



## Entrepreneurship: The case of migrant African-Australian women in the Cairns region.

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**ABSTRACT:-** There is increasing recognition in the literature of the relevance and importance of entrepreneurship for migrant women from developing countries who have settled in developed economies and aspire to become entrepreneurs. This qualitative study applied a case study methodology to explore entrepreneurship of eleven migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs in the Cairns region. The study identified factors that enabled the eleven participating women to start and sustain businesses. The study employed three data collection methods: semi-structured interviews; survey questionnaires; and researcher's reflective journal. Findings revealed that: (1) women who had experience in conducting business in Africa were most likely to establish businesses in Australia and (2) cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors acted as enablers in the establishment and operation of their businesses. This study provides empirical data of entrepreneurship among participating women, contributes to a new body of knowledge and provides a foundation for further research in this area. The study serves to inform aspiring migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs themselves and may inform policymakers.

**Keywords:-** African-Australian, Cairns region, case study, enablers, entrepreneur/ship, migrant, Qualitative, women.

### I. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates entrepreneurship among Migrant African-Australian Women Entrepreneurs (MAAWEs) in the Cairns region. Researching entrepreneurship is a growing area in educational and social research (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014). This study explores the entrepreneurship of eleven participating women in the Cairns region and, therefore, contributes to an emerging body of knowledge on the migrant experience and provides a foundation for further research in this area. The research examines factors that enable migrant African-Australian women to become entrepreneurs. The research focuses on the experiences of migrant women who are considering establishing a new business venture and who have been able to establish a business. In the study, MAAWEs are defined as those women who: (1) were born in an African country and migrated to Australia; (2) are aged 18 years and above; (3) hold Australian permanent residency or Australian citizenship; and (4) aspire to become an entrepreneur or already have a small business. There is limited literature on entrepreneurship among migrant African-Australian women in Australia, highlighting the need for an exploratory study. The study serves to inform aspiring migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs in regional Australia and may inform policymakers. The purpose of this research was to learn from the participants' experiences in the area of entrepreneurship, their interpretations of these experiences, and the meaning they attribute to them. Hence, qualitative methods to discover and understand their perceptions and the complexity of their experiences as local businesswomen was most appropriate.

**1.1 Research question:** What are the factors that enable migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs in the Cairns region to start and sustain businesses?

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 African-Australian

There is an increasing number of people in Australia of African descent. These migrants bring with them potentially valuable cultural, social and economic ties to the region (Negin & Denning, 2008). International migration between Africa and Australia has a long history and has accelerated in recent years (Hugo, 2009). Hugo describes African Australians as Australian citizens and residents born in, or with recent ancestors from Africa. African migrants come to Australia as skilled migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, through family reunion, or as secondary migrants from other countries (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2011).

Migrant settlement in Australia is seen as a state responsibility requiring public provision and supervision. Improving the English language proficiency and entrepreneurial skills of the migrants is an important factor in migrant settlement and individual financial wellbeing (Ogbor, 2000). Importantly, this study investigates entrepreneurship component. The ABS (2011) statistics show a total of 1,410 migrants from Africa (653 males and 757 females) of age 18 years and upwards living in the Cairns region. This study focused on a population of 757 women of 18 years and over, with their ancestry in Africa, currently living in the Cairns region.

### 2.2 Definitions of and early theories of entrepreneurship

Many studies use the terms “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” interchangeably (Collins, 2003). The terms entrepreneur or entrepreneurship are also contentious (Collins & Low, 2010). Richard Cantillon (1680–1734) was the first of the major economic thinkers to define the entrepreneur as an agent who buys means of production at certain prices to combine them into a new product. He classified economic agents into landowners, hirelings and entrepreneurs, and considered the entrepreneur as the most active among these three agents, connecting the producers with customers (Murphy & Cantillon, 1986). Jean Baptiste Say (1767–1832) improved Cantillon’s definition by adding that the entrepreneur brings people together to build a productive item (Murphy & Cantillon, 1986).

Alfred Marshall in his *Principles of Economics* (1890) held land, labour, capital, and organisation as the four factors of production, and considered entrepreneurship as the driving factor that brings these four factors together (Murphy & Cantillon, 1986). Many economists have modified Alfred Marshall’s theory to consider the entrepreneur as the fourth factor, instead of organisation, which coordinates the other three factors (Murphy & Cantillon, 1986). Keister (2005) argued that defining entrepreneurship can be somewhat difficult and defined entrepreneurship as being synonymous with business start-up or the creation of new organisations. Gartner (2004) defined an entrepreneur as a person who defines a creative idea and adapts it to a market opportunity, gathers resources to provide potentially for self-employment and or profit. This study focuses on migrant African-Australian women individuals who start a business as a means of economic survival (see Chaganti and Greene (2002). This study adopts Shane’s (2010) definition of the term entrepreneurship which is the “phenomenon of self-directed economic activity that is based on the socio-economic and institutional opportunities” (pp. 3–5).

