

Demystifying the Entrepreneurial Landscape in Zimbabwe SME Sector

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship has become a ubiquitous phenomenon in Zimbabwe following a post 2000 economic recession leading to apparent confusion regarding the ideal character of entrepreneurship in the capital, Harare. This study aimed to demystify the concept of entrepreneurship in Harare through interrogating 15 heterogeneous entrepreneurs in Harare through interviews and field observations. The study was aimed at examining the behavioural profiles of entrepreneurs; identify the motivating factors for entrepreneurship; and establish the ideal profiles that would enhance the opportunities of entrepreneurs in Harare. The results indicated that current entrepreneurs in Harare defy conventional wisdom regarding entrepreneurship given that they are unregistered, of no fixed above, inconsistent, predatory and copy cats of preexisting businesses. Most entrepreneurs were motivated by economic necessity to enter the fray; ideal entrepreneurship would require the ventures to be registered, to be innovative and embrace an entrepreneurial culture that is currently missing. In this vein, the government was urged to enhance the ease of doing business relative to venture registration and financing and future researchers urged to expand the scope of their inquiry towards other cities other than Harare.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, autonomy

Introduction

Entrepreneurship represents a higher-order business approach with positive and far-reaching socio-economic consequences (Odora, 2015). Globally, most governments have shifted from supporting large corporations towards supporting successful entrepreneurial endeavours in small scale enterprises. Thus, the term entrepreneurship is not new within the business world but confusion still reigns regarding the ideal characteristics of entrepreneurship particularly within the context of the small to medium (SME) business sector in emerging economies like Zimbabwe. Thus, in spite of the validity of entrepreneurship in tackling Zimbabwe's socio-economic challenges, we have little comprehension of the current scope of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe, where it has assumed a pivotal role in the country's economic renaissance following the post 2000 collapse of most conventional businesses that hitherto absorbed the growing number of job seekers (Nyoni, 2018; Mukorera, 2016). Mazikana (2019) adds that entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe followed the collapse of large scale corporations post 2008. Derera et al., (2020) note that developing countries contend with various challenges encompassing high unemployment, political instability, droughts, famine and inflation among others and this underlines the drive towards entrepreneurship. Chekenyi (2016) opines that while the entrepreneurship used to operate on the basis of a survival mode incorporating the

activities of small scale operators like vendors and shoe repairers, to date, it touches upon the activities of professionals encompassing economists, teachers and the like who are in search of means of survival.

The World Bank (2019) asserts that the number of people in Zimbabwe who survive on less than \$1.90 per day has increased from 29% in 2018 to 34% in 2019. The World Bank (2012) add that since 1980, Zimbabwe has been characterised by socio-economic disruptions with adverse consequences upon the well-being of ordinary Zimbabweans. Derera et al., (2020) agree that the pinnacle of the country’s economic challenges was 2008 when the GDP fell to -17.7% though the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2008 assuaged the situation. However, there has been a gradual economic downturn since then such that the GDP fell from 3.5% in 2018 to -8.3% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). As elsewhere entrepreneurship bears strong linkages to the SME sector which constitute a major driving force behind most global economies (Schmiemann, 2008).

In Zimbabwe, entrepreneurship is deeply rooted within the SME sector which has been considered the engine of economic growth. SMEs are dotted across all economic sectors and geographical regions of the country as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

