

The Problem of Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract: In the context of the economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic, the growth of youth entrepreneurship has become particularly relevant. This study aims to identify the main challenges faced by young entrepreneurs during both the startup and operational stages of running their own businesses. Key issues identified include: a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge, limited government support, low financial literacy, and high competition from more experienced market participants.

An analysis of educational approaches in Kyrgyzstan and abroad reveals a lag in the development of school-based and entrepreneurial education, which reduces young people's readiness to launch and grow their own ventures. Special attention in this research is given to the psychological aspects of entrepreneurship, including the issue of emotional burnout, as well as the role of non-governmental initiatives and startups.

The study uses surveys and interviews with young entrepreneurs to gather empirical data. The findings may serve as a foundation for the development of educational programs, government support measures, and initiatives aimed at fostering the startup ecosystem in Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurs; Hackathons; Business; Marketing; Entrepreneurship; Opportunities; Incompetence; Startups.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Youth entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical driver of economic growth, innovation, and employment generation in developing countries, including the Kyrgyz Republic. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the role of young people in fostering new business models, creating social impact, and revitalizing stagnant sectors of the economy.

However, despite the potential of youth-led ventures, many aspiring entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan face substantial barriers when attempting to launch and sustain their businesses.

The country's current educational and economic infrastructure does not fully support the development of entrepreneurial skills among young people. Business and economic concepts are rarely introduced in schools before the upper grades, and even then, they are covered briefly and inconsistently. As a result, many students leave the education system with limited financial literacy and little practical understanding of how to navigate the business world.

Beyond education, young entrepreneurs encounter numerous structural challenges, including limited access to funding, a lack of mentorship, and high competition from more experienced market participants. Government-backed support initiatives such as grants, hackathons, and business incubators do exist, but these programs often serve only a narrow portion of the youth population due to limited capacity and intense competition. Furthermore, psychological factors such as fear of failure, lack of confidence, and emotional burnout also hinder the progress of many young individuals striving to bring their business ideas to life.

This research aims to explore the most pressing difficulties encountered by young entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan and to propose targeted recommendations for educational reform, policy development, and community support. By understanding both the external and internal factors affecting youth entrepreneurship, this study contributes to the broader dialogue on how to foster a sustainable and inclusive startup ecosystem in Kyrgyzstan.

➤ *Relevance of the Study*

Kyrgyzstan is a country in the early stages of developing its economy. Young people who aspire to start

their own businesses face numerous challenges, such as a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge, limited government support, and strong competition from experienced business people. These obstacles significantly restrict their opportunities and hinder the implementation of their ideas.

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the economic development of Kyrgyzstan, and youth can make a significant contribution by creating new jobs and introducing innovations into the business sphere. However, in order for young people to unlock their entrepreneurial potential, several critical issues must be addressed—namely, insufficient knowledge, inadequate state support, and a general lack of competence.

One of the major problems is the lack of essential knowledge. In the Kyrgyz school curriculum, business-related topics are covered only superficially. For example, in the "Man and Society" course, themes related to entrepreneurship and economics are mentioned only occasionally, and more in-depth study begins only in the 10th grade. Furthermore, this class is held only once a week for 45 minutes, which is clearly not enough. Many schools still lack dedicated subjects on entrepreneurship or economics, which hinders the development of business skills among students [1].

Another key issue is the insufficient level of government support for young entrepreneurs. Although hackathons, grants, and other support programs do exist, they are currently available to only a limited number of individuals due to high competition. In order to support a larger group of aspiring young entrepreneurs, such programs need to be expanded and more financial assistance from the government should be mobilized.

In order for young people to successfully develop their businesses, it is essential to improve entrepreneurial education and create favorable conditions for startup support. Moreover, one of the main obstacles to the development of youth entrepreneurship is competition with more experienced businesspeople. Young entrepreneurs often find it more difficult to compete in the market because they lack the necessary experience and knowledge to effectively implement business ideas.

The goal of this research is to identify the main difficulties faced by young people when starting and running their own businesses, as well as to propose potential solutions aimed at increasing the success of youth entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To analyze existing approaches to the study of youth entrepreneurship.
- To identify the key challenges young entrepreneurs face in the process of launching and managing a business.
- To assess the influence of external and internal factors (economic, social, and cultural) on the development of youth entrepreneurship.

- To conduct a study using surveys and interviews in order to identify the problems and needs of young entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Analysis of Approaches to Studying Entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan and Other Countries*

The study of youth entrepreneurship is crucial before embarking on business development. Different countries adopt various approaches to entrepreneurship education, influenced by their educational systems, cultural contexts, and economic conditions.

Countries like the United States, Germany, and China place significant emphasis on teaching economics, finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship, which substantially contributes to the growth of successful enterprises. For instance, the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) in the U.S. provides entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students, focusing on underserved communities. Similarly, Germany's NFTE Deutschland offers training and teaching materials to promote entrepreneurial spirit among youth. In China, the Youth Business China (YBC) program, initiated by the All-China Youth Federation, offers mentoring, seed funding, and training to young entrepreneurs aged 18–35, aiming to promote entrepreneurship and job creation.