### 2.3 Descriptions of the factors that enable entrepreneurs to start and sustain businesses (enablers)

Enablers for starting and sustaining businesses include cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors.

#### 2.3.1 Entrepreneurial cultural factors.

There is no universally accepted definition of cultural factors as applied to entrepreneurship (Solesvik et al., 2014). Hofstede (2003) referred to culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another and includes systems and values” (p. 25). Nayab (2011) describes culture as customary practices and beliefs that have a significant impact on the basic values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviours of people.

Cultural traits like thrift, hard work and reliance on family labor, in some cases act as enablers rather than obstacles (Liversage, 2009). As research, at the psychological level, shows a link between values, beliefs and behaviour, it is plausible that differences in culture, in which these values and beliefs are embedded, may influence a wide range of behaviours including the decision to become self-employed rather than to work for others (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). This study deploys this same logic to explore cultural factors as enablers to Migrant African-Australian Women (MAAW) entrepreneurship.

#### 2.3.2 Family factors.

Family businesses drive social economic development and wealth creation around the world and entrepreneurship is a key driver of family businesses (Fahed-Sreih et al, 2010). Lin (2006) defines family businesses as owner-managed enterprises with family members exercising considerable financial and/or

managerial control. Family is an institution that embodies an important form of social capital that migrants draw on in their pursuit of economic advancement. Family enables the pooling of financial resources (Sanders & Nee, 1996) and provides convenient and low-cost sources of support, especially labor, to the migrant entrepreneur's business (Lyer & Shapiro, 1999).

### **2.3.3 Social networks and capital.**

A network is defined as the set of social relations or social ties among a set of actors who are linked (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). Social capital refers to the benefits entrepreneurs derive from their social networks (Baron, 2015). Networks, and their resulting social capital, can be key determinants of successful business start-up for migrant entrepreneurs (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). In the event of a migrant deciding to start a business, building social capital through network can attribute to success (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006).

A network is made of both formal/professional (e.g., business contacts, banks, lawyers, local government, organisations and associations) and informal/personal (family, personal friends, acquaintances) connections (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). Sequeira and Rasheed conceive that since social capital allows access to information, and information is costly, the prospective migrant entrepreneur with strong ties can reduce the transaction costs associated with starting a business.

### **2.3.4 Human capital.**

Human capital, relates to the skills and knowledge which an entrepreneur acquires during her life through, for example, schooling, work experience, and training (Collins & Low, 2010). According to Davidson and Honig (2003), human capital theory suggests knowledge increases cognitive abilities resulting in more productive and efficient activities. Agosin and Bloom (2006) hold the view that education increases social mobility, enhances participation in social activities, affects health and perceptions of quality of life and is an important determinant of economic growth. Human capital also extends to English language proficiency, increase in education and prior business experience (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). The recognition of foreign educational credentials would enable migrants to avoid becoming self-employed in an area in which they have no interest, and help others be self-employed in the field in which they are trained (Teixeira et al., 2007).

### **2.3.5 Institutional factors.**

Entrepreneurs are enabled by institutional environments (Shane, 2000). Farashan (2015) defines institutional factors as governmental policies or the access entrepreneurs have to financial support. The institutional profile of a country, both formally or informally, sets norms and standards of behaviour and reinforces certain behaviours and ways of thinking through reward and punishment systems to ensure compliance (Valdez & Richardson, 2013). By learning through social interaction and by following codified and enforced laws and regulations, individuals in a society are affected by institutions (Farashan, 2015). There are three characteristics identified by World Bank as important indicators of doing business in a region: registering property, enforcing contracts and dealing with licences (OECD, 2014). The creation of new firms is one institutional arrangement generally available for individuals in the economy (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The majority of migrants depend upon their personal savings as well as loans from relatives and friends (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006).

## **III. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY**

This research was undertaken within the Cairns region of Tropical North Queensland in Australia with eleven purposefully selected migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs. To better understand the factors that enabled women entrepreneurs to start and sustain businesses (enablers), this study used qualitative approach to explore the experiences of the women. I employed a case study methodology as I sought to gain a deep understanding of participating women experiences. Based on my reading of Yin (2014) and Creswell (2014) I felt that, this was best achieved using migrant African-Australian women who were aspiring entrepreneurs as informants in a 'semi-structured interview' situation (Patton, 2002). This research study drew on the participants' views. I listened to the women and coded the transcripts to reveal insights and build a picture based on data gathered from the research participant's interviews. I sought to understand the reality of the women's experiences, and their interpretations of those experiences in the area of entrepreneurship. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs for personal interviews. The invited participants satisfied the following criteria: born in an African country, and migrated to Australia, aged 18 years and above, held Australian permanent residency or Australian citizenship, lived in the Cairns region, aspired to become an entrepreneur or already had a small business.

