

Kiswahili as Cultural Capital in Shaping Employee Motivation in Informal and Small-Scale Youth-Led Enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**Prisca Boniphace Makulilo^{a*}, Joy Vincent Nyondo^a**

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Abstract

This study explored how Kiswahili language practices, as a form of cultural capital, influence employee motivation in youth-led enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It examined how Kiswahili supports communication, belonging, teamwork, engagement and motivation. Although Kiswahili is Tanzania's national language and holds cultural significance, limited attention has been given to its role in motivating employees in youth-owned businesses. Guided by Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and motivation theory, the study adopted a qualitative research design. Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions involving 60 participants: 20 youth entrepreneurs and 40 employees from youth-led enterprises. The findings revealed that Kiswahili functions as embodied cultural capital by strengthening workplace relationships, improving communication, reducing social distance and fostering a sense of belonging. Its use was also associated with greater confidence, teamwork, commitment and employee engagement, particularly in businesses without reward systems. However, English remained important for official communication and engagement with external stakeholders. The study contributes to knowledge on language, cultural capital and entrepreneurship by demonstrating that local languages can serve as non-monetary sources of employee motivation. It recommends incorporating a bilingual workplace communication strategy into youth entrepreneurship training programmes to balance local interaction with formal business communication.

Keywords: Swahili, Cultural Capital, Employee Motivation, Youth-led Enterprises, Workplace Communication.

1.0 Introduction

Across the globe, youth entrepreneurship has been advocated as a tool for generating employment, innovation, alleviating poverty, and increasing participation in the economy. In Africa, youth enterprises have been seen as a way to address youth unemployment and related socio-economic issues (Rajeev et al., 2017). The sustainability and performance of youth enterprises depend on more than financial capital, entrepreneurial skills, technology and markets but also cultural capital, which includes valued knowledge, disposition, language practices and meaning of participation in economy and work (Bourdieu, 2018; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

In youth entrepreneurship, language serves as one aspect of cultural capital. In fact, language is not only a tool for instructing and exchanging information, but also represents identity, recognition, legitimacy, belonging and value in certain workplace (Bourdieu, 2018; De Costa et al., 2019). In the context of entrepreneurship workplace, language can impact task coordination, workplace relations, employees' confidence and participation. In addition, language can influence employees' feeling of inclusion and motivation especially in small enterprises where the importance of social relations and communication lies at the heart of business activities (Cohen & Kassis-Henderson, 2023; Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020).

In multilingual situations, workplace language practices gain more weight because enterprises can face different demands regarding communication. Local and national languages can facilitate everyday

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communication, relationships with customers, and building trust and a sense of belonging in the workplace. In contrast, international languages like English can be useful for creating documentation, conducting official communication, and signing contracts. Studies show that workplace communication affects employees' mood, motivation, productivity and performance (Kitila, 2017; Kim et al., 2019). However, the role of language as cultural capital has been less studied in the case of youth enterprises compared with financial resources, skills and the market.

Kiswahili plays a central role in Tanzania as the national language, a tool for everyday communication, and an important sign of cultural identity. Tanzania is Kiswahili is the national language, and English is an official language in Tanzania (Whiteley, 2023). Kiswahili allows people from different ethnic and regional backgrounds to communicate and strengthens the sense of national identity and unity (Isingoma, 2017; Mazrui et al., 1995). The cultural value and professional usefulness of the Swahili language are shown in its use in education, literature, public communication, and life in general (Abdulaziz, 2017).

In Tanzania's urban economy, young entrepreneurs create different kinds of businesses in spheres such as retail, services, technology, informal trade, and small-scale commerce. In these circumstances, employees' motivation is important for business growth because it affects productivity, job satisfaction, teamwork, and organisational stability (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Varma, 2017).

The present study focused on enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and concentrates on wards such as Segerea, Bonyokwa, and Kinyerezi. The investigation does not address large-scale entrepreneurship and formal corporate workplaces. It concentrates on everyday workplace communication in informal and small-scale youth-led enterprises, where there can be no good system of financial motivations and other non-financial resources like trust, belonging, respect, cultural proximity, and effective communication become very important.