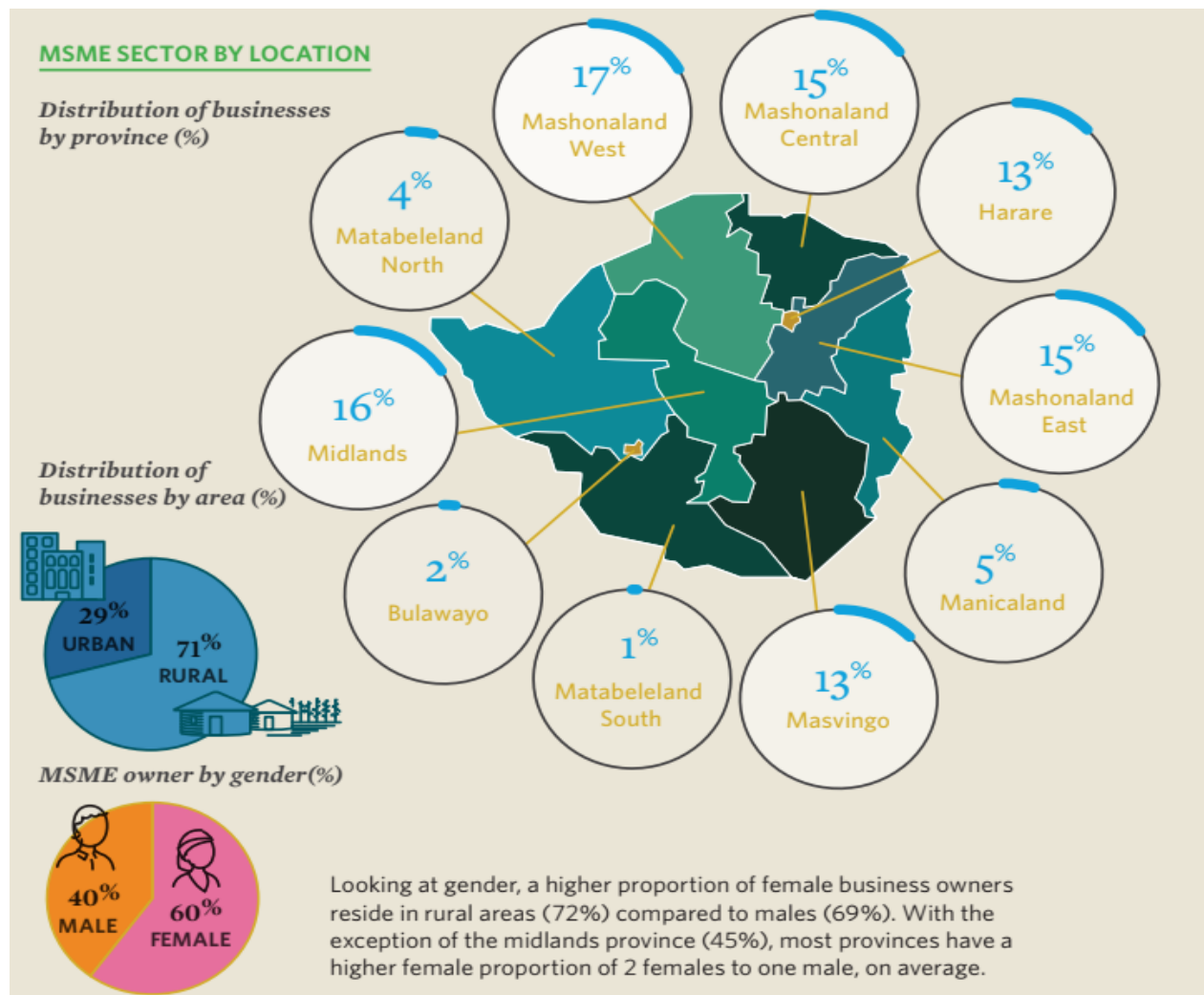


Figure 1: Statistical dispersal of SMEs in Zimbabwe

Source: Finscope (2022)

The above indicates that entrepreneurship is a nationwide phenomenon. Chigora et al., (2018) argue that SMEs represent the major drivers of employment creation, economic growth and the social fibre in developed countries in Europe where they contribute 60% of the GDP. Entrepreneurship within the context of the SME sector enables the poor to assist themselves in meeting their daily consumption needs thereby uplifting the conditions of the poor and marginalised (Chigwenya and Mudzengerere, 2013). The World Bank (2020) concurs that the SME sector in Zimbabwe employs over 60% of the working population while also accounting for 40% GDP. The growth of the SME sector in Zimbabwe follows government initiatives through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Community and Small and Medium Enterprise Development which seeks to ensure a guided approach to entrepreneurship in SMEs and availed a range of support schemes as well as eased the process of starting new businesses (ILO, 2020). Given the need for economic diversification, the Zimbabwe government has demonstrated increasing legislative preference for the SME sector (through the SMEs Act Chapter 24:12) which has become the seedbed for various forms of entrepreneurship (Samudzimu and Munkumba, 2022; Makanyeza et al., 2023). Thus, the proliferation of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe rides upon favourable government policies towards small businesses (Samudzimu and Munkumba, 2022; Makanyeza et al., 2023).

The UNDP (2018) adds that the SME sector has grown exponentially from around 10% in 1980 to over 70% in 2008 and it is characterised by new and never-seen-before economic activities. SMEs constitute over 80% of the private sector in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Chamber of Commerce, 2023). Their critical contribution is evident in that they account for US\$8.58 billion GDP contribution and 6 million employees (Sibanda et al., 2018). The demise of the formal economy in 2009 culminated in record inflation, hence entrepreneurship became a survival strategy for thousands of retrenched employees (Kanyenze et al., 2018; Shonhiwa and Murangwa, 2017). Chigwenya and Mudzengerere (2013) argue that in Zimbabwe entrepreneurship is evident within the informal sector which was considered a sub-economic sector until 1972 when it became fully recognised following the efforts of the ILO. The continued growth of the SME sector in Zimbabwe is driven by large scale de-industrialisation as well as higher numbers of university graduates who cannot be accommodated by existing formal businesses (Marondedze, 2019; Matsongoni and Mutambara, 2021).

