

ANALYZING THE ROLE OF BUSIENSS INCUBATION IN SUPPORTING YOUTH-LED STARTUPS IN POKHARA

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*A Project Work Report submitted to Pokhara University in Partial
Fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of*
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DECLARATION

I hereby, declare that this summer project report entitled " **ANALYZING THE ROLE OF BUSINESS INCUBATION IN SUPPORTING YOUTH-LED STARTUPS IN POKHARA** " which is submitted to Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College affiliated to Pokhara University, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) is my original work and every effort is made to show this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussion.

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Lastly, I extend heartfelt thanks to my friends, family, and everyone who assisted me directly or indirectly in completing this project. Your encouragement and support have been invaluable.

Thanking you all.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project, titled "**Analyzing the Role of Business Incubation in Supporting Youth-Led Startups in Pokhara,**" was undertaken to examine the importance of business incubation in fostering the growth and sustainability of new entrepreneurial ventures. Early-stage businesses often face significant challenges, including limited access to finance, inadequate managerial skills, and weak business networks. Business incubators have emerged as vital support systems that provide entrepreneurs with the resources, mentorship, training, and networking opportunities necessary to overcome these challenges. This study was conducted to assess the extent to which business incubation contributes to the success and long-term viability of start-up enterprises.

The scope of the study focused on the services and support mechanisms offered by business incubators to early-stage ventures, the challenges encountered by start-up businesses, and the impact of incubation programs on business performance and sustainability. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with entrepreneurs and business incubation managers, while secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, government publications, and other relevant literature. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, tables, and charts, to present the findings clearly and systematically.

The findings revealed that business incubation plays a significant role in enhancing the survival and growth of early-stage ventures. Incubated businesses benefited from access to business development services, mentorship, technical assistance, networking opportunities, shared facilities, and guidance in securing funding. Based on these findings, the study recommends that governments and policy makers increase investment in business incubation programs and create policies that encourage entrepreneurship development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Objectives of Study	3
1.3 Statement of Problem	3
1.4 Organization of the Study	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Limitation of the Study	6
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Review of Literature	7
2.2 Conceptual Framework	9
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	11
Research Design and Data Collection	11
Nature and Source of Data	11
Population and Sample	12

Data Analysis	12
CHAPTER IV: DATA REPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	13
4.1 Primary Data Presentation and Analysis.....	13
4.1.1 Respondents' Characteristics/Demographic Factors	13
4.1.1.1 Age of Respondents.....	13
4.1.1.2 Gender of Respondents	14
4.1.1.3 Education Level.....	15
4.1.1.4 Sectors/Areas of Startup	15
4.1.1.5 Participation in Business Incubation Programs	17
4.1.1.6 Most Valuable Session Perceived	17
4.1.2 Mentorship	18
4.1.2.1 Mentors Helped Improve Decision-Making on Startup Strategy	18
4.1.2.2 Regular Mentoring Increased Confidence as an Entrepreneur	19
4.1.2.3 Respondents' Incubation Duration.....	20
4.1.3 Access to Seed Fund	21
4.1.3.1 Incubation Helps Receive Information about Grants/Investment	21
4.1.3.2 Incubator Assisted in Preparing Funding Proposals and Pitch.....	22

4.1.3.3 Incubation Program Increased Chances of Obtaining Seed Funding.....	23
4.1.4 Networking	24
4.1.4.1 Incubator Connected with Industry Experts	24
4.1.4.2 Exchange of Ideas and Experiences with Experts and Startups	25
4.1.4.3 Frequency of Interaction with Other Entrepreneurs	26
4.1.5 Research and Development.....	27
4.1.5.1 Incubators Provide Support for Research and Development.....	27
4.1.5.2 Access to Research Tools and Equipment.....	28
4.1.5.3 Encouraged Continuous Research and Product Improvement	29
4.2 Major Findings.....	30
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	33
5.1 Summary	33
5.2 Conclusion	33
5.3 Recommendation	34
REFERENCE	36
APPENDIX: Questionnaire	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table No. 1: Age of Respondents	13
Table No. 2: Gender of Respondents	14
Table No. 3: Sectors/Areas of Startup	16
Table No. 4: Participation in Business Incubation Programs	17
Table No. 5: Mentors Helped Improve Decision-Making on Startup Strategy	18
Table No. 6: Regular Mentoring Increased Confidence as an Entrepreneur	19
Table No. 7: Respondents' Incubation Duration	20
Table No. 8: Incubation Helps Receive Information about Grants/Investment	21
Table No. 9: Incubator Assisted in Preparing Funding Proposals and Pitch	22
Table No. 10: Incubation Program Increased Chances of Obtaining Seed Funding	23
Table No. 11: Incubator Connected with Industry Experts	24
Table No. 12: Exchange of Ideas and Experiences with Experts and Startups	25
Table No. 13: Frequency of Interaction with Other Entrepreneurs	26
Table No. 14: Incubators Provide Support for Research and Development	27
Table No. 15: Access to Research Tools and Equipment	28
Table No. 16: Encouraged Continuous Research and Product Improvement	30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure (i): Conceptual Framework	9
Figure (ii): Age of Respondents.....	14
Figure (iii): Education Level.....	15
Figure (iv): Sectors/Areas of Startup	16
Figure (v): Participation in Business Incubation Programs	17
Figure (vi): Most Valuable Session Perceived.....	18
Figure (vii): Mentors Helped Improve Decision-Making on Startup Strategy	19
Figure (viii): Regular Mentoring Increased Confidence as an Entrepreneur	20
Figure (ix): Incubation Helps Receive Information about Grants/Investment.....	21
Figure (x): Incubator Assisted in Preparing Funding Proposals and Pitch	22
Figure (xi): Incubation Program Increased Chances of Obtaining Seed Funding	23
Figure (xii): Incubator Connected with Industry Experts	24
Figure (xiii): Exchange of Ideas and Experiences with Experts and Startups	25
Figure (xiv): Frequency of Interaction with Other Entrepreneurs	26
Figure (xv): Incubators Provide Support for Research and Development	28
Figure (xvi): Access to Research Tools and Equipment.....	29
Figure (xvii): Encouraged Continuous Research and Product Improvement	30

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
NTHMC	Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College
PU	Pokhara University
GoN	Government of Nepal
DoCSI	Department of Cottage and Small Industries
BIP	Business Incubation Program
NITEC	Nepal Innovation Technology & Entrepreneurship Centre
TBC	The British College
CSES	Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services
EE	Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
R&D	Research and Development
SEE	Secondary Education Examination

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Business Incubation is a concept that supports start-ups by providing one-stop solutions. It generally refers to an organization that accelerates and systematizes the process of creating successful enterprises by providing them with a comprehensive and integrated range of support, including incubator space, business support services, and clustering and networking opportunities." Business incubators significantly improve the survival and growth prospect of new start-ups in multiple ways like cost-reduction, business facilitation, loan access etc. (Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services (CSES), 2002) The main goal is to establish successful start-up companies. Business Incubation Program (BIP) in Nepal is operated under the lead role of the Department of Cottage and Small Industries (DoCSI), Government of Nepal (GoN) .

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a key driver of economic development, employment generation, and innovation, particularly in developing economies like Nepal. Youth are a group with energy, creativity, and innovative potential that are crucial to a country's economic development. Over the past decade, Nepal has witnessed a steady rise in entrepreneurial activity, fueled by a young and growing population, expanding access to technology and the internet, remittance-backed capital, and a shifting mindset among youth who now view self-employment and business ownership as viable alternatives to conventional employment or foreign labor migration. Business incubation has emerged as one of the most effective mechanisms to address this challenge, both globally and within Nepal. Incubation centers provide early-stage entrepreneurs with an integrated support system that typically includes physical workspace, mentorship, structured training, networking opportunities, research and development guidance and access to seed funding or investor linkages. By offering this combination of resources, incubators aim to reduce the risks and uncertainties associated with starting a new venture, thereby improving the survival and growth prospects of

startups during their most vulnerable phase. Despite this growing enthusiasm, early-stage ventures in Nepal continue to face significant challenges in their initial years of operation. Limited access to seed capital, limited networking with experts, inadequate mentorship, weak market linkages, lack of business management skills, and complex regulatory procedures often prevent promising ideas from surviving beyond their early stages. This critical gap between the conception of a business idea and its successful establishment as a sustainable enterprise has come to be widely recognized in entrepreneurship literature as the "valley of death."

Pokhara, as the second-largest city in Nepal and the emerging economic and educational hub of Gandaki Province, presents a particularly relevant setting for examining this phenomenon. The city has experienced considerable infrastructural development in recent years, including the establishment of an international airport aimed at improving connectivity with destinations beyond Nepal, alongside continued growth in its educational and urban infrastructure. Alongside this physical development, Pokhara has also witnessed the gradual emergence of institutions dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship with the development of technology. The incubation programs are in increasing number for students and entrepreneurs. Commentary on Pokhara's entrepreneurial ecosystem has suggested that meaningful, lasting impact requires the prior development of a strong surrounding ecosystem, noting that decades of earlier donor-funded small-business training programs across Nepal largely failed to produce sustainable outcomes once external funding ceased. This raises an important and largely underexplored question: to what extent has business incubation in Pokhara genuinely contributed to the survival, growth, and success of early-stage ventures, and how well-equipped is the local ecosystem to sustain this support in the long run?