Youth entrepreneurs are business owners and manage, or supervise youth-led enterprises. Employees are workers hired by these young entrepreneurs to carry out everyday business activities, such as serving clients, selling, producing, delivering services, and other business activities. Thus, entrepreneurs and employees become two different but connected participant groups in the research. The youth entrepreneurs will be considered as actors of the communication process, and employees as workers; their motivation, confidence, belonging and engagement are influenced by the communication processes.

Despite the broad usage of Kiswahili in everyday business communication in Tanzania, the role of the language as cultural capital for shaping employees' motivation in informal and small-scale youth enterprises has not been sufficiently researched yet. Earlier studies concerning youth entrepreneurship paid much attention to financial resources, skills, training, and market, but little was said about the role of Swahili in creating the atmosphere of workplace belonging, trust, engagement and motivation (Meshack, 2014; Brixiová et al., 2015; Chinomona et al., 2020). This ignorance is significant because many youth enterprises rely on low financial incentives and need to use language practices as resources. Thus, this study examines how Kiswahili operates as cultural capital in shaping the motivation of employees working in informal and small-scale youth enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. It investigates how Swahili affects workplace communication, inclusion, belonging, teamwork, confidence, and engagement among youth entrepreneurs and employees. In this way, the present study contributes to the discussion on language, cultural capital, and entrepreneurship.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Language, Workplace Communication, and Motivation

Workplace communication is based on language as a basic means of communication that affects employees' motivation in communicating with representatives of different languages. Good communication helps establish positive relations in the organisation and increases job satisfaction and performance (Kuoribo et al., 2024). Expanding youth entrepreneurship creates a shared language, the workplace understood by employees adds value, respect, and organisational connectedness; thus, a workplace language understood by employees adds value, respect, and organisational connectedness, increasing motivation and productivity (Nguyen et al., 2021). Swahili is the main language in Tanzania,

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uniting youth entrepreneurship through the use of workplace language (Kitila, 2017). Beyond communication within the organisation, bilingualism has been shown to bring benefits in professional networks and mobility, which could contribute to job satisfaction and motivation (Martin & Nakayama, 2018). Using a workplace language that employees clearly understand adds value, respect, and organisational connectedness, thereby increasing motivation and productivity (Nguyen et al., 2021). Similarly, Lee et al. (2025) show that leaders' motivational language enhances employees' well-being by strengthening relatedness in the workplace. This supports the view that language is not only a tool for giving instructions, but also a motivational resource that creates closeness, confidence, and emotional attachment among employees.

2.2 Cultural Capital, Cultural Competence, and Workplace Inclusion

Motivation levels in the workplace are influenced by employees' perceptions of inclusion and recognition experienced during their routine work. Ability to work with different cultures through language competence allows individuals to establish contacts both in their group and beyond, creating better teamwork in multicultural environment (Van Dyne et al., 2010). Culturally-sensitive communication in the diversity of cultures allows building up the trust, which contributes to increase of employee engagement. Research shows that organizations employing the practices recognizing cultural diversity of employees have higher levels of employee engagement (Downey et al., 2015; Goswami & Goswami, 2018). Empirical evidence shows that organisational culture is a key factor influencing employees' motivation, performance, and productivity in various types of organisations (Islam & Zyphur, 2009; Martinez, 2020; Bijalwan et al., 2024; Ilham, 2018; Sharma et al., 2025; Mohammed et al., 2024). Swahili as the main language of the country promotes unity of employees with diverse cultural backgrounds in the workplace (Martin & Nakayama, 2018).

2.3 Language Policy and Entrepreneurship in Multilingual Societies

Language policy represents a structural element influencing the manner in which entrepreneurs conduct business in multilingual societies. Organisation promoting local languages in its activities will be able to penetrate new markets and resources, thus increasing participation in the entrepreneurship ecosystem in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises (Nziku & Henry, 2021). Success of entrepreneurs in negotiations with clients and the expansion of market space depends on the wording used in entrepreneurship education programs (De Costa et al., 2021). Promotion of Kiswahili in Tanzania helps business owners to overcome the language barriers and communicate with local market successfully, contributing to sustainable development and growth of their businesses. However, creation of multilingual business environment creates conflicts regarding the need for using local languages and the requirements of official communication established by institutions and international organisations.