This case study employed three different data collection methods to strengthen validity and reliability of this study: semi-structured (in-depth) interviews, survey questionnaires and researcher's reflective journal. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews have been identified with qualitative research, and "the aim is to achieve both breadth of coverage

across key issues, and depth of content within each” (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 190). During the interviews, the participants were asked to complete a demographic survey. The demographic survey also measured the level of English language skills. The respondents were requested to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 (low), 2 (below average), 3 (average), 4 (above average), or 5 (high). I further grouped the levels into two groups (low–below average and average–high).

### 3.1 Data analysis

The data obtained from the survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and researcher’s journal were analysed (Patton, 2015). This research study followed Creswell (2014) four steps analysis process. The first step involved transcribing the interviews. During this step, I transcribed all the relevant parts of the recorded interview data from an audio to a text format and typed handwritten notes. In the second step, I read through these data and reflected on the overall meaning in order to get a general sense of the information and ideas the participants conveyed. The third step involved generating codes and emergent themes. This step was done using NVivo and involved organising the transcripts into segments by taking text data and segmenting sentences into categories or themes (Creswell, 2014).

The final step involved interpreting the meaning of the themes. After structuring and presenting the interview data, I interpreted the meanings of the coded data against the backdrop of my own culture, history and experiences and compared these findings “with information gleaned from the literature or theories” (Creswell, 2009, p. 189). The validation of the accuracy of the information occurred throughout the different steps of the research process. Inherent in the analysis of this qualitative case study is frequent and direct quoting, thus providing the research participants a voice, in this case the migrant African-Australia women entrepreneurs in the Cairns region.

## IV. FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports on the findings, analysis, and a discussion of the qualitative case study research with migrant entrepreneurs in the Cairns region. The section presents participants demographic data, occupation in Africa and Australia, prior experience in conducting business, and enablers are discussed.

**Table 1. Demographic data of the study participants**

Participants	Region of origin	Age	Marital status	No of years in Australia
<b>Abrielle</b>	West Africa	39	Single	6
<b>Callisto</b>	Southern Africa	45	Married to an Australian	41
<b>Emy</b>	East Africa	41	Married to an Australian	14
<b>Lana</b>	Central Africa	31	Married to an African	5
<b>Madilyn</b>	Southern Africa	52	Married to an Australian	21
<b>Mandube</b>	Southern Africa	45	Married to an African	8
<b>Patina</b>	Southern Africa	43	Single	11
<b>Purity</b>	East Africa	48	Married to an African	8
<b>Ramonita</b>	East Africa	53	Married to an African	26
<b>Reina</b>	East Africa	49	Married to an African	6
<b>Velvet</b>	East Africa	69	Married to a Scotsman	41

(Pseudonyms have been used).

The research study participants represent four regions in Africa. Only two women below the age of 40 years were engaged in business. Self-employment rates among the women migrants increased with the duration they lived in the settlement country. Six of the respondents had lived in Australia for over ten years, while five had lived in Australia for less than 10 years.

**Table 2. Demographics (Visa on arrival, current residency status, highest level of education, and English language skills) of the study participants.**

Participants	Visa on arrival	Residency status	Education	English language
Abrielle	Refugee	Permanent resident	TAFE Cert 3	Low
Callisto	Visitors	Citizen	Year 12	Above average
Emy	Spouse	Citizen	TAFE Cert 3	Above average
Lana	Refugee	Permanent resident	Degree	Low
Madilyn	Spouse	Citizen	Degree	High
Mandube	Working	Citizen	Degree	Above average
Patina	Working	Citizen	Degree	Above average
Purity	Skilled	Citizen	Diploma	Low
Ramonita	Skilled	Citizen	Diploma	Above average
Reina	Skilled	Permanent resident	Degree	Above average
Velvet	Business	Citizen	Year 6	Low

[TAFE (Training and Further Education)]

The respondents entered Australia on different visas (Table 2). Different categories of visa on entry indicate different individual migrant's characteristics. The three participants who were permanent residents explained that they were eligible to apply for citizenship and would apply soon. The majority of the respondents held a post-secondary or a university degree (10). Generally, most of the respondents (6) had above average English language skills.

