
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT MARGINS: NAVIGATING MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND BUSINESS SURVIVAL CHALLENGES IN POST-COVID 19

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Abstract:

The study explores the socio-economic integration challenges and business survival of migrants' entrepreneurs in post covid-19 South Africa. It aims to understand the business operational environment of migrants' entrepreneurs, challenges of integration for migrants' entrepreneurs, and the future of migrants' entrepreneurs in post covid-19 South Africa. Through snowballing recruitment approach, a total of 18 migrants' entrepreneurs were selected for semi-structured interviews. The inclusion criteria include entrepreneurs who are migrants and registered entrepreneurs in the Durban metropolis. Exclusion includes local entrepreneurs and un-registered entrepreneurs in the Durban metropolis. Themes were identified from the transcripts interview with the NVivo v14 software, and these themes were subsequently discussed for broad implications. The findings show that the operational business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs is characterized by restricted access, tax compliance challenges, business registration puzzles, and seclusion from operating in certain business ventures. For instance, it was established that the restriction of business access explains that migrants' business owners are ineligible to compete in certain sectors of the economy including the alcohol economy. The challenge of integration include access to loan and business support, language and cultural barriers, hostility and xenophobic attacks, and the challenge of documentation. The future of migrants' entrepreneurs includes exit plan, absence of government intervention and poor business growth indicator. The study concludes that registered migrant's business must be supported through palliatives to ameliorate the economic disruptions and impact of COVID-19 on local businesses. Future studies can focus on a comparative analysis of migrants' entrepreneurs and local business to understand the trend of disparities in the functionalities of these businesses.

Keywords:

Migration, Entrepreneurship, Small Business, economy, post-covid-19.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, international migration has become widely accepted with progression in recent times. Migration commentaries show continuous movements of people across the globe with varying intention such as political, socio-economic, and conflict among others (Arora & Majumder, 2021), with considerable increase within sub-Saharan Africa (Asoba & Tengeh, 2016). Black and Costaldo (2009) argued that the increase in migration movements within the sub-Saharan African are unconnected to the ethic and political instability in different countries like Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Rwanda, Somalia and the recent instability in Nigeria among others (Urban et al., 2022). South Africa, often considered as a vibrant economy landscape within Africa, has continuously been the destination of this movement. The last decades have witnessed an increase in the influx of migrants into South Africa (Duan et al., 2021). Available evidence shows that most migrants arrived with the intention of commencing entrepreneurial activities, especially within the local economy (Castro & Gomez-Zermeño, 2021).

The recognition of migrants' entrepreneurs in South Africa, however, commence with the ushering of South Africa into a democratic rule in 1994 with the welcoming of people from across the globe, particularly Africa into different sectors of the economy (Muchineripi et al., 2019). This position supports the need for the expansion and growth of the South Africa economy at all levels. Over time, migrants' entrepreneurs have continued to contribute substantially to the South Africa economy. With evidence of the economic and social significance of migrants' entrepreneurs to the South Africa economy landscape, the continuous politicking around migrants in general have remained a challenge to migrants' integration and socioeconomic conditions in South Africa (Dudi et al., 2021). While there has been increasing call for the socioeconomic integration of migrants' entrepreneurs at all levels of the South African economy, the political tension and social intolerance have continued to halt these initiatives.

The upsurge in the neglect and politicization of the significance of migrants' enterprise to the South Africa economy possess serious consequence for the economy growth of the country (Asoba & Tengeh, 2016). For example, the extensive spread of migrants' small business across South Africa's informal sector generating employment and contributing to the economy cannot be overemphasized. While this is established, many migrants' entrepreneurs are still subjected to different forms of hostility, intentional discrimination and seclusion within the small business space (Ngota, Mang'unyi & Sookdhev, 2018). For many migrants' entrepreneurs, the desire for economic survival in business has continued to expose them to different forms of intimation, attacks, harassments and occasionally looting in the country. While these evidences are clear breach of international conventions on migrations, the verity remains that migrants' entrepreneurs contribute substantially to the South African economy through small business enterprise. Thus, the call for integration of migrants' business owners has continued to form public policy across the country. The conversation around integration also supports the need for social and credit supports of migrants' enterprise in the general interest of the South African economy (Fatoki & Patswawairi, 2012), especially with the disruptions and impacts of the covid-19 on small business enterprise.