SMEs have become a safety net in which most Zimbabweans have discovered a means of survival (Nyathi et al., 2018) given higher graduate unemployment rates above 74% (Lloyds Bank, 2020; Ugaro, 2019; Yusof et al., 2013; Moyo, 2016; Masekesa and Chibaya, 2014). Lloyds Bank (2020) opines that only 5% of workers in Zimbabwe are formally employed. The World Bank (2020) agree that given the tripling inflation rate (737%) that pushed up food price increases by 725% contributing to severe purchasing power loss by June 2020, entrepreneurship seems perhaps the only way out for most Zimbabweans. Thus, most entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe are opportunity-based entrepreneurs who perceived that the post 2000 economic slowdown presented a perfect business opportunity worth capitalizing on (Ernst and Young, 2009). Nyoni (2018) agrees that the economic recession favoured the "naturally innovative temperament of entrepreneurs" in Zimbabwe. Conversely, Zimbabwe bears the hallmarks of necessity-based entrepreneurship in which necessity coerced individuals to become entrepreneurs (Salami, 2011). In this case, individuals did not choose to become entrepreneurs but were literally compelled by circumstances such as death of breadwinners, economic hardship and poverty among others (Nyoni, 2018). Thus, entrepreneurship was a survival strategy.

Nyoni (2018) contends that most entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe are necessity-based ones hence they lack a basic understanding of entrepreneurship and are devoid of the requisite entrepreneurial orientation which explains why most businesses die in their embryonic stage. Dabale and Masese (2014) opine that Zimbabwe's higher education curriculum does not unequivocally promote entrepreneurship and this explains why a few graduates actually own and run businesses. Thus, due to economic desperation, some graduates have started registered businesses and very few have actually quit their jobs in preference of business startups (Nyoni, 2018). Gunhidzirai (2017) adds that informal entrepreneurship is a ubiquitous mechanism for poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe. Thebe (2015) alludes to street entrepreneurship as a survivalist rather than a growth-oriented strategy in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Mazikana (2023) argues that the most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the ability to start a new business hence entrepreneurship varies in scope and size as well as quality. Entrepreneurship consists the selling of goods or services in public spaces (ILO, 2002). Most scholars (Alemu, 2018; Munyoro et al., 2016) contend that despite advances in tertiary education in Zimbabwe, the entrepreneurial culture seems missing among Zimbabweans.

Although the scope of entrepreneurship seems to be increasing due to harsh economic circumstances (Derera, 2015), most entrepreneurs are concentrated within the informal sector in Zimbabwe. Moyo and Kawewe (2002) agree that more often entrepreneurship in emerging economies is born out of desperation which subjects the incumbents to oppression and inhuman working conditions. Hence, micro enterprises in Zimbabwe have for long been associated with ignominy and human suffering (Derera et al., 2020). Thus, mapping ways through which the potential of entrepreneurship can be unlocked forms the essence of economic growth and development in Zimbabwe.

Empirical evidence, therefore, demonstrates that there are various manifestations of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe's SME sector that seem to debunk the myths surrounding entrepreneurship in general. Thus, entrepreneurship manifests itself in various forms touching upon the activities of unregistered small-scale businesses to registered large-scale registered corporations which creates confusion as to what entrepreneurship really entails in the context of the SME sector. Most enterprises in Zimbabwe are informal, small and unstructured in form, thereby, debunking the concept of entrepreneurship when viewing entrepreneurs from a western lens. It is for this reason that Zimbabwe seems to have demystified the concept of entrepreneurship if evidence from various SMEs is anything to go by. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the entrepreneurial posture among Zimbabwe's Harare-based SME sector.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: The article first provides an overview of empirical literature on entrepreneurship from a global, regional and local perspective. It first defines the key terms used in the study before it discusses the theoretical conceptions of entrepreneurship and ends with a review of existing empirical evidence on entrepreneurship. Thereafter, it presents the methodology, results and conclusion on the subject of inquiry. It ends with recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

Conceptualising entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a term that exhibits lack of definitional consensus (Ferreira et al, 2017; Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013). It's therefore a transdisciplinary term and within the context of Africa, there exists no direct translation of entrepreneurship (Ndiweni and Van Verhoeven,

2013). Originally attributed to John Baptiste Say from the French term *Entreprendre*, entrepreneurship relates to venturesomeness in which individuals seize opportunities to make profits while assuming inherent risks (Say, 1803). It has been defined in terms of different theoretical approaches encompassing economic, managerial, behavioural, personality traits, psychodynamics, cognitive and sociological perspectives (Ferreira et al., 2017; Ndoro and Van Niekerk, 2019).

Economic perspective

In terms of the economic theory of production, entrepreneurs organise and efficiently exploit factors of production to accelerate economic growth in terms of income epitomised by rent, profit, wages and interest on factors of production (Naude, 2010; Say, 1803). Central to economic entrepreneurial discourse are contributions by thinkers like Joseph Schumpeter, Israel Kirzner and Frank Knight who contend that entrepreneurs are economic gap fillers. They apply their capabilities to identify, evaluate and exploit economic opportunities within the context of risk (Kirzner, 1973). Entrepreneurs stimulate and lead the quest for and the identification of economic information related to new techniques, markets and goods (Schumpeter, 1934). Schumpeter (1954) associates entrepreneurship with autonomy, creative joy and willingness to succeed. These views correlate with Timmons (2000) who opines that entrepreneurs establish businesses for profitability and business growth, hence they create and seize business opportunities regardless of the resources at their disposal. Odora (2015) opines that entrepreneurship involves an opportunity to exercise creative freedoms, higher self-esteem and greater sense of control. Mwenje (2018) asserts that entrepreneurship resonates with the recognition, discovery and creation of new value in the society. It resonates with activities that introduce novelty and innovation in terms of new products, new work practices, new services and new venture creations (Ferreira et al., 2017, Storey and Greene, 2010, Schumpeter, 1942). This perspective characterises entrepreneurship in terms of (1) opportunity creation due to imagination, incremental innovation and creativity; (2) entrepreneurial alertness; (3) information search; (4) embrace of knowledge, skills and experience to address uncertainty; (5) risk assumptions and management of resources to achieve profit (Storey and Greene, 2010; Ferreira et al, 2017).