**Table 3. Participant's occupation in Africa and Australia**

Respondent	Occupation in Africa	Occupation in Australia	Location
Abrielle	Manufacturing soap for sale, selling salt	Selling African palm oil, Tola sauce and hair products	Home
Callisto	Not applicable-too young to work	Bookkeeping/selling dance wear/sewing	Commercial premises
Emy	Office administration	Selling hair products plus office administration	Home
Lana	Office job in human resources	Home and family day care	Home
Madilyn	Manufacturing and selling industrial and forestry chemicals	Retail confectionary (Selling sweets, chocolates, treats from around the globe.	Commercial premises
Mandube	Sewing and business & teacher	Sewing, health & fitness business & teacher	Home
Patina	Catering & hotel manager	Selling household items online/teacher	Home
Purity	Haircare & selling hair products	Haircare & hair products plus accounts officer	Commercial premises
Ramonita	Employee in a tourism company	Printing business	Commercial premises
Reina	Small restaurant business and employee as an accountant	Selling fresh fruits & vegetables & snacks	Home
Velvet	Selling vegetables & household items	Manufacturing & selling African pottery/artefacts/hair styling & hair products	Commercial premises

Table 3 shows respondents were found to be active across a range of business areas, including retail (confectionery, dance wear, fresh fruits, vegetables and snacks, palm oil, artefacts), crafts (sewing, making and selling African pottery), book keeping, and health and fitness. Seven of the respondents had prior experience in their own business before migrating to Australia and three indicated their parents had been in business. All the



respondents started up their own businesses. At the time of the interview, six of the eleven women had their businesses located at home while five were located in commercial premises.

#### 4.1 Prior experience in conducting business in Africa

Experience is one key to entrepreneurial success (OECD, 2013). Career interruptions and lower access to management roles can make women lag behind in knowledge and skills directly related to the tasks of an entrepreneur, for example, how to build products, how to market and sell them, and how to grow and manage teams (OECD, 2013). Seven women had conducted comparable businesses in Africa before migrating to Australia while three had not. This study found that women who had experience in conducting business in Africa were likely to establish a business in Australia. All of the participants indicated that they had a family business background and had created a new business as a start-up in the Cairns region.

#### 4.2 Factors that enabled the women in this study to establish and sustain businesses include: cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors (Enablers)

**Table 4. Key enablers and entrepreneurial categories**

Key enablers	Category	No of respondents
Technology use	Institutional factors	11
Support from family	Family	8
To fill a gap in the market	Institutional factors	7
To make extra money	Institutional factors	6
Support from Africans	Social capital & networks	6
Support from general Cairns community	Social capital & networks	5
Lack of Job and/or job security	Human capital	4
To invest money	Institutional factors	4
To use my skills	Human capital	3
Experience in business in Africa	Human capital	3
I like doing business	Cultural	3
To help my sister who does hair braiding	Family	2
I discovered a supply for the African products	Institutional factors	2
I needed the products myself	Institutional factors	2
Have control over my destiny/ be my own boss	Cultural	2
I love children & happy with day care	Cultural	1
Need to use my experience in big companies and become an entrepreneur	Human capital	1
Look for something to keep me busy	Cultural	1
Had vehicle required by my business	Institutional factors	1
Hard work	Cultural	1
Having an open mind	Cultural	1
Being smart	Cultural	1
Flexible / coming up with new ideas	Cultural	1
Offering a unique service	Institutional factors	1

The findings from this study suggest that factors that enabled MAAWEs to establish and sustain businesses included: cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors. (Table 4).The factors are discussed in details below.

##### 4.2.1 Entrepreneurial cultural capital.

The cultural factors that enabled starting a business included a like or desire for doing business, love for children and therefore happy with home and day care business, being a hard worker and to have control over one's destiny. As Madilyn said: *I wanted to have a small business, be more flexible and own my own future.* A number of women had prior business experience, thus it appeared that they had cultural entrepreneurial capital that supported courage to proceed with business.

#### **4.2.2 Family factors.**

The women who had families indicated that support from the family enabled them to start a business. Family links are important, especially in connection with financing of the business (Collins & Low, 2010). In the past women secured start-up capital from family members (Halkias et al., 2011). Thus extended family networks of close and distant relatives alike have been and are important sources of inspiration, encouragement, advice, knowledge, labour and finance (Collins & Low, 2010). The importance was reiterated by Emy as she explains: *I...to settle my sister who has just moved to Australia to get some cash when she does hair. That gives me double advantage and the money the hair makes remains in the family.* Lana said: *My husband supports me when he is off his office work.* Collins and Low's (2010) research indicated that migrant women who start businesses in Australia structure their business life around their relationship with their husband.