The migration literature is awash with studies on the contributions of migrants to entrepreneurship development and small and medium venture sustainability. The array of these studies includes the determinants and entrepreneurship motivations for migrants (Duan et al., 2021); a systematic review of immigrants' entrepreneurship with insight from developed countries (Dudi et al., 2022); factors affecting migrants entrepreneurship development in South Africa (Ngota et al., 2018). Others include African migrants' business in Cape Town, South Africa: growth challenges in context (Asoba & Tengeh, 2016); challenges to immigrants' entrepreneurship in South Africa



(Fatoki & Patswawairi, 2012) and human social capital as drivers of immigrant's entrepreneurship development and success (Urban et al., 2022). Within the canon of socioeconomic integration and business survival in post covid-19, hardly has any study focus on migrants' entrepreneurs in the context of South Africa. This study attempts to fill this research gap. By interrogating this gap, the study hopes to provoke insightful conversation relating to the socioeconomic integration and business survival of migrants in post covid-19 South Africa.

MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURS' DEBATES

The conceptual understanding of migrant entrepreneurship has continued to provoke debates among management and migration scholar as an important and emerging field of study (Vando, 2021). This trigger is supported by the immense contributions of migrants' entrepreneurs to employment creation in most migrants' host communities (Urban et al., 2022). However, despite these contributions, there is evidence of conundrums faced by migrants' entrepreneurs (Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). Migrant entrepreneurship has been established as an important socio-economic enterprise that supports the economic growth and development of nations (Rensmann & Miller, 2017).

Migrants' entrepreneurs represent a sizable representation of SMEs in countries of the Global North and produce social impact through employment creation, social inclusion, innovation and the large scale of economic growth and human development (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). Nonetheless, the debates of the impact of migrants' entrepreneurship in countries of the Global North has often been characterized with emotional narrative than factual evidences. For instance, negative opinions of migrants' entrepreneurs are reflected with a poor understanding of the roles of migrant entrepreneurs in their local communities (Mosweunyane & Chipunza, 2022). Several migrants' entrepreneurs leave their home countries for several reasons. For instance, while some do so for economic reasons, others migrate to evade war, climate change challenges and for economic reasons like venture creations. For context, migrant entrepreneur identifies an economic opportunity in his or her country of residence and respond by exploiting such economic opportunity (Mago, 2020). By way of this, migrants' entrepreneurs contribute significantly to the local economy of the host nation, but their enterprise is often comprised with difficulties (Malerba & Ferreira, 2022).

Migration literature championed by Dheer (2018) proposed a model to explain migrant entrepreneurship. According to Dheer (2018), the antecedent factors of migrants' entrepreneurship include regulatory impact, socioeconomic clauses, regional features, psychological and demographic attributes and other human resource attributes. In contrast, the output reacts and aligns with measures of economic growth, increase in job creation, and other growth indices in the local economy of the host nations. Another perspective of migrant entrepreneurship connects with the policies and strategies to promote and foster migrant entrepreneurship ventures (Tengeh & Lapah, 2017). Many developing nations are encouraged that migrants' entrepreneurs are important components required for stimulating job growth; hence there are existing local legislation that support the attraction and of migrant entrepreneurs' ventures (Williams & Krasniqi, 2018). However, the extent of this legislation and policy are broad. While some focus on addressing issues and challenges that limit migrants' entrepreneurial venture, others focus on business attraction and the attraction of skilled migrants with entrepreneurial ventures (Luisa et al., 2014; Msomi, 2021).