2.4 Empirical Gap on Tanzania's Youth Enterprises

Empirical research concerning the role of Kiswahili in increasing employee motivation and engagement in youth enterprises in Tanzania is limited. Existing literature on workplace language and entrepreneurial communication lays the foundation for further research (Mahili & Angouri, 2017; Kim, 2021; Parhankangas & Darics, 2022; Colladon et al., 2023). Research by Kibuuka (2022) does not show how Kiswahili functions as a key resource in youth enterprises in Dar es Salaam, influencing workplace relations, task management, and employee motivation. This gap needs to be filled because motivation is the key factor of productivity and success in youth entrepreneurship programs with limited financial incentives. The current study investigates Swahili as the cultural capital of youth enterprises to examine its influence on employees' motivation and engagement in the workplace (Reuster-Jahn & Hacke, 2011; Magembe, 2019; Omeje et al., 2020; REPOA, 2021).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The current study uses the theory of cultural capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. The concept of cultural capital refers to socially recognised knowledge, skills, dispositions, and competences that individuals use to establish recognition, legitimacy, and advantage in a given social field. In the current study,

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Swahili is analysed mainly as embodied cultural capital, represented by language competence, communicative skills, and the culturally appropriate speech of entrepreneurs and employees. Practically, employees who speak Swahili take a more active part in workplace communication, share their opinions, understand instructions, and build relationships with colleagues and customers.

Kiswahili serves as objectified cultural capital, appearing in business signage, client service scripts, product descriptions, training materials, and workplace communication practices. Furthermore, Swahili is institutionalised, as it has a national status and is widely used in education and public communication in Tanzania. Such features transform Swahili into a symbolic resource, adding to belonging, legitimacy, and participation in workplace communication. To support the motivational interpretation of language use, this study draws on Self-Determination Theory, particularly the needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Swahili supports relatedness by promoting social closeness and shared identity, competence by building communication skills, and autonomy by providing opportunities to participate voluntarily in workplace communication without linguistic pressure. Thus, Kiswahili functions as both cultural capital and a motivational resource.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative design to analyse how Kiswahili serves as cultural capital that influences employees' motivation in youth-led businesses in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Brinkmann, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A qualitative approach was needed to gain deeper insight into participants' experiences, meanings, and interpretations of language use in everyday workplace communication (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since cultural capital and motivation are socially constructed concepts, a qualitative approach provided the opportunity to understand how employees and entrepreneurs perceived the importance of Swahili in terms of workplace belonging, communication, teamwork, and engagement.

3.2 Study Area, Target Population, and Sampling

The research was carried out in Ilala Municipality in Dar es Salaam, focusing on Segerea, Bonyokwa, and Kinyerezi wards. Ilala Municipality was chosen because Dar es Salaam is one of the biggest cities in Tanzania that is characterised by a large number of small and medium enterprises and youth business activities (Magembe, 2019; Francis et al., 2020). Segerea, Bonyokwa, and Kinyerezi wards were important to the research because of their active retail, service, informal trading, and small-scale business activities, where Swahili was actively used as an instrument of workplace communication.

The target population consisted of young entrepreneurs and employees of informal and small-scale youth businesses. 60 people participated in the research, including 20 young entrepreneurs and 40 employees. The 1:2 ratio was appropriate because every business was expected to provide perspectives on workplace communication from both management and employee levels. Fewer young entrepreneurs were present in the sample because they were the owners, managers, or supervisors who created the conditions for the development of workplace communication. Employees made up the majority of the sample because their motivation, cooperation, sense of belonging to the work environment, and communication were influenced by the use of Swahili. This helped to obtain both perspectives on decision-making and everyday working experiences. Participants were chosen according to their participation in the daily activities of the businesses and their ability to discuss the issue of the role of Swahili in workplace communication.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to identify young entrepreneurs and employees with experience in workplace communication who could provide useful information about the role of Swahili in business (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Snowball sampling was used together with purposive sampling because informal and small-scale youth businesses were often not officially listed. Initial participants and enterprise owners helped to find other young entrepreneurs and employees to participate in the research. This method was appropriate for the informal business context in which contacts and community

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networks play a significant role. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, when no new substantial themes emerged during the interviews and focus group discussions.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with young entrepreneurs and employees to discuss their individual experiences regarding the use of Swahili in the workplace, motivation, communication, and participation. Interviews lasted for 40–60 minutes and were conducted in Kiswahili to help participants express themselves freely.