#### **4.2.3 Human capital.**

Human capital acquired through education is one of the main resources that migrants draw on in their host country (OECD, 2010). The women differ in their levels of human capital, thus differ in their ability to discover and exploit opportunities as compared with OECD (2004) study. Human capital is an important resource that women draw on to start their ventures in Australia. Each demographic category of visa on arrival of the study participants has different conditions and criteria, reflecting the different pre-migration human capital and English-language ability of the migrants. The findings show that women with more or higher quality human capital have achieved higher performance in executing relevant business tasks. Human capital, as represented through formal education attainment and skills acquired, increased the likelihood of success.

#### **4.2.4 Social Capital and networks.**

The sources of social capital were fellow Africans and other friends. Formal and informal network ties were also mentioned. Kloosterman and Rath (2001) pointed out that the experiences of migrant entrepreneurs are embedded within the broader structures and social relations of the society in which they settle. Lana's experience exemplifies how her business runs and how she finds customers: *here in Cairns there are high numbers of parents with children, and these parents have work to do...I pick and drop their kids to school. The kids are from local African parents, Aboriginals, Australians, and Torre Strait Islanders.* As Collins and Low (2010) have analysed, network ties present through some direct personal involvement enable businesses to find customers.

Another dimension of entrepreneurial networks relates to international business contacts and dealings (Collins & Low, 2010). Ten women were engaged in international trade with their countries of birth, highlighting the importance of diasporic ethnic networks as also pointed at by Collins and Low (2010). Emy's experience shows how these networks, 'work': *I buy my business products from... and the reason being.... hair products are very special,... advantage is the fact that I have got family over there... they are very keen and eager to help us buy the products ...here in Australia and that way whoever will help us from that side, it's all in family love and caring and my family knows they are helping me and my sister.* Contrary, an individual may have the ability to recognise that a given entrepreneurial opportunity exists, but might lack the social connections to transform the opportunity into a business start-up (Shane & Eckhardt, 2003). Further research on this matter would be valuable.

#### **4.2.5 Institutional factors.**

The creation of new firms is one institutional arrangement that is generally available for individuals in the Australian economy (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Solesvik and colleagues (2014) argue that some entrepreneurs discover business opportunities by being alert to gaps in the market. The Cairns region has a market condition created by the migration of Africans, and yet there is no Australian penetration in African food and hair sales. This has left a gap in this service and a consequent opportunity for entrepreneurship to be filled by migrants looking to better themselves.

Studies show the majority of migrants depend upon their personal savings as well as loans from relatives and friends (Sequeira & Rasheed, 2006). Similarly, this study found out that the women relied more heavily on internal sources of start-up capital, raising smaller amounts of capital for financing their businesses. The experience of women in this study are congruent with those from Azmat (2013) whose study found out that some of the enablers for businesses were culture, family, and social capital. However, the respondents quoted networks and institutional capital as additional enablers. Entrepreneurs are enabled by their institutional environment (Shane, 2000). African women who started their business with savings had similar enablers and the study findings have confirmed this expectation.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

This study has explored entrepreneurship among eleven migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs in the Cairns region. The study explored the factors that enabled the migrant African-Australian

women to become entrepreneurs. This study has found that enablers for starting and sustaining businesses include cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors. The data was gathered from migrant women in one geographical region, so the results are limited in applicability and cannot be inferred to be similar to different regions and cultures.

The study provides empirical data of entrepreneurship of the participating women and, provides a foundation for further research in this area. This research reinforces the findings of similar studies that Cairns women face cultural, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors. The experience of women in this study are congruent with those from Azmat (2013) whose theoretical study found out that some of the enablers for businesses were culture, family, and social capital. However, the respondents in this study quoted networks and institutional capital as additional enablers. This study has the potential to become a foundation for further research in this area. The study serves to inform the aspiring migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs and has the potential to inform policymakers. This research offers an addition to the women entrepreneurs' literature by focussing on a migrant experience that is not adequately researched.

The study findings reveal that there is room for the Australian Government and other organisations to improve financial support to migrant women for starting local businesses. This may make it easier for business women to obtain import licences and/or permits; and encourage more tourists/visitors to come to the Cairns region. The state and Australian Governments also can have a role in providing support for business training; and create awareness on television, radio, social and print media about the importance of integrating migrants into Australian society, particularly in regional areas. Further research can explore strategies for the government and business organisations to establish enabling environment for developing and sustaining businesses.

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
MAAW	Migrant African Australian Women
MAAWE	Migrant African Australian Women Entrepreneurs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

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