Migrant entrepreneurship is fundamentally portrayed by certain characteristics. The peculiarity of these features is not the same for all migrants' entrepreneurs (Malerba & Ferreira, 2022). There are both negative and positive aspects of motivation for migrants' entrepreneurs. For the negatives, migrant's entrepreneurship only exists because of unemployment and labour market discrimination

(Cobbinah & Chinyamurindi, 2018). Available literature evidence suggests that the high rate of unemployment has often provided migrants entrepreneurs the motivation to venture into entrepreneurship (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). In countries with high rate of unemployment, migrants are discriminatory excluded and end up being entrepreneurs. Thus, it is often argued that many migrants prefer entrepreneurship for the avoidance of labour market discrimination which exposes them to low-wage jobs and prevent growth and sustainability (Mothibi et al., 2015). Although, some individuals may have no other preference than self-employment and venture creation. Having conceptualized migrant entrepreneurship, the next section of the paper explains challenges, issues and sustainability of migrant entrepreneurship.

CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF MIGRANTS' ENTERPRISE IN POST-COVID 19.

The migration-entrepreneurship literature has recounted several challenges and sustainability issues with migrant entrepreneurs (Brown, 2017). Studies have shown migrants entrepreneurs encounter both internal and external challenges (Bruton et al., 2010; Muchineripi et al., 2019). While internal challenges are prone to ease of solution, external challenges are often difficult to manage including access and integration into local markets (Jose, 2018). Migrants' entrepreneurs' challenges can also be understood from the prism of male and female point of analysis. For instance, compare to male with more entrepreneurial skills of integration and navigation, female migrants' entrepreneurs are often challenged with integration challenges (Mueller et al., 2023). Literature evidence also suggests that women from developing nations are less likely to have the capital strength to commence an entrepreneurial venture as a migrant, largely reinforced by cultural beliefs (Muchineripi et al., 2019). Cultural beliefs and traditions may hinder women migrants in terms of gender inequality and fear of risk (Muchineripi et al., 2019). One of the most encountered challenges for many migrants is communication barriers. Ram et al., (2016) argued that local language posits constraints to migrants' entrepreneurs' growth and survival in many contexts. With evidence that many migrants' entrepreneurs struggle to understand and communicate in the local language of host communities, business continuity, success and survival remained largely problematic. This narrative support increased evidence of labour market discrimination and other systemic exclusion of migrants' entrepreneurs in the broad scheme of business operations (Omisakin, 2017).

Many migrants' entrepreneurs, like other local entrepreneurs, require access to the financial systems of host countries. With barriers related to social, attitudinal and cultural, many migrants' entrepreneurs excluded from the financial systems of host of countries (Mueller et al., 2023; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). This reflects the typical societal view of migrants in general and can be explained by the wider trust of migrants of their own identity. Evidence supports that migrants' entrepreneurs' exclusion on many grounds is related to questions of identity (Abizu, 2018). Financial institutions are often aback in terms of providing migrants with start-up capital and progressing credit facilities that support enterprise growth and sustainability (Akanle, 2022). Several commentaries have argued that the challenge of trust between migrants' entrepreneurs and financial institutions of host countries may have further compounded this challenge (Williams & Krasniqi, 2018; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). While the centurms of trust are established, language barriers can also expand this trust as most financial credit applications require genuine language integration in some instances (Achenbach, 2017).

The necessity to obtain adequate social resource by migrants for the commencement of a new business venture cannot be over emphasized. For instance, upon arrival, migrants typically lack robust ties with the new environment to commence a business venture (Hart & Acs, 2011).



Contrarily, however, migrant business success and venture greatly rest on the extent of their integration into local business setup, yet the hostility and unpleasant networking environment of some host communities towards migrants problematize the integration of migrants' entrepreneurs into their new business environment (Cobbinah & Chinyamurindi, 2018; Jose, 2018). Recent evidence suggests that host communities' trust and practices often determine the extent migrants' entrepreneurs can access business information and essential supports needed for the success and sustainability of their enterprise (Malerba & Ferreira, 2021).