Four focus group discussions were conducted, and each included six to eight participants, mostly employees of informal and small-scale youth businesses, with some young entrepreneurs when necessary to make the discussion more fruitful. Focus groups helped participants discuss common experiences and their opinions on the influence of Swahili on workplace communication, motivation, and cooperation.

Conducting focus group discussions was justified because workplace communication and motivation are socially constructed phenomena. Focus group discussions allowed talking about common workplace experiences, comparing the experiences, and generating common insights which cannot be obtained during individual interviews, thus revealing how employees and young entrepreneurs perceive the role of Swahili in workplace communication. FGDs lasted 60-90 minutes. All interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English where it was necessary.

Table 1. Composition of Study Participants

Category of Participants	Number of Participants	Percentage
Youth entrepreneurs/business owners	20	33.3%
Employees/workers	40	66.7%
Total	60	100%

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analysed through thematic analysis. The researcher conducted multiple readings of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Codes were identified inductively from participants' statements about the use of Kiswahili, workplace communication, motivation, belonging, and business operations. Those codes were then grouped into themes reflecting patterns emerging during interviews and focus groups. The analysis process was conducted in four steps: becoming familiar with the transcripts, coding, developing themes, and refining the themes. Peer debriefing was used to discuss the emerging themes with an experienced qualitative researcher, improving the credibility of interpretation and reducing researcher bias.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility was increased through triangulation of interviews and focus groups, as well as informal member checking with some participants. Dependability was supported by an audit trail that included field notes, interview guides, coding notes, and analytic memos. Confirmability was ensured through peer debriefing and reflexive memo writing. Transferability was ensured through detailed descriptions of the study area, participants, and research procedures.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation and the possibility to withdraw at any point in the study without penalties. Written consent was received before the data collection. Anonymity was reports. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and were available only to the researchers. Interviewing and conducting focus group discussions in Kiswahili were culturally and linguistically sensitive parts of the research process.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The findings are based on themes arising from the interviews and focus groups conducted with young entrepreneurs and workers from Segerea, Bonyokwa, and Kinyerezi. In the data, it is evident that the participants viewed Swahili language not just as a form of communication but also as a resource that has an impact on the motivation, sense of belonging, team work, and employee engagement. Although the major theme focuses on the positive impact of Kiswahili as a resource in the workplace, participants also provided more detailed views on how Swahili is not sufficient in some business practices.

Table 2. Summary of Themes, Evidence, and Motivational Implications

Theme	Main Evidence from Participants	Motivational Implication
Swahili as a source of workplace commitment	Participants reported that Swahili created social closeness and a shared workplace identity.	Strengthened commitment and emotional attachment to the workplace.
Improved communication and teamwork	Swahili reduced misunderstanding and made task coordination easier.	Improved teamwork, confidence, and work efficiency.
Belonging and inclusion	Employees from different ethnic backgrounds felt included through Swahili.	Reduced marginalization and increased participation.
Perceived performance and service quality	Entrepreneurs linked Swahili communication to fewer mistakes and better customer service.	Supported operational stability and customer interaction.
Swahili as a non-financial motivational resource	Kiswahili created a family-like workplace atmosphere despite limited financial rewards.	Helped sustain morale in resource-constrained youth enterprises.
Bilingual tensions and limits of Swahili	Participants reported that Swahili supported daily workplace communication, but English was still needed for proposals, contracts, technical terms, online platforms, banks, suppliers, and international partners.	Demonstrated the need for balanced bilingual communication rather than exclusive reliance on Swahili.

4.1 Theme 1: Swahili as a Source of Motivation and Workplace Commitment

Participants reported that the use of Kiswahili in the workplace strengthened employee motivation by creating familiarity, unity, and a sense of shared identity. Employees explained that speaking Kiswahili made them feel closer to their colleagues and more comfortable in contributing to workplace discussions. Employee 7 explained:

“We come from different regions, but when we speak Swahili, it feels like we all belong to

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one place. It makes the team closer and helps us work together” (Employee 7, FGD 2).

Similarly, another employee stated:

“When I speak Swahili with my colleagues, I feel relaxed. I can express myself well, and that makes me feel part of the team” (Employee 12, Interview).

These accounts show that Swahili operated as a social and emotional resource that strengthened employee commitment and workplace attachment.