This study seeks to address that gap by focusing specifically on Pokhara, examining the role, accessibility, and effectiveness of business incubation in supporting early-stage ventures within the city, and offering insights that are grounded in the local entrepreneurial context rather than generalized national trends.

1.2 Objectives of Study

General Objective

- a) To examine the role of business incubation in supporting the growth and sustainability of early-stage ventures in Pokhara.

Specific Objectives:

- a) To assess the range of services (mentorship, workspace, training, networking, and funding linkages) provided by incubators to early-stage entrepreneurs.
- b) To analyze the level of accessibility and awareness of incubation support among early-stage founders in Pokhara.
- c) To evaluate the impact of business incubation on the survival, performance, and growth of incubated ventures.
- d) To identify the key challenges and gaps faced by early-stage ventures in accessing or benefiting from incubation support.
- e) To explore entrepreneurs' perceptions and satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of incubation services received.
- f) To recommend measures for strengthening the business incubation ecosystem in Pokhara.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Although Pokhara has witnessed a growing number of entrepreneurship initiatives in recent years, there is limited understanding of how effectively business incubation centers support early-stage ventures in the city. Factors such as accessibility of incubation services, quality of mentorship, availability of funding linkages, and the readiness of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem vary widely, making it difficult for many startups to receive adequate support during their most critical early stages. This study seeks to identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of business incubation in Pokhara, in order to help improve support systems for early-stage ventures and strengthen the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The following questions guided this study:

- a) What is the level of awareness and accessibility of business incubation services among early-stage entrepreneurs in Pokhara?
- b) What range of services (mentorship, workspace, training, networking, and funding) do incubation centers in Pokhara provide?
- c) How does business incubation influence the survival and growth of early-stage ventures?
- d) What challenges do early-stage ventures face in accessing or benefiting from incubation support?
- e) What role does the local entrepreneurial ecosystem play in sustaining incubated ventures beyond the incubation period?

1.4 Organization of the Study

1.4.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this study includes Background, Objectives of the study, Significance of the study, and Limitation of the study.

1.4.2 Literature Review

Second chapter includes theoretical review, review of related studies and research gaps. Review of related studies briefs about similar research that has been carried out previously.

1.4.3 Research Methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology employed to conduct the study and techniques used in analysis of data. The research design, data collection procedures, and processing and analysis procedures are mentioned in this section.

1.4.4 Presentation and Analysis of Data

Fourth chapter deals with presentation of primary data using different appropriate graphs and tables as well as analysis of those data using statistical tools.

1.4.5 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Fifth chapter concludes with a brief explanation of the whole report. Conclusions are drawn from the major findings of the study and finally, the required recommendations are provided for further improvement.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will be beneficial to upcoming researchers who wish to conduct research on similar topics and fields. It provides insights into the role and effectiveness of business incubation in supporting early-stage ventures in Pokhara. The findings may help policymakers and educational institutions design more effective incubation programs and support services. Furthermore, the study contributes to improving the accessibility and awareness of incubation resources among young entrepreneurs. It also enhances understanding of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and its role in supporting startup survival and growth. Overall, the study can contribute to promoting economic development and youth entrepreneurship in the Pokhara region.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

- a) The study focuses only on business incubation centers and early-stage ventures in Pokhara, so the findings may not be generalized to other regions.
- b) Limited sample size, as data collection is constrained by time and resource limitations.
- c) The rapidly evolving nature of the startup and incubation ecosystem may affect the long-term relevance of findings.
- d) Limited availability of reliable secondary data on local business incubation activities.

CHAPTER: II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Literature

Business incubations have become an important pillar in the attraction and the support of innovation and entrepreneurship - in practice, and to a greater extent in theory as well (Brem. A & Gerlach. S 2015). Entrepreneurship can be locally fostered through business incubators. The role of business incubators is to accelerate the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services.

Lee & Oster young (2020) state that Youth involvement in business incubator programs has been shown to improve managerial skills and business sustainability. With appropriate mentoring, young people can implement more systematic management, marketing, and decision-making strategies, resulting in more efficient and profitable businesses. Business incubators as growth facilitators have an important role in helping new entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. However, in carrying out their duties and functions, there are several obstacles faced by business incubators.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory by Daniel Isenberg (2010) explains that entrepreneurship flourishes when entrepreneurs operate within a supportive environment consisting of government policies, financial institutions, universities, business support organizations, investors, mentors, and markets. Business incubators are a critical component of this ecosystem because they connect startups with these stakeholders and create an environment conducive to innovation and business development. Scholars involved in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) documented various forms of entrepreneurial activity across countries and regions over the years (Bosma et al.,2021), concluding that younger people are more likely than older people to start new businesses and younger adults tend to have less knowledge and experience, smaller networks, fewer resources and fewer skills. Mair & Marti (2021) found that business incubators that facilitate connections between people, mentors, and industry players can open new

market access, expand collaboration opportunities, and provide hands-on learning experiences unavailable through conventional training. This confirms that business incubators not only equip young people with skills but also build ecosystems that support sustainable business success. Various Supports through access to investors, access to peers, help with team formation and direct funding from the programmes could have a positive impact (Bone et al., 2019), on youth lead startups which includes variables covering entrepreneurial events, training courses, co-working spaces and consulting sessions with experts. Some variables are quantitative in nature such as the impact of events and learning, mentorship, access to funding and collaborative network provided by the Circular Jumpstart acceleration programme for start-ups (Muchtar & Nalurita, 2023). In addition, mentorship programmes, entrepreneurship education and an emphasis on innovation and creativity through entrepreneurial universities and academia (Dhiman & Arora, 2024) as well as providing necessary resources for success such as expert-level technical assistance and a innovative research guidelines for product or service refinement. Palazzolo & Devasagayam (2023) have also been found that networking and research supports from experts helps to overcome the possible risks occurred in business activities through continuous guidance with proactive management. Securing funding is a critical step for start-ups to fuel their growth. Antony S (2024) found that Incubators help to connect entrepreneurs with investors, venture capitalists, and other sources of funding to finance their ventures

Notably, younger adults may have more energy, enthusiasm and tend to give up less in terms of an established career and high salary because they may not yet have to support a family, pay a mortgage and other lifestyle choices (Calvo et al.,2023).Not everyone is able to spend the time or money necessary to attend college and obtain a business administration degree. Further, not everyone has access to resources that can fund a new business effort until it becomes profitable. Incubator programs help to fill the gap by providing rudimentary training to entrepreneurs, a space to launch the business, and in some cases contact between the new business owner with others who are in a position to invest in the future of the company. If business incubators support entrepreneurs, (Ndabeni 2008, Dutt et al.2016), then incubators could be potentially more valuable for

growing businesses started by entrepreneurs who have less pre-entry knowledge and experience. Mentoring, for example, could help disadvantaged entrepreneurs diagnose problems with their business early, and thereby avoid costly mistakes. Incubators also offer much-needed kick-starter funding and networking opportunities, which socially and educationally disadvantaged entrepreneurs often lack. Evleens, van Rijnsoever, and Niesten (2017) emphasize that network-based incubation support rather than incubation "space" alone is what management theory would predict to matter most for start-up performance, since it addresses resource and legitimacy gaps that founders cannot resolve alone.

Hackett and Dilts (2004) proposed a theory of business incubation that views incubation as a process through which incubators provide startups with resources, mentoring, business support, and networking to improve their chances of survival and growth. The theory suggests that successful incubation reduces the high failure rate of early-stage ventures by helping entrepreneurs overcome resource constraints and develop their businesses. Several persistent gaps also recur across reviews: (1) a lack of standardized performance metrics, which limits comparability across studies (Deyanova et al., 2022); (2) weak theoretical grounding connecting specific incubation practices to specific venture outcomes (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2014); as that need to be addressed as soon as possible to obtain effective implementation of incubation system in own startup ventures.