Migrants' entrepreneurs are also constrained by systemic discrimination and prejudices that forms the roots cause of xenophobic attacks (Akanle, 2022; Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). Discriminatory practices towards migrants' entrepreneurs support the dispositional basis for indirect mistreatments. One of these discriminatory practices that often-constrain migrants' enterprise is xenophobia attacks. The idea of xenophobia represents an attitudinal outlook that rejects people based on the view that they are alien and unwanted in a community or country (Brzozowski et al., 2010). The frequent perception that migrants' entrepreneurs are taking over small businesses in their local communities of host have been met with consistent xenophobic attacks leading to loss of businesses and lives in some cases (Rensmann & Miller, 2017). Most migrants cluster are considered as inept but nice, and others competent but not likeable. This perspective supports the perceived differences in competency and likeability of migrants, such that the extent of discrimination against migrants depends on country of origin and likeability in many contexts. These expressions are also extended to migrants' business owners (Kloosterman et al., 2016). The institutional ecosystem where migrants' entrepreneurs work is likely impacted by the actions and policies of government and private sector alike. However, the lack of support of these actors for migrants' entrepreneurs in most developing countries is a pointer to institutional challenge for migrants' entrepreneurs (Fatoki & Chiliyam 2012). Supporting this claim is the verity that most institutional supports for small businesses is often piloted toward the locals leaving migrants entrepreneurs stranded of any institutional supports.

The post-COVID-19 pandemic comes with several sustainability challenges for small business ventures around the globe (Engidaw, 2022). The impact of these challenges on migrants' businesses is often more complicated with the lack of institutional supports and palliatives from host countries (Griffin-el & Olabisi, 2018). For many migrant entrepreneurs, business activities changed dramatically post COVID-19 with many businesses' liquidating (Tengeh & Lapah, 2013). Business fluctuations and weak turnover were some of the predominant effects for many migrant businesses' owners post COVID-19. For instance, while many businesses in the hospitality sector were most hit by the implication of post COVID, several migrants' businesses liquidated with the lack of institutional support (Hart & Acs, 2011). This reinforces the systemic exclusion and discriminatory practices against migrants' enterprise. The post COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates the enterprise activities of most migrant business owners coupled with the poor and low purchasing power of many South Africans. The vast presence of migrants' businesses in sectors considered mostly affected by the disruption of the pandemic has continued to attract commentaries as one of the cogent explanations that support the vulnerability of migrants' enterprises (Jolof et al., 2022). Many migrants' enterprise is constrained by cash liquidation challenges required for business sustainability. The consequential effect is the poor supply chain distributions for business survival (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021).



METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The philosophical grounding of this paper is built on interpretive assumptions to explore the socio-economic and business survival challenges of migrants' entrepreneurs in post-covid-19. In this study, the opinions and perceptions of migrants' entrepreneurs were unraveled to understand the socio-economic and business survival of migrants' entrepreneurs with the economic wave and disruptions of post-covid-19 in South Africa. These issues clearly support the traditions of the qualitative research approach. The design of the study supports exploratory research design. For instance, hardly has any study been conducted on the intersection of migration and entrepreneurship through the lens of socio-economic and business survival challenges in post covid-19 in South Africa. This supports the traditions of the exploratory research design to advance the limit of knowledge known on the discourse of migration and entrepreneurship in the context of post covid 19. The study population consist of selected migrants' entrepreneurs recruited from the city of Durban, South Africa. The city of Durban is justified being one of the economic hubs of South Africa with large number of local and foreign entrepreneurs. The characteristics of these entrepreneurs include owners of spaza shops, beauticians like hair saloon and barber shops, retail ethnic foods shop owners and care repairs and sales among others.