4.2 Theme 2: Improved Communication and Teamwork

Participants also associated Kiswahili with clearer communication and stronger teamwork. They reported that the use of a familiar common language reduced misunderstanding, enabled quick explanation of tasks, and improved coordination among team members. Entrepreneur 3 noted:

“Kiswahili helps us avoid wasting time. Everyone understands instructions quickly, and it becomes easier to solve problems” (Entrepreneur 3, Interview).

An employee added:

“When we use Swahili, everyone can contribute ideas. No one feels afraid to speak” (Employee 9, FGD 1).

The findings indicate that Kiswahili supported communication efficiency and collective participation within youth-led enterprises.

4.3 Theme 3: Belonging, Inclusion, and Reduced Marginalisation

The use of Swahili also promoted inclusion among employees from different ethnic and regional backgrounds. Participants explained that Kiswahili reduced feelings of difference and created a neutral communicative space where all workers could participate. Employee 15 observed:

“Before, I felt different because others did not use my ethnic language. But with Kiswahili, I can connect with everyone” (Employee 15, Interview).

Another employee stated:

“When everyone speaks Kiswahili, there is unity. You do not feel left out because of where you come from” (Employee 21, FGD 3).

These findings show that Kiswahili helped reduce linguistic and ethnic marginalisation in the workplace.

4.4 Theme 4: Perceived Links to Performance and Service Quality

Participants further indicated that Swahili supported performance by improving task clarity, customer interaction, and workplace confidence. Entrepreneurs reported that employees worked more effectively when instructions and customer service communication were conducted in Swahili. Entrepreneur 6 explained:

“When I made Kiswahili the main language for daily communication, employees became more confident and worked faster” (Entrepreneur 6, Interview).

Another participant stated:

“Customers feel comfortable when we speak Swahili because they understand us easily. It helps us serve them better” (Employee 18, FGD 3).

Although the study did not measure performance quantitatively, participants perceived Swahili

as contributing to smoother operations and better service delivery.

4.5 Theme 5: Kiswahili as a Non-Financial Motivational Resource

Participants emphasised that youth-led enterprises often operate with limited financial resources, making non-financial motivation important. In this context, Kiswahili created a supportive atmosphere that helped employees remain committed despite modest pay or limited benefits. Entrepreneur 10 explained:

“We cannot always give big salaries, but using Kiswahili creates a family atmosphere. Employees feel respected and valued” (Entrepreneur 10, Interview).

An employee similarly observed:

“Even if the payment is not very high, when people respect you and talk to you well, you feel motivated to continue working” (Employee 24, FGD 4).

These findings suggest that Kiswahili contributed to motivation by fostering respect, solidarity, and emotional belonging.

4.6 Theme 6: Bilingual Tensions and the Limits of Kiswahili in Business Growth

Although most participants described Kiswahili as important for workplace motivation, belonging, and teamwork, some participants also explained that Kiswahili was not sufficient for all business functions. They noted that Swahili worked well for daily workplace interaction, task coordination, and local customer communication, but English remained important in formal and growth-oriented business activities. Entrepreneur 4 explained:

“Kiswahili helps us communicate easily with workers and customers, but when we prepare proposals, contracts, or official letters, we normally need English because most institutions expect formal documents to be written in English” (Entrepreneur 4, Interview).

Similarly, one employee stated:

“In daily work, Kiswahili makes things simple because everyone understands it. However, some technical words, product instructions, and online business platforms are in English, so we also need English to understand them properly” (Employee 27, FGD 4).

Another entrepreneur added:

“When we deal with local customers, Kiswahili is enough and even better because it creates closeness. But when the business communicates with banks, suppliers, training institutions, or international partners, English becomes necessary” (Entrepreneur 8, Interview).

These accounts show that Kiswahili played a strong motivational role in everyday workplace interaction, but its usefulness was not absolute. Swahili mainly functioned as an internal motivational and relational resource, while English remained important for formal documentation, technical communication, and external institutional engagement.

4.7 Discussion

The findings suggest that Kiswahili is a form of language-based cultural capital that affects employees' motivation in informal and small-scale youth-led enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. Indeed, Bourdieu defines cultural capital as socially valued knowledge, dispositions, skills, and abilities that allow people to gain recognition and work successfully within a given social field (Bourdieu, 2018). In the present case, Kiswahili is embodied cultural capital, as it is demonstrated by linguistic competence, confidence, and culturally familiar workplace communication of employees. These findings support Lamont and Lareau's (1988) claim that cultural capital derives its value when it enables

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people to enter social relations and gain recognition.