In Kyrgyzstan, prior to 2012, economic education in schools was limited. According to S. Onorbaevich Bazarkulov, economic subjects were taught based on the Ministry of Education's program, but the integration of these subjects into the curriculum led to a reduction in instructional hours, sparking debates among educators about the adequacy of such changes.

Recently, initiatives like the Jasa.kg project, funded by USAID and implemented by the International Youth Foundation, have aimed to improve youth employability through skill development and increased civic engagement. The program promotes entrepreneurship through lectures, camps, competitions, and mentorships, benefiting numerous youth across the country. Additionally, the University of Central Asia's Naryn Centre for Entrepreneurship, established in 2021, provides intensive entrepreneurship training, business incubation, and mentoring programs to create job opportunities for youth in rural communities.

➤ *Identifying Key Challenges Faced by Young Entrepreneurs in Starting a Business*

Despite a noticeable increase in the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kyrgyzstan, young entrepreneurs continue to face significant obstacles that hinder their ability to successfully launch and grow their businesses. According to the National Statistics Committee, 18,100 SMEs were registered in 2024 — a 20% increase compared to 2023 (rus.azattyk.org). However, many of these ventures ultimately fail due to a variety of challenges.

- *Financial Constraints*

Access to capital is one of the main challenges for young entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan. Many struggle to secure funding due to high-interest rates, lack of collateral, or insufficient credit history. Although government grants and support programs exist, they are often limited in scope and availability, making them inaccessible to the majority of aspiring business owners (akchabar.kg).

- *Lack of Knowledge and Skills*

A significant number of young entrepreneurs lack basic knowledge in economics, finance, marketing, and business management. This knowledge gap often leads to poor decision-making, mismanagement of funds, and difficulties competing in the market. Inexperience and a lack of practical skills further limit their ability to build and sustain successful ventures (rus.azattyk.org).

- *Bureaucratic Barriers and Corruption*

Cumbersome administrative procedures, frequent inspections, excessive fines, and corruption are common barriers. Many entrepreneurs report facing unnecessary audits and burdensome insurance fees, which increase operating costs and discourage entrepreneurial activity (24.kg).

- *Cultural and Social Obstacles*

Traditional Kyrgyz society tends to value stable employment (e.g., government jobs) over entrepreneurial risk-taking. Family expectations often discourage young people from pursuing business ventures, favoring “secure” career paths instead (atameken.kz).

- *Underdeveloped Infrastructure and Support Systems*

There is a lack of coworking spaces, business incubators, and startup accelerators in Kyrgyzstan. Although some support programs exist, they are often small-scale and not widely accessible. As a result, young entrepreneurs have limited access to resources, mentorship, and professional networks (akchabar.kg).

- *Human Resource Challenges*

Entrepreneurs often struggle to find qualified employees due to the lack of skilled labor and practical training in the education system. This makes it difficult to build effective teams and manage operations efficiently (rus.azattyk.org).

- *Economic and Legal Instability*

Kyrgyzstan’s unstable economy, frequent changes in legislation, and political uncertainty pose significant risks. Many young business owners are unprepared to navigate such volatility, increasing the likelihood of failure.

➤ *Identifying Key Challenges Faced by Young Entrepreneurs in the Business Operation Stage*

After launching their own ventures, young entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan continue to face a number of significant challenges that hinder effective business management and sustainable growth. The main difficulties at this stage include:

- Underdeveloped business strategies,
- Weak or absent business planning,
- Emotional and professional burnout.

Strategy development is a long-term process aimed at defining key growth directions, goals, and mechanisms for achieving competitive advantages. It requires a company’s ability to self-organize, use resources effectively, and adapt to external changes. In both academic and business practice, several approaches to strategy formulation are recognized, including:

- Business management concepts,
- Strategic planning,
- Long-term resource management,
- Models based on self-organization principles [23].

Business planning, on the other hand, is a more practical and step-by-step process. It includes financial modeling, marketing strategy, risk assessment, and an actionable plan for the near future. The absence of a business plan — or having only a superficial one — often leads to chaotic management, inefficient resource use, and difficulty in attracting investors or partners.

A well-developed business plan:

- Allows for an objective assessment of the company's current state,
- Helps establish priorities and the sequence of actions,
- Facilitates early identification and mitigation of risks,
- Increases trust from investors and partners,
- Provides flexibility in adapting to changing market conditions.

However, in Kyrgyzstan, many young entrepreneurs either lack a business plan entirely or create one that is formal and ineffective. Even those who understand its importance often struggle with making the plan a useful tool in real-world business operations and growth [24].

➤ *Emotional Burnout in Business Management*

Emotional burnout in business is a state in which an entrepreneur experiences constant fatigue, loss of motivation, and diminished interest in their work. It arises from prolonged stress, high responsibility, overwork, and the feeling that everything depends solely on them.