Sociological perspective

According to sociologists, the individual propensity to engage in entrepreneurship is determined by the social context in which they live (Westhead et al., 2011; Storey and Greene, 2010). Thus, both internal and external factors shape as well as constrain the behaviour of entrepreneurs (Westhead et al., 2011). In addition, given subjective norms, the dominant values from close associate often result into expectation resulting in one getting entrepreneurial (Westhead et al., 2011). Correspondingly, social contexts determine one's access to resources leading to entrepreneurial decisions or inaction (Westhead et al., 2011).

Psychological approach

It views entrepreneurship from a trait perspective wherein entrepreneurs are risk takers, have a strong need for achievement, autonomous and have a locus of control (Kuratko et al, 2015; In terms of the same approach there is still unending debate on whether entrepreneurs are born or made (Westhead et al., 2011; Ndoro and Van Niekerk, 2019).

Psychodynamic perspective

It considers the dark side of entrepreneurship and projects entrepreneurs as highly complex individuals (Ferreira et al., 2017; Ndoro and Van Niekerk, 2019). It argues that entrepreneurship can result from both negative and positive externalities (Westhead et al, 2011). In the same vein, people may become entrepreneurs due to marginalisation hence they exhibit deviant personalities (Ndoro and Van Niekerk, 2019; Westhead et al, 2011). This indicates the role of socio-economic deprivation in fostering entrepreneurial behaviours (De Vries, 1977; Ndoro and Van Niekerk, 2019).

Behavioural perspective

The behaviourists Weber and McClelland (1961) contend that entrepreneurs exhibit a unique value system that underlies their conduct. They concur with economic theorists that entrepreneurship touches upon innovation, independence and business leadership through the exercise of control over production (Nyoni, 2018). Mintzberg (1978) perceives entrepreneurship from a management point of view as they control the behaviour of others within their social and operational context. Cheater (1989) offers a social perspective on entrepreneurship in which they constitute cultural dissidents who breach cultural norms and values in pursuit of their self-interest. Kennedy (1988) explains why immigrants often succeed as entrepreneurs given their lack of moral obligations to the norms and values that apply to the natives. In line with this reasoning, certain social groups produce more entrepreneurial events and value entrepreneurship compared to others (Kennedy, 1988).

Authentic entrepreneurship involves the discovery and pursuit of opportunities (Grecu and Denes, 2017). It is about opportunity seeking, creation of new opportunities and the development and exploitation of a wide range of effects (Kaburi et al, 2012; Munyoro et al, 2016). Wang (2016) views entrepreneurship from the perspective of newness of markets, products, services, production processes and use of raw materials. Entrepreneurs are subject to risk and uncertainty in their quest for profit hence they pursue opportunities regardless of the resources available (Dumbu, 2014; Munyoro et al, 2014).

The study drew from the above frameworks on entrepreneurship in its exploration of the aspect of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe's SME sector. Suffice to say that entrepreneurship involves a sense of innovation based on market opportunity identification and responding to such opportunities in creative ways. This involves a sense of risk bearing in anticipation of profit. It entails the unique and innovative configuration of resources in business venturing to capitalise on market opportunities. Thus, implied in our definition of entrepreneurship are key terms which encompass the design, launch, running, risk taking and profit making business orientations. Entrepreneurship entails the designing, launching and running of new businesses while also bearing all the risks associated with the business with the ultimate view of profit making. In terms of designing, we assume that entrepreneurs are great thinkers characterised by innovation and originality of thought. What follows is the product launch where the idea is turned into an enterprise. Running involves giving traction to the enterprise on the basis of functional integration and product delivery as promised. Given the inevitability of risk owing to the dynamic business environment, entrepreneurship also entails risk management to safeguard profits. Thus, profit is the endgame in entrepreneurship.

Ideally, entrepreneurs exhibit an entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in terms of exhibiting various entrepreneurial postures encompassing the ability to innovate, proactivity, risk taking,

autonomy, opportunity identification, creativity in the face of challenges, generation of results, resource mobilization, self-motivation among other dominant styles and patterns of behaviour. In this sense, this study adopts Shane and Venkantaraman (2000) observation that “entrepreneurship does not require, but may include, the creation of a new organisation.”

What is the SME sector?