The finding that Swahili improves workplace communication and teamwork aligns with Kitila (2017), who reports that efficient workplace communication leads to high morale, engagement, and productivity in Tanzania's micro and small enterprises. In the current research, employees report that Swahili reduced misunderstandings, clarified instructions, and stimulated participation in workplace conversations. The findings also align with Cohen and Kassis-Henderson (2023) on the role of language in shaping workplace interaction. Moreover, this finding agrees with the conclusions of Nguyen et al. (2021) about the impact of motivating language on employee outcomes. However, the present study expands the scope of previous work by suggesting that Swahili plays different roles in youth-led enterprises in Tanzania. Moreover, the findings on the positive impact of Swahili in creating a sense of belonging among employees with diverse ethnicity and regionality align with Mazrui et al. (1995) and Isingoma (2017), who claim that Swahili helps language-based inclusion may become a significant motivational resource in a small business setting.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Swahili helped increase employee confidence and participation, as well as their emotional attachment to the workplace. This aligns with existing studies on organisational culture and employee engagement, which show that motivation increases when people feel respected, included, and socially connected (Islam & Zyphur, 2009; Martinez, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2024). In this study, Swahili created a family atmosphere in youth-led enterprises, especially when financial incentives were scarce. Notably, most Tanzanian youth-led enterprises operate under financial restrictions and cannot motivate employees financially. Thus, Swahili becomes a nonfinancial motivational resource that provides morale, respect, and commitment. Additionally, Lee et al. (2025) support this finding, arguing that motivational language improves employee well-being through relatedness. In the present study, Swahili strengthened relatedness by creating social closeness, confidence, and a sense of belonging among employees in youth-led enterprises.

Existing research also supports the positive impact of Swahili on task coordination and customers' perceptions of service quality. Kim et al. (2019) show that language diversity in the workplace may affect teamwork, communication, and organisational performance, while Kuoribo et al. (2024) note that communication in multicultural teams affects the diversity of languages at the workplace may affect teamwork, communication, and organisational performance, while Kuoribo et al. (2024) note that communication in multicultural teams has an impact on productivity. In the current study, entrepreneurs associate the usage of Kiswahili with fewer misunderstandings, more rapid task completion, and better customer communication, which suggests that Kiswahili facilitates organisational operation by making communication clear for employees and local customers.

Nevertheless, the findings reveal bilingual tensions. Although Kiswahili proved beneficial for internal communication, motivation, teamwork, and customer interaction, English is necessary for documentation, proposals, contract drafting, technical terminology, using online platforms, and communication with partners. This aligns with Martin and Nakayama's (2018) claims about the role of intercultural and bilingual competence in increasing workplace participation and opportunities, and with De Costa et al.'s (2021) research on the impact of language on entrepreneurial participation and access to resources. Thus, the findings suggest that Swahili and English play distinctive but complementary roles in youth entrepreneurship. While Swahili promotes internal cohesion and motivation, English facilitates formal visibility and institutional communication.

The current study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by addressing the research gap regarding the emphasis on financial capital, entrepreneurial skills, training, and market access. As was already mentioned, previous studies focused on the skills, training, access to finance, and performance of youth-led businesses (Brixiová et al., 2015; Meshack, 2014; Chinomona et al., 2020). However, Current research shows that cultural capital (Kiswahili language practices in particular) also affects employee motivation in youth-led enterprises. This finding contributes to the field of entrepreneurship because it shows that employee motivation in small enterprises depends not only on economic factors but also on language, belonging, trust, and cultural familiarity.

Moreover, in Tanzania's context, the findings suggest that youth-led and small-scale enterprises in Dar es Salaam operate in an environment where social relations and

practical communication are vital for business survival. The current study supports REPOA (2021) on the importance of skills and the sustainability of youth-led businesses in Dar es Salaam, and Magembe (2019) on the development and challenges of SMEs in Dar es Salaam. The current study adds that Swahili may contribute to sustainability indirectly through strengthening communication, morale, and participation. Overall, the findings are supported by previous research on cultural capital, workplace communication, organisational culture, and youth entrepreneurship. However, the study makes a specific contribution by showing how Swahili serves as language-based cultural capital in informal and small-scale youth-led enterprises in Dar es Salaam. The findings show that Swahili is not only a national language or a tool for communication but also a workplace resource that facilitates motivation, belonging, and teamwork, confidence, and customer interactions. However, the study further shows that Kiswahili should not be considered a replacement for English.