While the benefits of business incubators are clear, their implementation in the field is not without challenges. The UNDP (2021) emphasizes that variations in financial literacy among youth group members, limited initial capital, and lack of understanding of digital technology are key barriers that must be addressed through adaptive mentoring strategies, relevant training materials, and ongoing support. With the right strategies, youth groups can increase their business profits and develop more professional businesses. Nepal's entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) is still emerging and faces several challenges, including limited access to capital, restricted market entry, and regulatory complexities.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a visual or written representation of the concepts, variables, and their relationships that guide a research study. It provides the foundation for formulating research questions, hypotheses, data collection, and data analysis. It demonstrates the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. According to this research, growth and sustainability of youth-led early-stage ventures in Pokhara is the dependent variable, and business incubation support factors are the independent variables

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

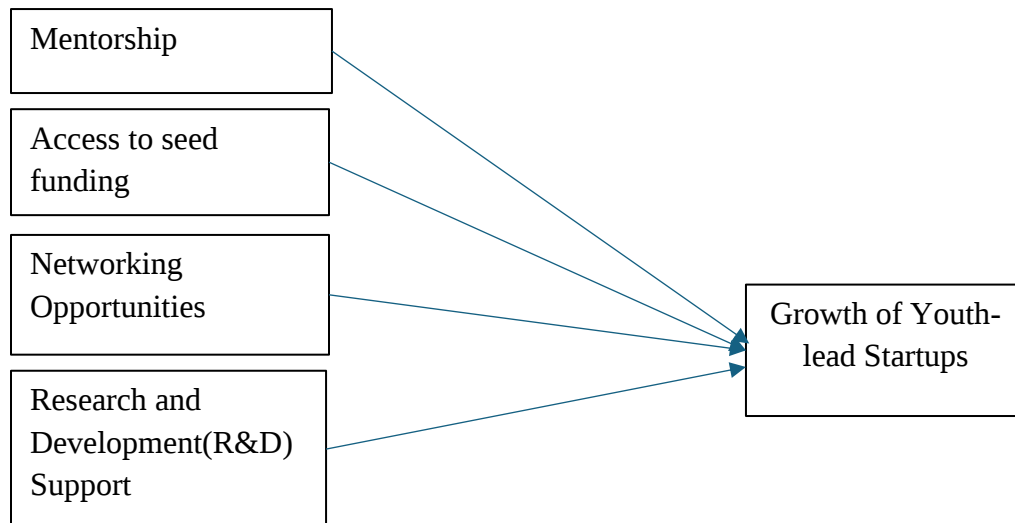


Figure: (i)Conceptual Framework

Operational Definition:

a) Mentorship

Mentorship refers to the guidance provided by experienced professionals to young entrepreneurs. It helps with decision-making, avoids common startup mistakes, and builds confidence in managing early-stage ventures.

b) Access to seed funding

Access to seed funding refers to the availability of initial capital, grants, or investment provided through incubation programs. It enables youth entrepreneurs to test ideas, develop prototypes, and cover early operational costs.

c) Networking

Networking involves connecting young entrepreneurs with investors, industry experts, potential customers, and other startups. Strong networks help startups gain visibility, partnerships, and market access.

d) Research and Development (R&D)

Research and Development support refers to the assistance provided by business incubators to help startups develop innovative products, services, technologies, and business processes. This support may include access to research facilities, technical expertise, product design assistance, prototype development, testing facilities,

e) Growth of youth-led startups

Growth of Youth Lead Startups refers to the extent to which businesses established and managed by young entrepreneurs expand and improve their performance over time. Startup growth can be reflected in increases in sales revenue, customer base, market share, profitability, production capacity, and business assets.

CHAPTER: III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. It covers research design, nature and sources of data, population and sample, sampling method, data collection, and data analysis techniques used to examine the role of business incubation in supporting youth-led startups in Pokhara.

Research Design and Data Collection

The study primarily follows a quantitative research approach because the major information was collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphical presentations. For data collection, I used categorical questions and five-point Likert-scale statements ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The study also included a limited qualitative element through open-ended questions and direct interview with people concerning the challenges, values experienced by entrepreneurs and suggestions for improving business incubation programs. Therefore, while the principal research approach is quantitative and descriptive, qualitative responses (Mixed Method) were also considered where appropriate to provide additional understanding.

Nature and Source of Data

The study used both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data Sources

- a. Structured questionnaire
- b. Responses from youth, entrepreneurs, and startup-related respondents in Pokhara Valley Five-point Likert-scale responses and other categorical questions

Secondary Data Sources

- a. Research articles, Books
- b. Relevant websites and previous report studies related to business incubation and startups

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of youth, entrepreneurs, and startup-related respondents relevant to business incubation in Pokhara Valley. A total of 121 respondents were included in the study using convenience sampling. Among them, 81 respondents participated in business incubation programs, while 40 respondents had not participated. The participants provided information about their experiences with incubation services, while non-participants provided information about awareness, perceptions, and willingness to participate.

Data Analysis

After collection, the data were edited, coded, classified, and tabulated. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage were used to analyze the responses. The findings were presented through frequency tables, bar diagrams, and pie charts. Microsoft Excel, MS-words are generally used for data analysis and Open-ended responses concerning challenges and recommendations were reviewed and grouped according to common ideas. Qualitative data and overall summary of interview are presented in main findings.

CHAPTER: IV

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Primary data Presentation and Analysis

This Chapter is allocated for data analysis and presentation. The data observed or collected directly from the first-hand source that has not been used before are called primary data .The Primary data is taken by questionnaire method from, the people of Pokhara valley .For the data collection 121 respondents are taken as sample using the convenience sampling method .The data presentation as follow :

4.1.1 Respondents characteristics/Demographics Factors

4.1.1.1 Age of Respondents

Age of respondents also affects businesses, especially based on their knowledge and experience. During data collection period, most of the respondents belong to youth people or after teen age group.

Category	Count	%
Below 20 years	18	14.9
20-24 years	55	45.5
25-29 years	28	23.1
30-34 years	16	13.2
35 years and above	4	3.3
Total	121	100

Table No:1 Age of Respondents

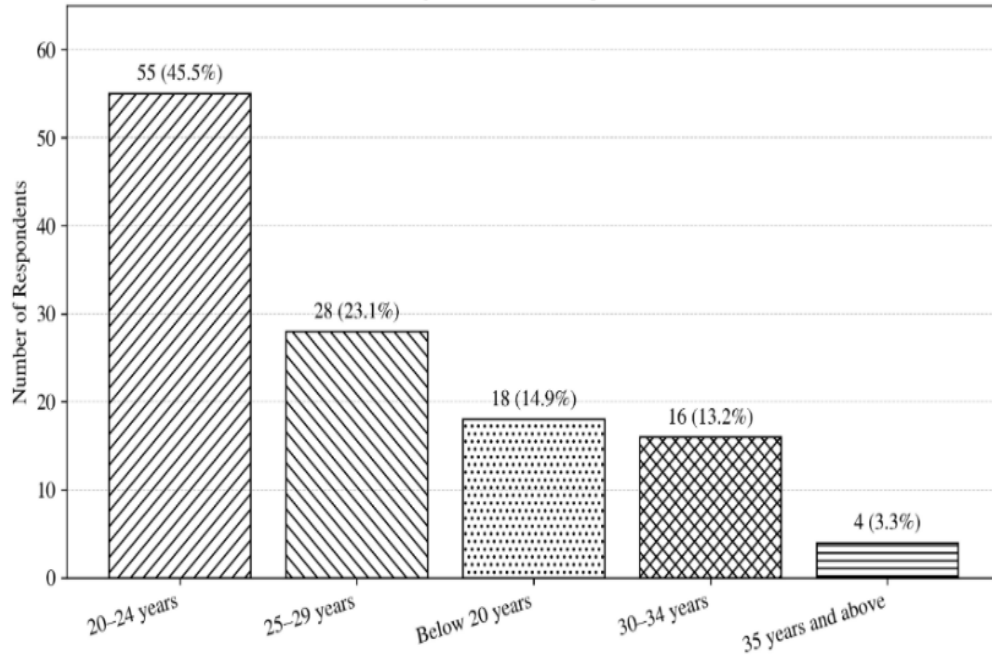


Figure (ii) Age of Respondents

Above Figure demonstrate that out of 121 respondents, most respondents (45.5%) are aged 20–24 years, followed by 25–29 years (23.1%), 14.9% are of below 20 years, 13.2% of 30-34 Years and 3.3% of 35 years and above. Overall, the data indicate that the respondents were predominantly young people, particularly those between 20 and 29 years of age. This age distribution is relevant to the study because the research focuses on youth-led startups and the role of business incubation in supporting young entrepreneurs in Pokhara.

4.1.1.2 Gender of Respondents

Category	Count	%
Female	80	66.7
Male	40	32.5
Other	1	0.8
Total	121	100

Table No:2 Gender of respondents

The chart shows that out of 120 respondents, 66.7% are female, 32.5% are male, and a very small percentage selected Other. Female fellows are also well growing in networking and incubation activities, where they gain entrepreneurship ideas refinement opportunity in better way.

4.1.1.3 Education level

The educational background of respondents provides an overview of their academic qualifications and helps understand their level of education.