There exists no consensus on the concept of SMEs which vary according to region or country (Chivasa, 2014). This indicates the absence of a universally accepted definition of SME. In general, SMEs are defined in terms of the number of employees, annual turnover and total assets and there is diverse terminology used in the definition of entrepreneurship. Citing the case of the EU, Berisha and Pula (2015) define SMEs as businesses with employees below 250 and having an annual turnover below €50 million. Herr and Nettkoven, (2017) agree that in the UK, SMEs are micro enterprises with limited human capital. In Malaysia, Gamage et al., (2020) consider SMEs to be heterogeneous survivalist independent operators. USAID (2009) argue that in South Africa they are historically disadvantaged enterprises with revenue thresholds below R20 million annually. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Association of SMEs define SMEs as small businesses with a turnover below US\$240 000 annually and they also have to be formally registered. In terms of the Finance Act, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) defines SMEs as small businesses with between 10 and 75 employees and an annual turnover of between US\$50 000 and US\$2 million while also being formally registered. Makanyeza et al., (2023) define SMEs as owner-managed enterprises employing relatively small financial and human capital to engage in different businesses. This is the definition that the current study adopts.

Theories of entrepreneurship

McClelland- the need for achievement theory

The theory contends that once individuals are adequately motivated by higher needs for achievement through various initiatives such as entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurial education or mere necessity they are more likely to set up their businesses (Nwokolo, 2015). Correspondingly, Woodside et al., (2015) concurs that the need for achievement, power and affiliation often compels human beings to excel in any activities and more often, this results from either education or experience (Qiao, 2017). Thus, in terms of this theory, the longing for achievement underlies entrepreneurship. Woodside et al., (2015) add that the unique psychological characteristics of entrepreneurs resonate with moderate risk partiality, internal locus of control, innovativeness and responsible decision making.

Ajzen’s Theory of planned behaviour

The theory argues that entrepreneurial intention or behaviour is a form of premediated behaviour that follows relevant behavioural information (Ajzen, 2012). It adds that both social and personal factors are essential antecedents of entrepreneurial behaviour. In addition, social pressure (subjective norms) compel individuals to engage in entrepreneurship (Jaen and Linan, 2012). In addition, entrepreneurship is dependent upon perceived behavioural control which relates to individual perceptions of their own abilities to excel at selected business pursuits (Oosterlinck, 2016).

Empirical literature review

The researchers turned to more general entrepreneurship literature regarding entrepreneurship behaviours to advance our comprehension of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has been assessed in terms of traits (Schiebel, 2005); identities (Vesala and Vesala, 2010); skills (McElwee, 2008); goals and values (Niska et al., 2012); attitudes (Rosairo and Potts, 2016; Morris et al, 2017) and mindsets (Chipfupa and Wale, 2017; Bhula et al., 2018). In the UK, Blanchflower and Shadforth (2007) and in Spain, Garcia-Perrera and Roman (2019) perceive entrepreneurship in terms of self-employment. In Canada, Hebert and Link (2011) view entrepreneurship from a purely economic perspective. The paper quotes that such economic perceptions of entrepreneurship can be traced back to French scholars like Cantillon, Quesnay and Jean Baptiste Say; English classical economists like Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and Alfred Marshal; German philosophers like Von Thunen and Von Mangoldt; Austrian scholars such as Josef Schumpeter and Carl Menger and American scholars like Francis Walker and Frank Knight. In this vein, the genesis of European and US entrepreneurship are located within the realm of the capitalist industrial revolution and its emphasis on the classic theory of profit. Western modern 20th century conceptions of entrepreneurs resonate with the recreation or revolutionizing the pattern of production through new inventions. In terms of this reasoning, typical entrepreneurs encompass the legendary Italian merchant Marco Polo, Andrew Carnegie of the US steel industry, Edward Harriman who reorganized the US railroad industry and John Morgan who reorganized the US banking system. In the USA, Reynolds (2011) view entrepreneurs from the perspective of distinctive personality traits, high growth and capitalization, innovation and innovativeness, opportunity recognition and business creation. Overall western conceptions of entrepreneurship are based on corporate entrepreneurship where entrepreneurs are innovative, proactive, risk taking, autonomous and competitively aggressive individuals.

In general, entrepreneurship literature indicates the value of causal and effectual behaviours in influencing commercial outcomes (Yu et al., 2018; Smolka et al., 2018). Causal entrepreneurial behaviours encompass predictive and goal oriented activities that create value (Chandler et al., 2011). On the contrary, effectual entrepreneurial behaviours revolve around non-predictive value creation premised upon capitalizing on opportunities available at the moment thereby allowing for swift adjustment in relation to environmental changes amidst resource constraints (Shirokova et al., 2020). Most studies on these entrepreneurial behaviours have targeted high technology and higher income western settings (Cai et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2018; Ruiz-Jimenez et al., 2020; Brettel et al., 2012). These contexts substantially differ in terms of entrepreneurship in emerging economies like Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, Munyoro and Phiri (2020) examine the significance of entrepreneurial culture among university students in Zimbabwe. The study notes that universities are seedbeds for entrepreneurship but the entrepreneurship culture is not yet well established. In the same vein, Manyise, Denton and Trienekens (2023) concur that the entrepreneurial behaviours of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe differ in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. The survey indicated the heterogeneous entrepreneurial character of the farmers as some were non-entrepreneurial while others were either goal-driven, means driven or ambidextrous. Chigwenya and Mudzengerere (2013) opine that given the unorthodox character of most SMEs in Zimbabwe, the SMEs Act was promulgated to mainstream most informal sector activities into the formal economy. In a survey examining entrepreneurship cultures among SMEs in Zimbabwe, Chivasa (2014) notes the non-existence of an entrepreneurial culture among SMEs in Bulawayo. The study notes that in the context of an economic crisis, failure to invest in

research and development and lack of ambidexterity constrain SMEs' ability to respond to dynamics customer needs.