In today's fast-paced world, an increasing number of people suffer from emotional overload and symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome. Professionals engaged in constant interpersonal communication—such as psychologists, entrepreneurs, and teachers—are especially prone to psycho-emotional exhaustion [25]. Entrepreneurs may begin to feel that their efforts yield no results, and instead of inspiration, they experience apathy, irritability, or anxiety. This state hampers sound decision-making, reduces efficiency and growth potential, and can eventually lead to a complete loss of interest in their business. There is a notably high level of emotional burnout among private business owners [26].

According to the one-factor model, emotional burnout is defined as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged involvement in situations that place high demands on emotional resilience and stress tolerance. This definition includes symptoms such as low energy, weakness, chronic insomnia, and various physical and psychosomatic complaints [27].

Emotional exhaustion also involves feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Mental exhaustion is characterized by the development of negative attitudes toward work and life in general.

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III. METHODOLOGY

For conducting the literature review, a qualitative analysis methodology was employed to deeply study scientific sources addressing youth entrepreneurship development, business education challenges, and government support in Central Asian countries, particularly in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The sources for search and selection included academic electronic libraries (including CyberLeninka), official reports, peer-reviewed journal publications, conference materials, and news resources. The main criteria for source selection were:

- Publication relevance, primarily within the last 10 years;
- Academic or expert credibility;
- Relevance to the themes of youth entrepreneurial activity and regional economic development.

➤ *Presence of Accurate Data and Analytical Conclusions*

A total of 27 sources were analyzed, including scientific articles, monographs, reports from international and local organizations, as well as media materials. Special attention was given to works addressing the following topics:

- Mechanisms of support for startups and small businesses in Kyrgyzstan;
- Educational initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurial skills among youth;
- International experience (USA, Germany, China) and possibilities for its adaptation;
- Factors hindering the effective development of youth entrepreneurship in Central Asia;
- The role of emotional intelligence and managerial competencies in global business practice.

The collected data were classified into thematic categories, allowing the identification of key trends for each section, as well as gaps in existing research.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding youth entrepreneurship development in Kyrgyzstan. The application of this approach enables, on one hand, the collection of quantitative data to identify trends, and on the other hand, the acquisition of in-depth insights into the perspectives and experiences of young entrepreneurs. The integration of these approaches contributes to enhancing the reliability of results and more thoroughly uncovering the research problem.

Quantitative data were collected via a Google Forms questionnaire comprising [number of] questions. Participants aged 15 to 25 were surveyed. The results will be analyzed using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Participants were selected through random sampling via social media and educational platforms. The main objective of the survey was to identify general trends and statistics related to the level of awareness about entrepreneurial challenges among youth.

Qualitative data were collected through purposively selected interviews with individuals interested in entrepreneurship research and who consented to participate. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes.

The interview guide consisted of 20 questions covering educational aspects, marketing, and competitiveness. The primary goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' opinions, experiences, and personal attitudes regarding the challenges of entrepreneurial activity. All interviews were recorded with participant consent and subsequently analyzed through thematic coding and identification of recurring patterns.

➤ *Quantitative Findings*

Based on the survey of respondents, the following age structure of aspiring entrepreneurs was established:

- 40% are school students nearing graduation;
- 28% are young people aged 18–22;
- 32% are respondents aged 28–30.

The majority of participants reside in Bishkek. Most respondents had previously attempted to start their own business, primarily in the fields of education, information technology, online sales, and technology.

➤ *Qualitative Findings*

Analysis of open-ended responses revealed that most aspiring entrepreneurs face a number of significant barriers in launching and developing their businesses:

- Lack of information on how to start a business and promote products or services;
- Difficulties with advertising and marketing — participants

were unsure how to effectively design marketing campaigns and attract customers;

- Lack of practical experience and challenges in team building;
- Financial constraints, including insufficient startup capital;
- Legal difficulties, especially regarding contract preparation and business legalization;
- High market competition;
- Emotional burnout and stress caused by uncertainty and ongoing challenges;
- Low level of specialized education, which also hindered a confident start and growth.

These findings highlight the urgent need for more active support of youth entrepreneurship, particularly in terms of educational programs, mentorship, financing, and legal assistance.

IV. CONCLUSION

The development of youth entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan represents both a vital opportunity and a pressing challenge for the country's economic future. Comparative analysis with countries such as the United States, Germany, and China reveals that a systematic approach to entrepreneurship education, coupled with institutional support, can significantly foster entrepreneurial capacity among young people. While Kyrgyzstan has made commendable strides—particularly through initiatives like Jasa.kg and the Naryn Centre for Entrepreneurship—there remains a significant gap in accessible education, infrastructure, and long-term strategic support for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Young Kyrgyz entrepreneurs face a range of obstacles, from limited financial resources and bureaucratic hurdles to cultural expectations and an underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystem. Even after launching a business, they often struggle with ineffective planning, weak strategies, and emotional burnout—factors that hinder sustainable growth and success.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-level approach involving government reform, private sector involvement, and a stronger integration of entrepreneurship into the national education system. Providing young people not only with the tools to start a business but also with ongoing mentorship, emotional resilience training, and access to real-world business networks will be essential for nurturing a new generation of resilient and innovative entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan.

Ultimately, empowering youth through entrepreneurship is not just an economic imperative, but a societal one—capable of driving job creation, innovation, and long-term national development.

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