graduates is less effective or insufficient. In Uganda, the youth centres are either non-existent in some areas or functional but with limited services to the youths. There is a need to establish youth centres to provide information on available job opportunities in the public service commission and the private sector, including Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and offer guidance and counseling for graduates.

## Conclusion

In a country like Uganda, where the state does not provide financial assistance for graduates to assist them in searching for jobs, the family is expected to give extended support to young persons from childhood to transition into adulthood, including school-to-work transition. In the absence of family support, the youths are likely to experience prolonged transitions, engage in precarious work, experience stress and social exclusion. Furthermore, informal support alternatives such as friends become the immediate support alternatives but do not guarantee stable support needed during the transition period. Youth-oriented Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) like job search assistance is essential for school-to-work transition, but such a policy should be diversified to include access to information, financial assistance and also counseling services because several graduates testified that they suffered from stress and the feeling of being abandoned during school-to-work transition without family support. Developing a formal framework to assist during school-to-work transition by reviewing the effectiveness of the current ALMPs that facilitate labour market entry and labour market participation is necessary. Non-state actors such as Non-Government Organizations that support the youth in developing countries like Uganda can explore more into job search assistance for the several youths who graduate from universities and create awareness about the need for the families to support school-to-work transitions. Both the state and non-state actors can play an active role in the school-to-work transition or trajectories of graduates. Universities need to educate learners that school-to-work transition on average takes more than one year, which calls for patience during the



transition period.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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