The above analysis indicates extensive scholarly interest on the subject of entrepreneurship but few studies, if any, have actually attempted to clarify the concept with specific reference to Zimbabwe's SME sector, particularly those in Harare. These studies fail to capture the essence of entrepreneurship in relation to broader conceptions of entrepreneurship. They have largely failed to delve into the intricacies of entrepreneurship within Harare's SME sector which is diverse and complex in nature. These evident knowledge gaps constrain the development of effective strategies and policy instrument for fostering entrepreneurial behaviours in Harare, Zimbabwe. To address this gap, the current study seeks to achieve the following overarching objectives:

1. To establish the current behavioural profiles of entrepreneurs in Harare's SME sector as compared to global literature
2. To identify the factors influencing the entrepreneurial decision among SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe
3. To establish possible behaviours that entrepreneurs require to achieve their business goals in Harare, Zimbabwe

By examining the entrepreneurial behaviour of Zimbabwe's Harare-based SME sector, the current study makes important contributions to entrepreneurial literature. It firstly constructs typologies of entrepreneurship within resource-limited settings in sub Saharan Africa. It also offers the rationale to tailor entrepreneurship-specific responses within the context of emerging economies like Zimbabwe.

Methodology

The study was premised on the interpretivism philosophy that seeks to interpret the subjective experiences of selected study participants. This points towards the phenomenology strategy which focused on a smaller sample of participants who articulated their experiences of entrepreneurship. Tassone (2017) contends that phenomenology enables respondent experiences to be elucidated from different perspectives. This explains the adoption of methodological triangulation premised on in-depth key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Phenomenology is based on the belief that reality is subjective while being entrenched within changing and complex settings (Saunders et al, 2016). The study adopted a qualitative paradigm in seeking to collect non numeric data on the subjective experiences of entrepreneurs in Harare, Zimbabwe. Thus, data is collected in Harare (which epitomised the entrepreneurial sector in Zimbabwe being the capital city) from 15 purposively selected participants to gain insights into entrepreneurial activities. The study participants selected were involved in one kind of entrepreneurial activity and were owner-managed enterprises employing relatively small financial and human capital. The sample size was determined by the point of data saturation and this was achieved at 15 participants. The collected data was analysed through qualitative data analysis which encompasses coding and writing themes that emerge from the study results. Thus, labelling and coding enables the researcher to promptly access all texts associated with a given theme as well as allow for comparison (Munyoro, 2014). Siedel's (1998) model which focuses on Noticing, Collecting and Thinking regarding interesting things is adopted for this study. Thus, the researcher assigned codes to the data that emerged from the themes and these were later fragmented. The codes acted at information sorting and collecting devices in line with Munyoro (2014). The write up involved a summary

of the collected data presented in the form of narratives supported by verbatim quotes. To render the research ethical, the researcher observed rights to self-determination, confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and voluntary participation in line with observations by Saunders et al., (2012); Bond, 2003).

Results and discussion

Sample participant characteristics

Table 1: Individual participant characteristics.

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
RESPONDENT AGE GROUP		
Below 20 years	3	19
20 – 40 years	10	68
40 – 60 years	2	13
RESPONDENT SEX		
Male	10	63
Female	5	37
Qualification		
Uneducated	3	20
Grade 7	4	23
O/A level	4	23
Diploma/Certification	3	20
University Degree	1	14

Table 1 shows that in terms of age, most participants (68%) were middle aged (20-40 years) while 19% were below 20 years and the rest (13%) over 40 years of age. This indicates that entrepreneurship cuts across all age categories in Harare. Blanchflower (2000) concur that most entrepreneurs are middle aged. In terms of gender, most (63%) of the participants were male as compared to 37% female. Akuegwu and Nwi-ue (2016) concur that most entrepreneurs are male due to breadwinner responsibilities though Binder and Coad, 2013) note that most entrepreneurs are female. Relative to educational status, most participants (34%) had a tertiary qualification (degree, diploma or college certificate) while 46% had either primary or secondary education and the rest (20%) had not attained any education. This indicates that education is not a determinant of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe given that the motivations for entrepreneurship are economic hence individuals have no choice within a needs-based economic context. This contradicts observations by Kaliendo, Fossen and Kritikos (2014) who contend that lowly educated individuals are subject to involuntary transition into entrepreneurship out of necessity while educated ones are motivated by opportunistic reasons. Overall, the results indicate the heterogeneous character of most SMEs in terms of individual characteristics as they straddle all ages, all sexes and all educational levels.