A total of 18 migrants' entrepreneurs were recruited from different nationality representing the wide range of migrants' entrepreneurs' population in Durban. This sample size justifies the traditions of qualitative study where emphasis is on small sample size for in-depth exploration of research problem than large number of sample size (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2011). To ensure that only migrants' entrepreneurs were recruited, referrals/snowballing approach was employed to garner appropriate responses on the socio-economic and business survival of migrants' entrepreneurs. Referral bias was managed by clearly determining the characteristics of respondents who have the wide range of opinion and experience required to provide clarity to the research problems, and by ascertaining that the demographics represent a wide spectrum of metrics including age, nationality, and gender etc. The inclusion criteria include entrepreneurs who are migrants and registered entrepreneurs in the Durban metropolis. Exclusion includes local entrepreneurs and un-registered entrepreneurs in the Durban metropolis.

Interviews were conducted in person, and all interviews were recorded with the permission of the respondents. An interview guide was employed during the interview process. Questions enquired include "Can you explain the socio-economic challenges affecting your enterprise as a migrant? Describe the survival of your business in post-covid as a migrant? Are there any palliatives offered to resuscitate your business in post covid-19? What is the future of migrants' enterprise in South Africa in your opinion? among others. All interviews were conducted in English Language being the basic language of communication by all respondents. The interview lasted for 25-35 minutes for each respondent. Member checking was used to ascertain the accuracy of the data. For example, all respondents were given the privilege to evaluate the transcripts interview scripts. This is to manage the researcher's bias and opinions by reducing the risk of misinterpretation of data. This process was done through keeping a reflective journal during the entire research process to report researcher's assumptions that could emerge during the data coding and analysis. For transferability of the

research findings to other context, thick description was employed to produce a thorough and appropriate narration of the research settings, the respondents and the methodological approach employed in the study. Confirmability was used to ascertain the consistency and synergy between data and interpretations to ensure that the conclusions are tied to the data. Lastly, audit trail and careful note taking of all events and challenges during the data collection were also ensured throughout the study.

Informed consents of all respondents were dully obtained, and respondents were advice of their right to participate or not and even seize to participates as the data collection progresses. The anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents was obtained and strictly protected during data collection and analysis. The data was analyzed with the NVivo v.14 with the emergence of themes that speaks to the research objectives. Thereafter, the themes were analyzed with major implications drawn to make sense of the research problem.

DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs

The study established a collection of issues that explain the typical operations and business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs as shown in Figure 1. For instance, restricted access of migrants to some sectors of the formal and informal economy was highlighted as the chief amongst these challenges. Some of the reasons alluded to these restrictions have to do with the nature of business permitted to foreign small business owners such as restriction from the alcohol industry for issues unconnected with migrants' entrepreneurs dominating this flourishing sector of the South African economy. Many of the respondents argued that despite their initial experience in some business areas and effort to secure appropriate requirements for the commencement, there are business that as a foreign migrant one cannot be allowed to access. This position neglects fundamental human rights and scrutinizes the small and medium business policies in the context of migrants' entrepreneurs in South Africa. What remains unclear is whether there are any policies or legislations that support such restrictions in line with international best practices.

While many migrants migrated for improved life and living conditions by commencing business enterprise for sustainability and growth of local community of host, it is interesting that there are still bottlenecks in terms of the nature and peculiarity of business they are permitted to embark on. This position clearly supports some of the conversations on the harsh business environment in South Africa, especially for migrants' entrepreneurs who directly or indirectly contributes to employment growth of the South African economy. According to many of the respondents, the South African labour market and business operations are controlled by lobbyist who determine who access and when. In other words, the decisions regarding access have not always been favourable to migrants' entrepreneurs. Thus, making it difficult for a large-scale business expansion for many migrants' business owners. One of the respondents explained as follows:

As a migrant entrepreneur, one of the major things I know that explain the business environment is that there is constriction everywhere. So long you are a migrant doing business in South Africa, it is likely you encounter restriction in one form or the other. There are businesses you cannot venture into even when you have the prerequisites to do so. They are just not possible because of some powerful restrictions that will deny you access. I believe this is not what it should be, but it is what it is. Migrants' entrepreneurs cannot think of having his or business in the alcohol sales or distribution, it is not possible. Amongst others, these are sectors preserve for the locals and not migrants.