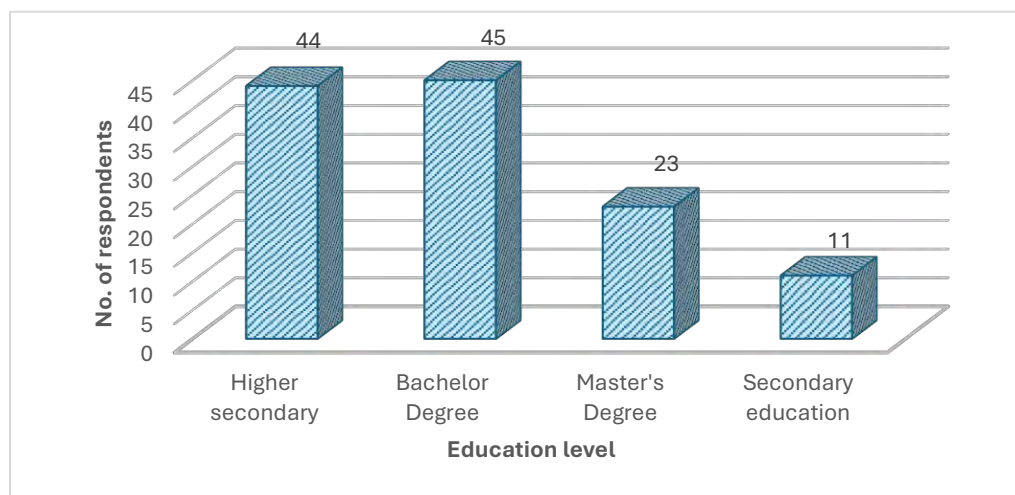


Figure (iii) Education level

The figure presents the educational level of the respondents. Among the total respondents, 45 respondents (36.6%) have a Bachelor's Degree, representing the highest proportion. This is followed closely by 44 respondents (35.8%) with higher secondary education. Similarly, 23 respondents (18.7%) have a Master's Degree, while 11 respondents (8.9%) have secondary-level education. Overall, the data indicates that most respondents have higher secondary or Bachelor's-level education, with Bachelor's degree holders forming the largest group.

4.1.1.4 Sectors /Areas of Startup

Startups operate in different sectors depending on the nature of their products, services, and business activities. Identifying the sector areas of startups helps to understand the

types of businesses represented by the respondents and the areas in which young entrepreneurs are actively engaged.

Category	Count	%
Tourism and Hospitality	30	25
Manufacturing	22	18
Information and Technology	22	18
Retail and Trade	18	15
Agriculture	17	14.2
Creative industry	9	7.5
Other	3	2.5
Total	121	100

Table No: 3 Startup areas

The data shows that 121 respondents are distributed across different sectors: 30 (25%) are in Tourism and Hospitality, 22 (18.3%) in Manufacturing, 22 (18%) in Information Technology.

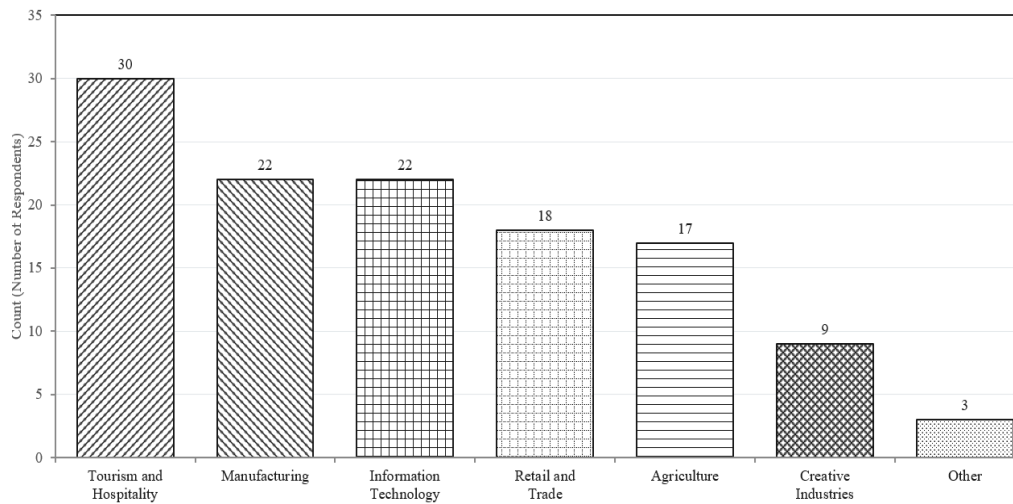


Figure (iv) Startups area

Moreover, 18 (15%) in Retail and Trade, 17 (14.2%) in Agriculture, 9 (7.5%) in Creative Industries, and 3 (2.5%) in other sectors. Overall, the data shows a diverse startup ecosystem.

4.1.1.5 Participation in Business Incubation Programs

The following data demonstrates that out of 121 respondents, 81 (66.9%) participated in business incubation, while 40 (33.1%) did not participate.

Business incubation Participation	Count	%
Yes	81	66.9
No	40	33.1
Total	121	100

Table No :4 Incubation Participation

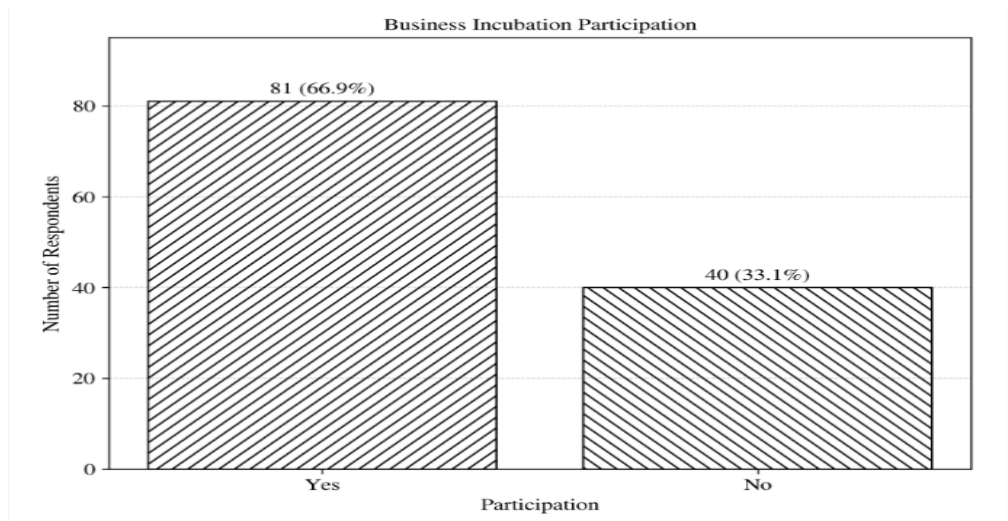


Figure (v) Incubation Participation

Furthermore, the findings indicate that business incubation is a common experience among the respondents, with most having participated in incubation programs with the growing essence of business incubation concept among youths.

4.1.1.6 Which Session did respondents perceive as the most valuable for your business?

Different people made various kinds of perceptions regarding business incubation sessions based on their startup needs and requirements.

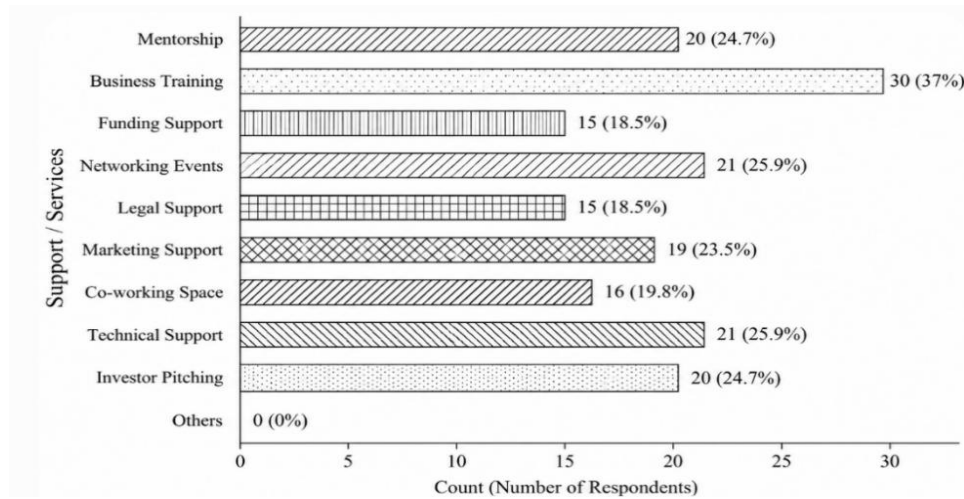


Figure (vi) Session value perceive

The chart also shows the different types of support needed by entrepreneurs. Among the respondents, Business Training is the most preferred support, selected by 30 respondents (37%). Networking Events and Technical Support were each selected by 21 respondents (25.9%). Mentorship and Investor Pitching were preferred by 20 respondents (24.7%) each. Similarly, Marketing Support was selected by 19 respondents (23.5%). Co-working Space was selected by 16 respondents (19.8%), while Funding Support and Legal Support were each selected by 15 respondents (18.5%).

4.2.1Mentorship

4.1.2.1Mentors helped improve my decision-making on startup strategy.