The current behavioural profiles of entrepreneurs in Harare’s SME sector

Results indicate that entrepreneurs in Harare exhibit bewildering characteristics as expressed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Entrepreneurial behavioural profiles in Harare

Entrepreneurial attribute	Entrepreneurial posture	Evidence
Registration status	Largely unregistered	<i>"Mine is not a registered business because I don't have the money to register so I collude with law enforcement to sell my products on the street."</i>
	No fixed abode	<i>"I operate my business from anywhere where there is business especially during the tobacco marketing season where I relocate to the auction floors."</i>
	Unconventional schedules	<i>"It's difficult to operate during the day so we sell our wares at night in the city centre and there is no holiday or weekend for entrepreneurs like us."</i>
Nature of business	Copycat mechanisms	<i>"I see no need to start a new business but simply wait to see what's trending those days and I join."</i>
	Inconsistent	<i>"To survive you just need to discern opportunities and seize them so I can do almost anything as long as it gives me money."</i>
	Predatory	<i>"I sell my wares on the street in front of busy shops because prices are different thanks to multiple price regimes in Zimbabwe."</i>
Awareness of entrepreneurship	Ignorant	<i>"I lack the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes in entrepreneurship because I have not been trained in entrepreneurship but just hustle to survive."</i>

The results in Table 2 above indicate that most entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe are unregistered, being of no fixed abode and operating outside conventional time frames. The lack of registration occurs because of the cumbersome and expensive nature of new venture registration which compels many to operate without requisite registration. In terms of the Zimbabwe Investment Act, it takes 90 days to register a new business, hence, most aspiring entrepreneurs operate without the requisite registration. Being of no fixed abode implies the shifty character of most entrepreneurs who chase opportunities wherever they are found at times flouting regulations by working outside regulated time frames for business. Most enterprises are predatory in nature capitalizing on market gaps or simply copying trending business ideas. This indicates their inconsistencies as they oscillate from one business idea to another or simply get predatory by poaching others' clients.

In terms of the SMEs Act (Chapter 24:12) SMEs are registered businesses which dovetails with conventional reasoning that enterprises should be duly registered businesses regardless of their size. In this vein, given the survivalist mode of most enterprises in Zimbabwe's SME sector, they do not fit the western models of entrepreneurship since most are unregistered, unconventional, illegal, of no fixed abode, inconsistent one man (woman) show operations and not premised on conventional business practices such as reputation. ILO (2020) contends that the SME model sought to create a guided approach to entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe but the current manifestations of entrepreneurship defy this perspective as most enterprises are fly-by-night operators with no legal basis. The fact that city authorities engage in running battles with night time vendors lends credence to the fact that existing models of entrepreneurship defy logic. Kanyenze et al., (2018) contends that entrepreneurship is a survival strategy for most unemployed graduates and in that context of risk, stress and uncertainty associated with endemic poverty, legality often takes the back bench which explains the lack of corporate legal persona among most SMEs in Zimbabwe at the moment. Thebe (2015) alludes to street entrepreneurship as a survivalist rather than a growth-oriented strategy in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Thus, Zimbabwe's SME sector epitomises large scale informal entrepreneurship

which significantly differs from conventional global definitions from more developed economies. This indicates the close correlation between the rule of law and entrepreneurship and in the context of legal vacuums or general disregard for the law, ideal entrepreneurship is difficult to establish in Zimbabwe. This indicates that Zimbabwean based SME businesses are not entrepreneurs in an ideal economic sense but they have redefined and expanded the concept to incorporate new forms of business. This occurs because of opulent economic opportunities created by economic recession (Ernst and Young, 2009) and economic desperation (Nyoni, 2018). Moyo and Kawewe (2002) agree that more often, entrepreneurship in emerging economies is born out of desperation which subjects the incumbents to oppression and inhuman working conditions. Hence, micro enterprises in Zimbabwe have for long been associated with ignominy and human suffering (Derera et al., 2020). Cheater (1989) offers a social perspective on entrepreneurship in which they constitute cultural dissidents who breach cultural norms and values in pursuit of their self-interest. The results indicate that the subject of entrepreneurship is subjective just like other aspects like happiness or truth which are relative.

Factors influencing the entrepreneurial decision among SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe

The results indicated that entrepreneurship in Harare was need-based; influenced by profit considerations and the fact that some opportunities were irresistible. Some participants stated that:

“When hunger stares you in the face you have no option but to engage in some kind of business or another. In my case I am a foreign currency dealer but also double up as a used car sales man. I have also engaged in farming and am willing to go for anything that brings food on the table.” (Middle aged dealer, 09.02.24).

“There are some businesses such as second hand clothes vending or simply being a runner which bring enormous profits that are hard to resist. Being a runner means that I buy things on behalf of others who are too busy to engage in international trade, from overseas and add a markup” (Female runner, 08.02.24).