4.8 Practical Implications

4.8.1 Managerial Implications for Youth Entrepreneurs

The findings suggest that youth entrepreneurs running informal and small-scale businesses should treat Kiswahili as an important resource for increasing workplace communication, teamwork, employee self-efficacy, and belonging. Since youth enterprises sometimes lack financial incentives, Kiswahili can help create a respectful and supportive workplace environment where employees feel included and motivated. However, the findings also show the only language used for conducting business. Youth entrepreneurs need to implement a balanced bilingual communication policy. While Swahili can be used in everyday interactions, task clarification, meetings, customer interactions, and peer encouragement, English must be used for documentation, proposals, contracts, emails, electronic media, and communication with external partners. Therefore, youth entrepreneurs can create simple bilingual workplace tools such as Kiswahili customer service scripts, bilingual task instructions, Basic English letter templates, and brief training on common business terminology to allow employees to benefit from the motivating power of Kiswahili while also developing their ability to participate in more formal, growth-oriented business operations.

4.8.2 Policy and Training Implications

The findings show that youth entrepreneurship training programs need to include bilingual workplace communication as a component of business development support. Training organisations, governmental organisations, and development partners cannot focus only on finance, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills. They need to train young entrepreneurs and their employees in using Swahili and English in business operations.

Since informal and small-scale youth-led enterprises may benefit more from practical courses than from extended formal training, they can attend business English clinics, Kiswahili customer care training, bilingual documentation assistance, and exercises in writing proposals, invoices, contracts, emails, and business profiles. Such training will enable young entrepreneurs to maintain the motivating power of Swahili and communicate effectively with banks, suppliers, governmental organisations, and international partners. Policymakers need to recognise local language use as part of enterprise development. Endorsing the use of Kiswahili for workplace communication will increase inclusion and motivate employees, while enhancing English will increase market visibility, market accessibility, and institutional collaboration for the business.

4.8.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has been conducted in selected wards of Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. Thus, its findings are applicable only to youth-led enterprises in Tanzania. The focus on informal and small-scale enterprises may yield different results in more formal environments where English and formal structures dominate.

Furthermore, this study relies on qualitative data reflecting respondents' experiences and perceptions of the enterprises. Although connection between Kiswahili using indicators such as profit, employee retention, customer satisfaction, and productivity. Although the study mentions opposing perspectives

on the limitations of Swahili, its findings are specific to the social and linguistic context of the enterprises examined.

Future research could apply a mixed-methods approach to examine how language use influences youth entrepreneurship performance, measured by employee retention, service quality, customer satisfaction, and business growth. Comparative research may examine differences between informal and formal enterprises, small-scale and large-scale operations, and urban environments such as Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Arusha, Dodoma, and Mbeya. Longitudinal research may shed light on how the roles of Swahili and English change when youth-led enterprises grow and interact with bigger markets and institutions.

5.0 Conclusion

This study examines the role of Swahili as cultural capital in influencing employee motivation in informal and small-scale youth-led enterprises in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The findings indicate that Kiswahili facilitates employee motivation by supporting workplace communication, belonging, teamwork, confidence, participation, and emotional bonds with the workplace. As a form of cultural capital, Kiswahili allows employees to speak more openly, understand instructions better, and communicate more confidently in everyday business interactions. This study contributes to academic knowledge by showing that language can serve as a non-financial motivational tool in youth entrepreneurship. When youth-led enterprises face financial constraints, Swahili becomes a resource that promotes respect, trust, solidarity, and inclusion. Thus, this study reveals that employee motivation in small enterprises is influenced not just by salaries or financial incentives but by culturally meaningful language communication. On the other hand, the study shows that Swahili is not enough for all business operations. English is still necessary for documentation, proposals, contracts, technical terminology, digital media, external communication, and business expansion. Therefore, this study advocates the balanced bilingual communication approach. Youth entrepreneurship training programs need to maintain the motivational and inclusive power of Swahili while strengthening English for formal, technical, and growth-oriented business communication.

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