Mentoring in startup strategy is the process of providing entrepreneurs with expert guidance, advice, and experience to help them make better strategic decisions and successfully grow their startups.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	1	1.2
Neutral	18	22.2
Agree	37	45.7
Strongly Agree	25	30.9
Total	81	100

Table No:5 Mentorship improve decision making

Above table demonstrates that out of 81 respondents, 37 (45.7%) agreed and 25 (30.9%) strongly agreed that mentors helped improve their decision-making. The findings indicate that mentors have a positive influence on entrepreneurs' decision-making regarding startup strategy

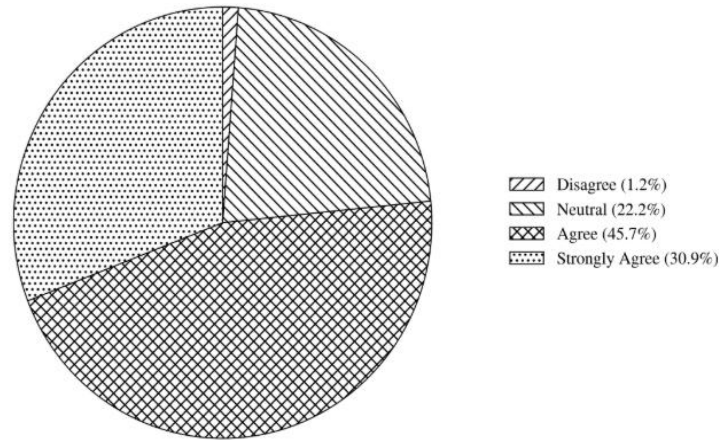


Figure (vii) Mentorship improve decision making

Meanwhile, 18 respondents (22.2%) remained neutral, while only 1 respondent (1.2%) disagreed.

4.1.2.2 Regular mentoring increased my confidence as an entrepreneur through improving management skills.

In this study, respondents were asked whether regular mentoring increased their confidence as entrepreneurs by improving their management skills. The result suggests that regular guidance from mentors helps entrepreneurs become more confident in managing their businesses.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.3
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	14	17.7
Agree	46	58.2
Strongly Agree	19	22.8
Total	81	100

Table No: 6 Mentorship increased confidence as an entrepreneur

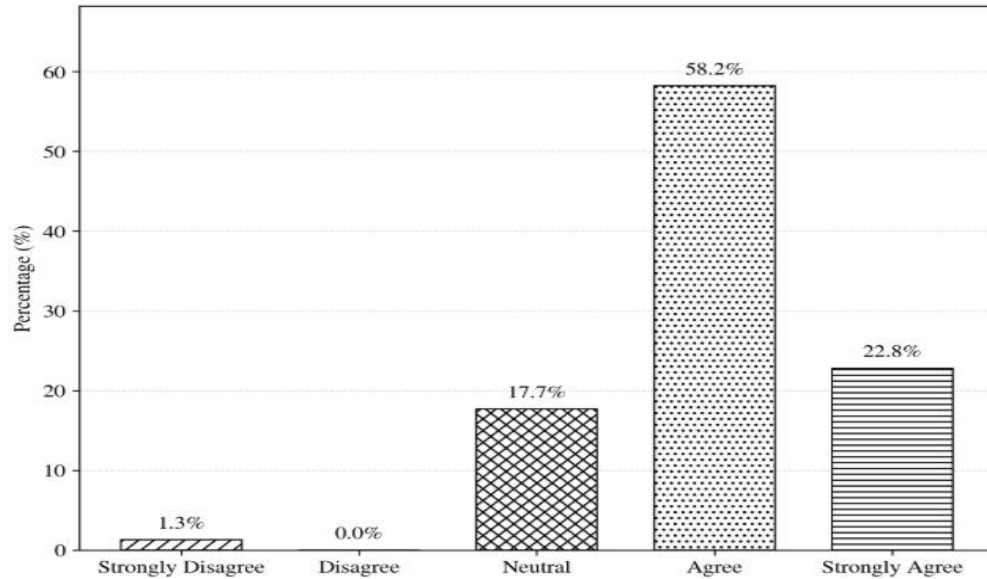


Figure (viii) Mentorship increased confidence as an entrepreneur

Out of 81 respondents, 46 (58.2%) agreed and 19 (22.8%) strongly agreed that regular mentoring increased their confidence as an entrepreneur. 14 respondents (17.7%) were neutral, while only 1 respondent (1.3%) strongly disagreed and none disagreed.

4.1.2.3 Respondents' Incubation duration

The questionnaire survey shows that 46.9% of respondents were in incubation for 3–6 months, which represents the largest group. This was followed by 25.9% who were incubated for less than 3 months, 19.8% for 6–12 months, and 7.4% for more than one year.

Category	Count	%
3-6 months	38	46.9
Less than 3 months	21	25.9
6-12 months	16	19.8
More than 1 years	6	7.4
Total	81	100

Table No:7 Incubation duration

Overall, the result indicates that most respondents had relatively short incubation periods, with 3–6 months being the most common duration. This also suggests that incubation programs should consider providing flexible and sufficiently long-term support, depending on the needs and development stage of individual startups.

4.3.1 Access to Seed Fund

4.1.3.1 Incubation helps me to receive information about grants or investment opportunities for my business.

Business grants and investment support from business incubation also influence youth lead startups as seed funding plays vital role to collect and manage various kinds of resources.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	26	32.1
Agree	45	55.6
Strongly Agree	8	9.9
Total	81	100

Table No: 8 Incubation helps to receive information about grants

The survey shows that 45 respondents (55.6%) agreed, and 8 respondents (9.9%) strongly agreed that incubation helps them receive information about grants or investment opportunities. Meanwhile, 26 respondents (32.1%) were neutral, while only 2 respondents (2.5%) strongly disagreed and none disagreed.

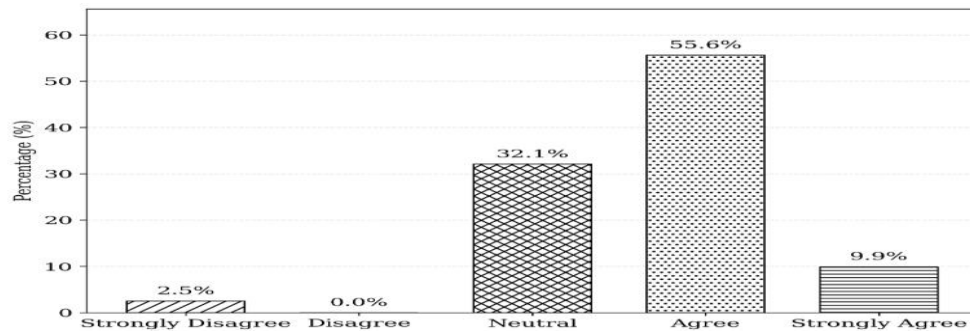


Figure (ix) Incubation helps to receive information about grants

Thus, the findings indicate that incubation plays a positive role in connecting entrepreneurs with information about grants and investment opportunities.

4.1.3.2 The incubator assisted me in preparing funding proposals and business pitch.

The responses reveal a generally positive perception of the incubator's role in supporting entrepreneurs with funding-related activities.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	1	1.2
Neutral	16	19.8
Agree	37	45.7
Strongly Agree	25	30.9
Total	81	100

Table No:9 incubation assisted in preparing funding proposal

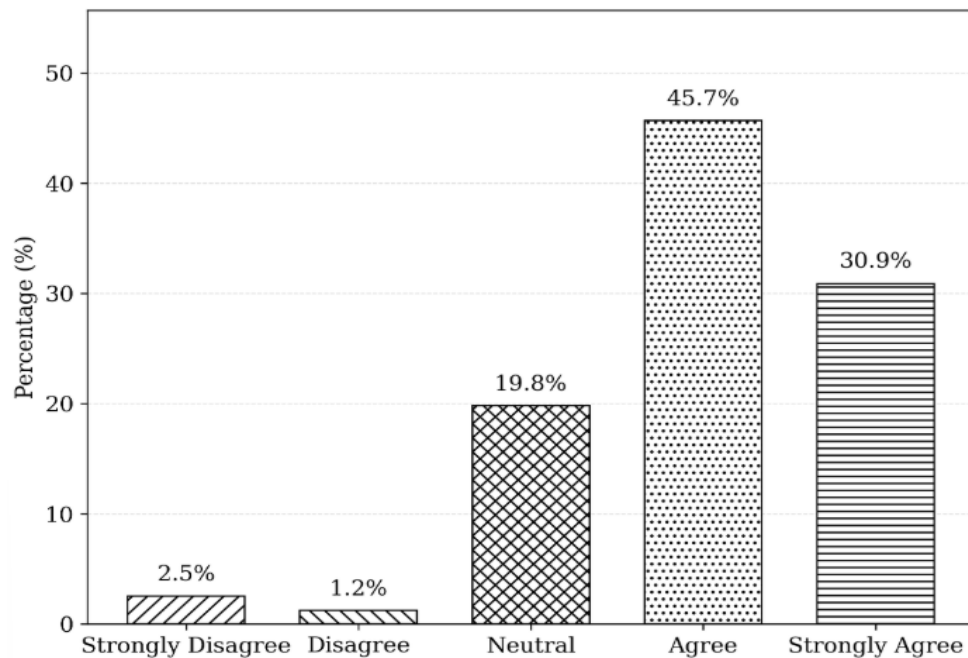


Figure (x) incubation assisted in preparing funding proposal

Among the 81 respondents, 37 (45.7%) agreed and 25 (30.9%) strongly agreed that the incubator assisted them in preparing funding proposals and business pitches. 16 respondents (19.8%) were neutral, while only 1 (1.2%) disagreed and 2 (2.5%) strongly disagreed.