The above indicates that the decision towards entrepreneurship in Harare is driven by economic considerations given the negative economic status characterised by runaway inflation, unemployment and generally declining living standards. In that context, most individuals without a formal job or those with low salaries supplement their incomes through entrepreneurship. Chekenyi (2016) agrees that the survival mode that characterise Zimbabwe at the moment drive both formally and informally employed towards some kind of entrepreneurial endeavour. The World Bank (2012; 2019; 2020) allude to the role of economic disruptions in the spike in entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe. The UNDP (2018) agree that entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe is associated with never-seen-before economic activities. Nyoni (2018) and Salami (2011) agree that entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe is due to the economic recession thereby making the practice a necessity-based endeavour. All this indicates the role of socio-economic deprivation in fostering entrepreneurial behaviours (De Vries, 1977; Ngoro and Van Niekerk, 2019). This agrees with the psychodynamic perspective which contends that entrepreneurship can result from both negative and positive externalities (Westhead et al, 2011). In the same vein, people may become entrepreneurs due to marginalisation hence they exhibit deviant personalities (Ngoro and Van Niekerk, 2019; Westhead et al, 2011). Westhead et al., (2011) contend that entrepreneurs may be made by economic circumstances which holds true for Harare’s largely informal entrepreneurs.

Possible behaviours that entrepreneurs require to achieve their business goals in Harare, Zimbabwe

The study results also indicated that entrepreneurs in Harare require certain behavioural profiles that would enhance their competitiveness. The researcher observed during field work that the current behavioural profiles of most entrepreneurs are replete with risk such as threat of forfeiture of merchandise, health related and physical complications as well as lack of capital among others. Some respondents indicated the need for following interventions to address these challenges:

- Formal registration

“If we are to be registered formally we wouldn’t have to pay protection fees to either council officials, the police or political figures as we currently do. This means that our operations would be above board.”

The researcher observed during field work that in most instances, vendors had to pay some form of bribe to be allowed to continue working and this occurred because they were not registered businesses in terms of the SMEs act. Their enterprises were subject to arbitrary closure by the authorities leading to loss of business hence formal registration would forestall such challenges.

- New venture formation

“Most enterprises are not new but rather copy cats of existing businesses and this puts them in a precarious position of competition from established businesses.”

The results indicate the general lack of new venture formation in Harare, thereby indicating the general affinity towards predatory business behaviours. However, small businesses that copy the systems and procedures of established businesses risk failure due to counter offensive competition from incumbents. For instance the researcher observed that entrepreneurs who sold their goods in shop fronts were subject to constant raids by law enforcement authorities at the behest of established businesses. Thus, new ventures would be based on blue ocean opportunities that are identified but entering red oceans with existing competitors tended to diminish the competitive advantage of recent entrepreneurs. Mazikana (2023) argues that the most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the ability to start a new business. This correlates with Schumpeter, 1934); Mwenje, 2018; Ferreira et al., 2017, Storey and Greene, 2010) who agree that entrepreneurship should resonate with innovativeness in terms of creation of new products, new value; new work practices, new services and new venture creations.

- Entrepreneurial culture- education

“There is a general lack of knowledge regarding what to do as entrepreneurs hence we move from one venture to another. We have also not benefitted from training or formal approaches that are found in other countries.” (Foreign currency dealer, 13.02.24).

The results point towards general lack of entrepreneurial education which compels most to venture into almost anything they perceive as opportune. It is the absence of such entrepreneurial indoctrination that most enterprises have failed to gain traction hence the need for official and formal approaches towards entrepreneurial culture development in Harare.

These views correlate with Nyoni (2018) who contend that most entrepreneurs lack a basic understanding of entrepreneurship and are devoid of the requisite entrepreneurial orientation which explains why most businesses die in their embryonic stage. Dabale and Masese (2014) opine that Zimbabwe's higher education curriculum does not unequivocally promote entrepreneurship which is why only few graduates actually own and run businesses in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the results it is cogent to opine that entrepreneurship in Harare indeed contravenes the orthodox conventions of entrepreneurship which developed along western capitalist orientations. Thus, while profit remains the end game of entrepreneurship in Harare, most enterprises lack the corporate character of traditional entrepreneurship in terms of registration, nature of business and entrepreneurial orientation. It is for this reason that approaches towards enhanced entrepreneurship should revolve around new venture formation, registration and the building of entrepreneurial cultures through education and indoctrination. The results also show the role of economics in driving entrepreneurial endeavours in Zimbabwe leading to the general impression that necessity is the mother of invention. In that context, respect for conventions is overlooked when survival is the ultimate objective of entrepreneurship. It seems that in Zimbabwe, many people embarked on entrepreneurship to escape the vagaries of poverty and not as a strategic response to the structure of environmental opportunities. This escapist mindset indicate that Zimbabwean entrepreneurship is characterised by inadequate initial preparations that have become the inherent characteristics of small businesses.

In view of the findings, the Zimbabwe government is urged to ease the process of new venture registration and offer financial and other kinds of support to new businesses. Currently, most businesses struggle to gain traction due to financial constraints and cumbersome registration formalities hence the need for political will in addressing these aspects. Budding entrepreneurs are also urged to experiment with new ideas to build new client bases rather than poach clients from established businesses. Future researchers are urged to focus on other cities other than Harare for generalisability of the results.

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