Overall, the findings indicate that incubators provide useful assistance in developing funding proposals and business pitches, helping entrepreneurs communicate their business ideas more effectively to potential investors and funding sources.

4.1.3.3 The incubation program increased my chances of obtaining seed funding.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.3
Disagree	2	2.5
Neutral	16	20
Agree	32	40
Strongly Agree	30	36.2
Total	81	100

Table No:10 Incubation increased my chance of obtaining seed funds

From above table, Out of 81 respondents, 32 (40%) agreed that the program increased their chances of obtaining seed funding, while 16 (20%) were neutral.

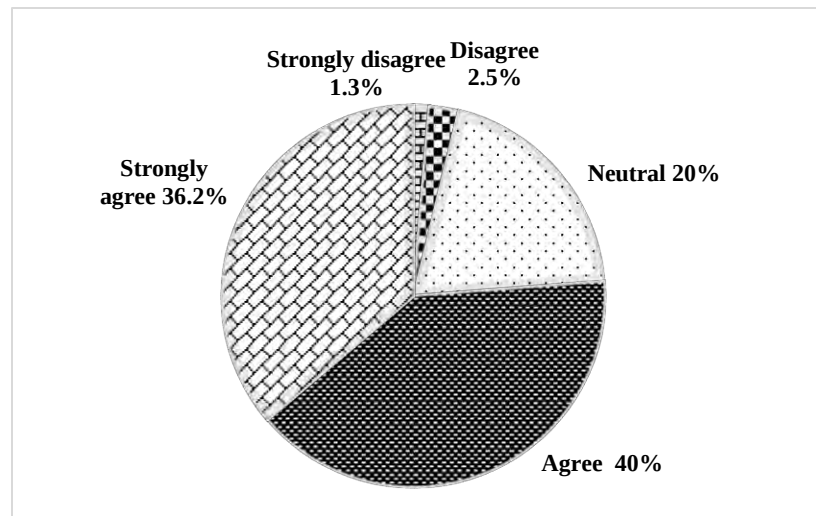


Figure (xi) Incubation increased my chance of obtaining seed fund

Only 2 respondents (2.5%) disagreed, and 1 respondent (1.3%) strongly disagreed, while 30 respondents (36.2%) strongly agreed that program increased their chances of obtaining seed funding.

Overall, the findings suggest that the incubation program has a positive role in improving entrepreneurs' chances of accessing seed funding, although a considerable proportion of respondents remained neutral.

4.4.1 Networking

4.1.4.1 The incubator connected me with industry experts and helped me to expand my business.

Networking plays an important role in the development and growth of startups. It enables entrepreneurs to connect with other entrepreneurs, industry experts, for their startup ideas. Industry experts generally pose more experience and with the good connection with them, it helps to design, modify and expand business as per need of entrepreneurs.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	2	2.5
Neutral	16	19.8
Agree	37	45.7
Strongly Agree	24	29.6
Total	81	100

Table No:11 Incubator connected with industry experts

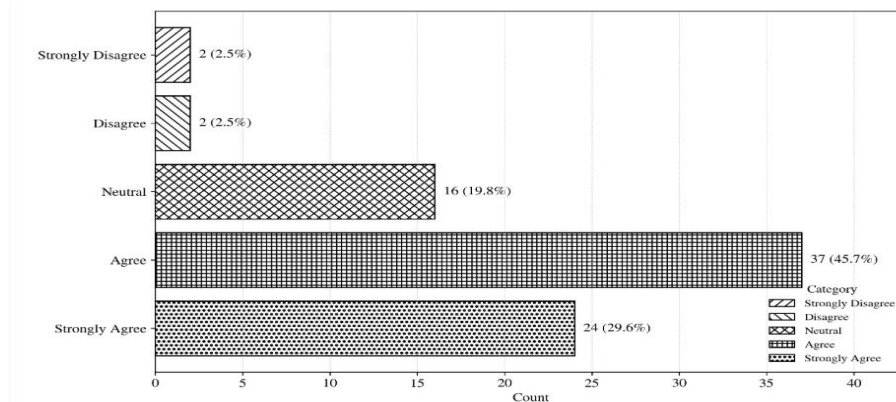


Figure (xii) Incubator connected with industry experts

The responses show a strongly positive impact of the incubator. A remarkable 45.7% of respondents agreed and 29.6% strongly agreed, meaning 75.3% overall felt that the incubator successfully connected them with industry experts and supported business expansion. Meanwhile, 19.8% remained neutral, while only a small minority expressed disagreement. Overall, the incubator appears to be building valuable industry bridges and turning connections into business growth.

4.1.4.2 The incubation program enabled me to exchange ideas and experiences with other experts and startups.

Continuous knowledge sharing sessions and good public relationships with experts also influence business growth. Experts in startups are experienced mentors, industry professionals, investors, and entrepreneurs who provide guidance and knowledge.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.2
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	19	23.5
Agree	35	43.2
Strongly Agree	26	32.1
Total	81	100

Table No :12 Incubation enabled me to exchange ideas with experts

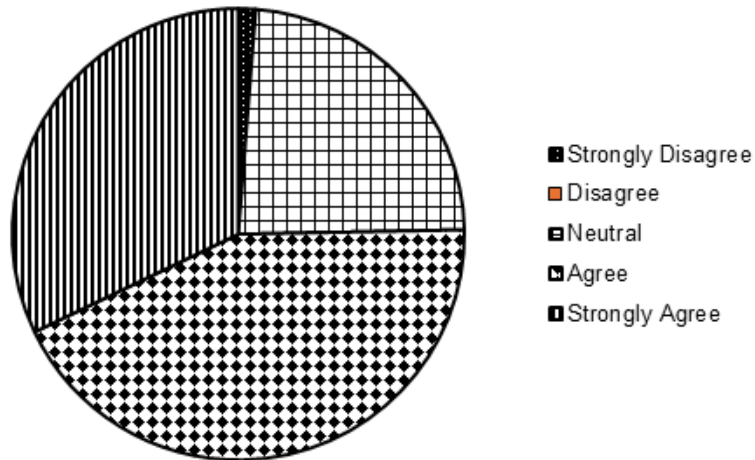


Figure (xiii) Incubation enabled me to exchange ideas

The responses reflect a strong culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration within the incubation program. A substantial 75.3% of respondents agreed (43.2%) or strongly agreed (32.1%) that the program enabled them to exchange ideas and experiences with experts and startups. While 23.5% were neutral, only 1.2% strongly disagreed.

4.1.4.3 How often did you interact with other entrepreneurs through incubation?

Business incubation is not limited to providing physical facilities or technical assistance. The frequency of interaction with other entrepreneurs is an important indicator of the networking opportunities available through an incubation program. So, this Study also tries to find that how business incubation connects people and assists in interaction for their startups.

Category	Count	%
Sometime	37	45
Often	24	30
Very often	11	13.8
Rarely	9	11.2
Total	81	100

Table No:13 Frequency of Interaction with entrepreneurs

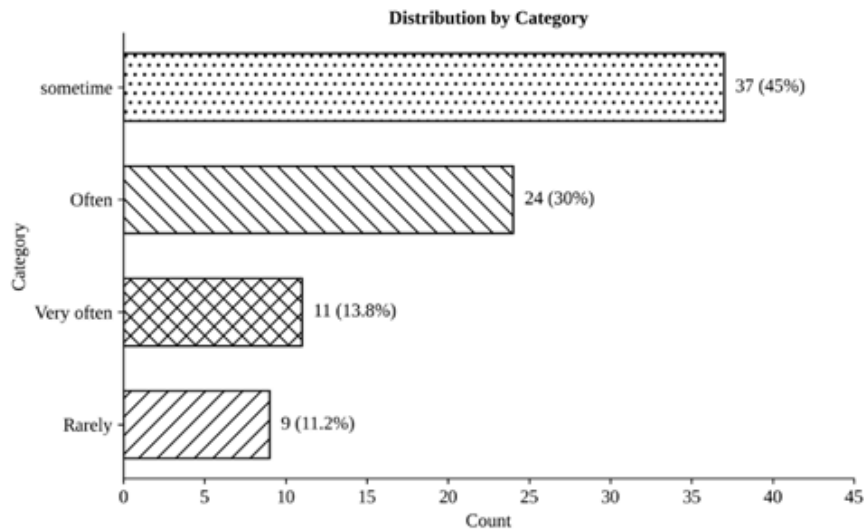


Figure (xiv) Frequency of Interaction with Entrepreneurs

The chart shows that 45% of respondents interacted with other entrepreneurs sometimes, making it the most common response. 30% interacted often, while 13.8% interacted very often category and 11.2% interacted rarely based on need only.

Overall, the result indicates that the incubation program provides a good opportunity for entrepreneurs to interact and network with one another, with most respondents having at least some level of interaction.

4.5.1 Research and development

4.1.5.1 Business incubators provide greater support for research and development to the youths for their startups.

Research and Development (R&D) support is examined as it is an important component of business incubation. It helps young entrepreneurs develop new ideas, improve existing products and services.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.2
Disagree	3	3.7
Neutral	24	29.6
Agree	41	50.6
Strongly Agree	12	14.8
Total	81	100

Table No:14 Incubation provide support for research and development

The findings reveal strong support for youth-oriented R&D through business incubations with 65.4% of respondents agreeing (50.6%) or strongly agreeing (14.8%). While 29.6% remained neutral, only 4.9% expressed disagreement regarding the statement as business incubators provide greater support for research and development to the youths for their startups.

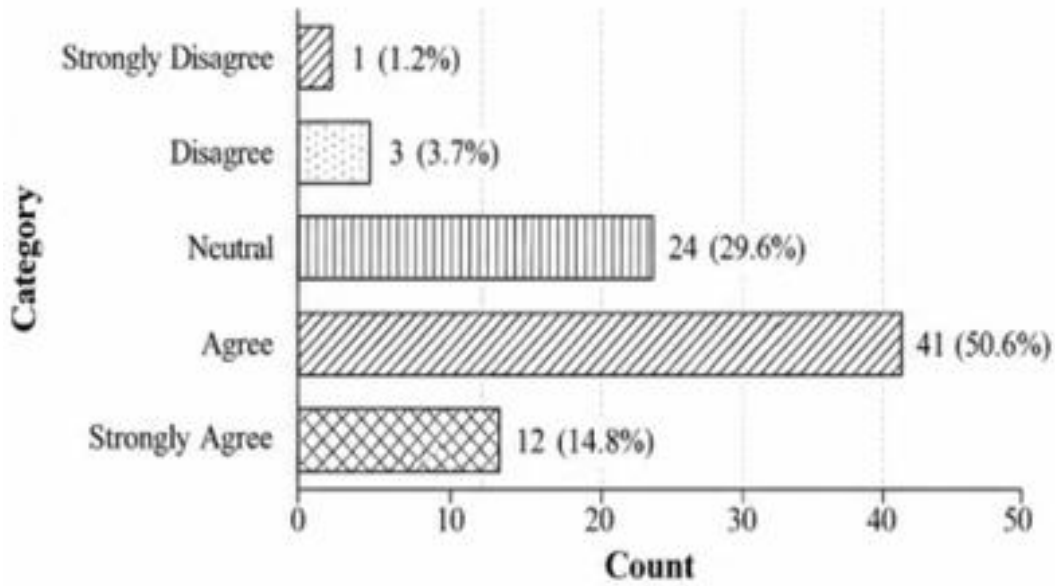


Fig (xv) Incubation provides support for research and development
Overall, incubators appear to be nurturing young innovators by turning research ideas into promising startup opportunities.

4.1.5.2 The incubator provided access to research tools and equipment needed for developing my product or service.

Access to research tools and equipment is important for startups because it helps entrepreneurs develop, test, and improve their products or services. In this study, respondents were asked whether the incubator provided the necessary research tools and equipment for product or service development. The benefit of access to research tools and equipment is clearly supported by the respondents' responses.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	3	3.7
Neutral	17	21
Agree	39	48.1
Strongly Agree	20	24.7
Total	81	100

Table No:15 Incubation provided access to research tools and equipment

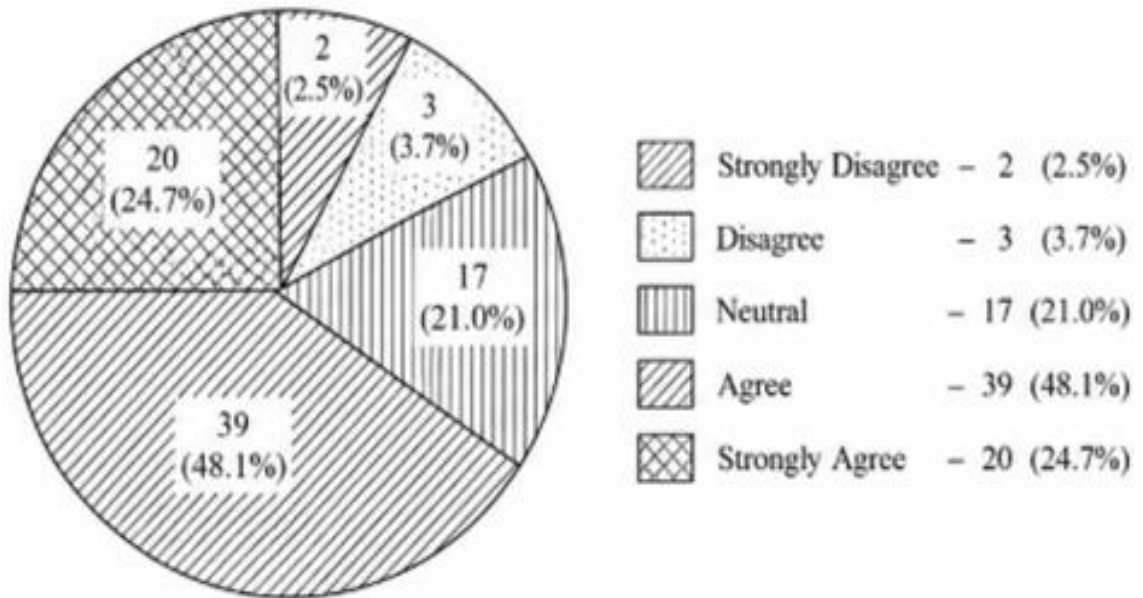


Figure (xvi) Incubation provided access to research tools and equipment

From above table and figure, out of 81 incubation participant respondents, 39 (48.1%) agreed and 20 (24.7%) strongly agreed, giving a combined 72.8% positive response. Meanwhile, 17 (21.0%) were neutral, while only 5 (6.2%) expressed disagreement. This indicates that the incubator is providing valuable research resources that help startups develop and refine their products or services.

4.1.5.3 The incubator encouraged me to do continuous research and product improvement for my Startup.

The purpose of this statement was to examine whether business incubation programs encourage youth entrepreneurs to continuously conduct research and improve their startup products or services. Continuous improvement is important for startups because it helps entrepreneurs respond to changing customer needs and improve the quality of their products or services.

Category	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.46
Disagree	3	3.70
Neutral	15	18.55
Agree	46	56.69
Strongly Agree	15	18.5
Total	81	100

Table no:16 Incubation encouraged me to do continuous research

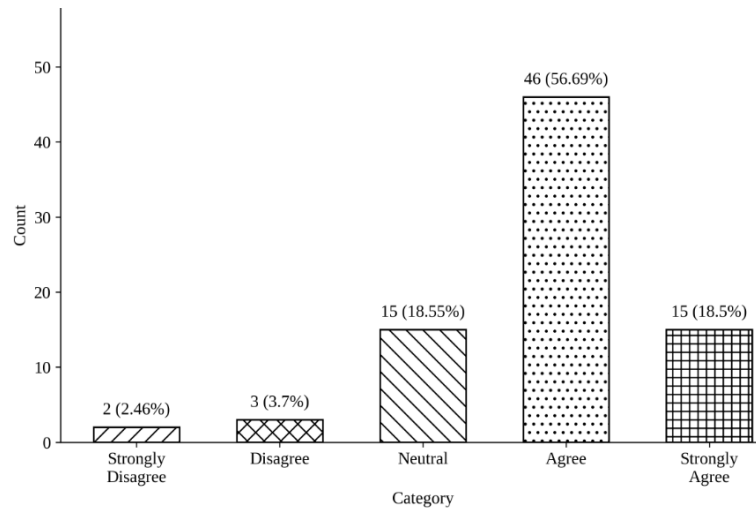


Figure: (xvii) Incubation encouraged me to do continuous research

The respondents' feedback highlights a strong inclination toward continuous innovation and improvement. A total of 75.1% of respondents expressed agreement, including 56.3% who agreed and 18.8% who strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 18.8% were neutral, indicating that the incubator is playing a positive role in motivating startups to keep researching, innovating, and improving their products over time. While only 2.46% strongly disagree and 3.7% expressed disagreement with this statement.

4.1.5.4 Main Findings

The study presents the comprehensive role and effectiveness of business incubation in supporting youth-led startups in Pokhara Valley, based on data collected through a

structured questionnaire administered to youth in the study area. The following findings therefore present both the achievements and remaining challenges of business incubation in fostering a stronger and more sustainable youth-led startup ecosystem in Pokhara Valley.

- a) Strong reach but incomplete coverage: 66.9% of surveyed Pokhara youth had already participated in a business incubation program, showing incubation is a mainstream -not marginal part of the local startup ecosystem.
- b) Mentorship is the strongest-performing pillar: 81.0% of participants agree mentoring increased their entrepreneurial confidence, and 76.6% say it improved their strategic decision-making.
- c) Networking delivers consistently high value: 75.3% were connected with industry experts and 75.3% could exchange ideas with peer startups, making networking the most uniformly positive support area.
- d) Funding support builds more readiness than it guarantees capital: 76.6% say incubators helped them prepare funding pitches, but only 62.7% (of a smaller responding subgroup) felt their actual chances of securing seed funding improved, with zero 'Strongly Agree' responses
- e) R&D support is the weakest pillar: while still net-positive (65.4%-75.0% agreement), R&D questions drew the highest share of Neutral responses, pointing to under-resourced research infrastructure in current programs.
- f) Overwhelming perceived overall impact: 78.8% of participants say incubation positively influenced their overall business growth, with the remainder saying 'Maybe' and none saying 'No'.
- g) Non-participation is driven by access, not attitude: the top reasons for not joining are lack of awareness (23.1%) and lack of time (20.5%) -- rarely disbelief in the value of incubation.
- h) Latent demand among non-participants is very high: 89.7% believe mentorship matters, 82.1% support encouraging youth to join incubation, and 97.5% would be willing to invest time if it improved performance. Most of them take incubation as platform for training for business.

- i) Near-universal support for university-incubator partnerships: 100% of responding non-participants either Agree or Strongly Agree that universities should collaborate with business incubators.
- j) Short program cycles dominate nearly half (46.9%) of participants were in a program for only 3-6 months, suggesting most incubation support in Pokhara is short-term rather than sustained.

CHAPTER: V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary of the study

The study entitled “Analyzing the Role of Business Incubation in Supporting Youth-Led Startups in Pokhara” was conducted to examine how business incubation programs support young entrepreneurs and startups in Pokhara Valley. The data show that business incubation is already a mainstream feature of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, with two-thirds of respondents having direct incubation experience. Among these participants, mentorship and networking emerged as the strongest-performing pillars of support, consistently improving confidence, decision-making and access to industry connections. Seed-funding helped participants become more investment-ready even though it did not always translate into secured funding, and R&D support while still positively rated was the least developed pillar, indicating room for stronger research infrastructure. Crucially, 78.8% of participants reported that incubation positively influenced their overall business growth, and not a single participant reported a negative impact. Among youth who had not yet joined an incubation program, the barrier was overwhelmingly practical lack of awareness or time rather than a lack of belief in incubation's value; in fact, non-participants showed almost universal enthusiasm for incubation, mentorship, and university-incubator collaboration. Peer collaboration is viewed positively by all non-participants (74.4% Yes, 25.6% Maybe, 0% No), echoing participants' own high ratings of networking value.

5.2 Conclusion

The responses of non-participants confirm and reinforce the picture painted by actual incubation participants: business incubation is perceived as valuable across the board, and the gap between who wants incubation support and who receives it is best explained by outreach and accessibility rather than by any deficit in youth entrepreneurs' interest or

belief in the model. Closing that gap through wider awareness campaigns, flexible/part-time program formats, and formal university-incubator partnerships represents the clearest and most immediately actionable opportunity to extend the demonstrated benefits of incubation to a larger share of Pokhara's youth entrepreneurial population.

Across every open/qualitative-style question, non-participants describe themselves as believers in incubation who have simply not yet been reached by it. Overall, the findings confirm that business incubation plays a substantial, largely positive role in supporting youth-led startups in Pokhara, while also revealing clear opportunities to widen access, strengthen R&D support, and extend program duration.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested to make business incubation programs more effective in supporting youth-led startups in Pokhara. The recommendations mainly focus on improving mentorship, funding access, networking, R&D facilities, awareness, and the duration of incubation support.

- a) Expand outreach campaigns (colleges, social media, local youth forums) to raise awareness of existing incubation programs, since lack of awareness is the top barrier to participation.
- b) Design flexible, part-time incubation tracks to accommodate students and working youth who currently cite lack of time as a barrier.
- c) Strengthen the seed-funding pipeline by formalizing investor connections and follow-up support after pitch preparation, not just pitch-readiness training.
- d) Invest in R&D infrastructure -- labs, prototyping tools, research partnerships -- since this pillar shows the highest neutral/undecided responses.\
- e) Formalize university-incubator partnerships given the near-unanimous support for this from non-participants.
- f) Track post-incubation outcomes (revenue, funding raised, survival rate) to convert perceived impact into measurable, evidence-based impact data.

- g) Extend program duration beyond the common 3–6-month cycle to allow deeper mentoring relationships and measurable business outcomes.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Project work survey -Analyzing the Role of Business Incubation in Supporting Youth -Lead Startups in Pokhara

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a research project entitled "Analyzing the Role of Business Incubation in Supporting Youth-Led Startups in Pokhara." The purpose of this study is to examine how business incubation services contribute to the growth and development of youth-led startups in Pokhara.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic research purposes. No personal information will be disclosed in any report or publication.

Thank you for your valuable participation.

Regards

Nitu Pun, BBA - 6th Semester

NTHMC

Name (Optional):

1. Age

a. Below 20 years

b.20–24 years

c.30–34 years

d.35 years and above

2. Gender

a. Male b. Female c. Other

3. Highest Level of Education (the degree you hold)
- a. Secondary Education (SEE)
 - b. Bachelor's Degree
 - b. Higher Secondary (+2)
 - d. Master's Degree
4. Areas of Startups
- a. Information Technology
 - b. Tourism and Hospitality
 - c. Agriculture
 - d. Manufacturing retail and Trade
 - e) Creative Industries
5. Have you participated in any business incubation program before?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Which Session did you perceive as the most valuable for your business?
- a. Mentorship
 - b. Business Training
 - c. Funding Support
 - d. Networking Events
 - e. Legal Support
 - f. Marketing Support
 - g. Co-working Space
 - h. Technical Support
 - i. Investor Pitching
 - j. Others _____

A.Mentorship

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
7. The incubator provided valuable business mentoring.	0	0	0	0	0
8. Mentors helped me to improve my decision-making ability regarding Startup Strategies.	0	0	0	0	0
9. Regular mentoring increased my confidence as an entrepreneur through improving my management skill.	0	0	0	0	0

10. How long did you participate in the incubation program?

- a. Less than 3 months
- b. 2-6 months
- c. 6 - 12 months
- d. More than 1 year

B. Access to Seed Funding

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
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Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
11. Incubation helps me to receive information about grants or investment opportunities for my business.	0	0	0	0	0
12. The incubator assisted me in preparing funding proposals and business pitch.	0	0	0	0	0
13. The incubation program increased my chances of obtaining seed funding.	0	0	0	0	0

C. Networking

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
14. The incubator connected me with industry experts and helped me to expand my business.	0	0	0	0	0

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
15. The incubation program enabled me to exchange ideas and experiences with other experts and startups.	0	0	0	0	0

16. How often did you interact with other entrepreneurs through incubation?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometime
- d. Often
- e. Very Often

D. Research and Development (R&D) Support

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
17. Business incubators provide greater support for research and development to the youths for their startups.	0	0	0	0	0

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
18. The incubator provided access to research tools and equipment needed for developing my product or service.	o	o	o	o	o
19. The incubator encouraged me to do continuous research and product improvement for my Startup.	o	o	o	o	o

Section E: Challenges and Recommendations

20. Do the incubation programs positively influence your business growth overall with the help of mentorship, networking and funding opportunities?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

21. In your opinion, what improvements should be made to business incubation programs to better support youth entrepreneurs in Pokhara?

22. What were the major challenges you experienced while participating in the business incubation program?

if No!

22. What is the main reason you have not participated in a business incubation program?

- a. I was not aware of business incubation programs.
- b. I did not know how to apply.

- c. There were no suitable incubation programs available.
- d. I did not meet the eligibility requirements.
- e. I lacked time to participate.
- f. My business did not require incubation support.
- g. I preferred to develop my business independently.
- h. The incubation program location was not convenient.
- i. I was concerned about the time commitment.
- j. I did not think the program would benefit my business.

23. What do you think about Business incubation actually as a normal citizen?

24. Do you know about mentorship, and do you believe mentorship is important for the success of youth-led startups?

- a. Yes, I know, and believe as a important for startups
- b. No, I don't Know
- c. Uncertain`
- d. Other

25. If research and development support were available, how likely would you use it?

- a. Very Unlikely
- b. Unlikely
- c. Neutral / Not Sure
- d. Likely
- e. Very Likely

26. Do you believe collaboration with other entrepreneurs can improve business performance?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe
- d. Uncertainty

27. How important is seed funding during the early stage of a startup?

- a. Not Important

- b. Slightly Important
- c. Moderately Important
- d. Important
- e. Very Important

28. Do you believe young entrepreneurs in Pokhara should be encouraged to participate in business incubation programs?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. May be

29. Would you be willing to invest your time in a business incubation program if it could improve your startup's performance?

- a. Definitely not
- b. Probably not
- c. Not Sure
- d. Probably Yes
- e. Definitely Yes