Another issue that defines the operational and business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs is tax compliance and associated bottlenecks. For instance, while a migrant's entrepreneur is constitutionally bound to pay tax, such constitutional right should be extended to ensuring migrants entrepreneurs are not restricted on the type of business and sector they can do business as well. For instance, it was argued that compliance with tax has a close-up effect on migrants' entrepreneurs with the restrictions in other spheres of business endeavours. Many of the respondents argued that while migrants' enterprise is not as flourishing as local businesses, tax compliance has affected the viability and growth of many migrants' enterprises. One of the respondents said the following:

As migrants' business owners, we operate in a business space where compliance with tax is not optional but compulsory. What is not, however, interesting is that the same compliance is not extended to migrants' entrepreneurs when it comes to the nature of business and industry we wish to participate in for business. There is a strong system that makes it hard for anyone to invade tax and compliance. But what I noticed is that it appears to me that the penalties on migrants' entrepreneurs are immediate and stringent. I am not sure if this statement is completely right, but there have been occasions as a business owner I am not given fair hearing when it comes to tax compliance. Again, with the nature of business, I strongly believe that the tax system should work in a manner that considers business fluctuation with less stringent measures.

Another respondent recounts on the issue of tax compliance within the business environment as a fact that determine the operations of migrants' business in South Africa. The respondent argues that there is a need for leniency and argued that the migrants' entrepreneurs despite complying with taxes are not given free opportunities to do business within the South Africa business space.

I believe there is no point complying with legal conditions like taxes and one is still subject to unfair treatment in the business environment. We cannot comply with rules, and the same rules are not in our favour when it comes to business exploration. I will be correct to say the large number of small businesses that comply and pay taxes are within the migrant businesses, yet we are constrained on many fronts. When it also comes to the exercise of penalties and strict punishments you will see that migrants' entrepreneurs are spotted quickly. I really do not think this should be the case since we are also contributing to the economy through our enterprise.

The recurring theme of business registration as factor that characterized the business and operational environment of migrants' entrepreneurs highlights the significant pressure that migrants' small business owners face. Most of the respondents explain that in certain instances, migrants' entrepreneurs are constrained with business registration despite meeting up with basic requirements as mandated by the local authority for business registration. The notion that migrants' enterprise contributes substantially to the development of local economy appears to be undermined by the constraints of business registration. For instance, it is assumed that if migrants' enterprise contributes to local economy growth, then business registration should not be restricted especially when the rules of business registration are complied with. However, the issues around these restrictions are complex. Although, the restrictions and complexities of business registration do not affect all migrants' enterprise, many of the respondents agreed this is a challenge that has continued to limit the spread and growth of migrants' enterprise in South Africa. This trend is further complicated by the hostility against migrants' small business owners which reinforces the unwelcoming nature of many South Africans towards migrants' enterprises. While it is expected that this challenge should be given the most attention, it is observed that challenges in businesses and other hostilities towards migrants' enterprise are unending.

For me, what I can say is that the business environment for many of us who are migrants is not the same for others who are not. For instance, when you talk about business registration to make your business formal as a migrant, there are several issues that you will be constraining with. This is not to say issues in terms of compliance, but issues in terms of intentionally frustrating you to register your business because you are a migrant. I have seen occasions that this played out. There are instances that even when you meet up with all the criteria, you will still be constrained by some forces. This difficulty has forced many to eventually carry on their businesses without formalization.

Many respondents argued that the lack of access or constrained to business registration and formalization has continued to discourage many migrants entrepreneurs within the Republic with increasing fear of intimidation and legal sanctions among others. The goal for many is to have their business registered as a law-abiding migrant, but situation in many instances has further complicated this pursuit leaving many with the fear of the unknown. The consequential fallout from all these impacts the migrant entrepreneurs and the growth of the local economy.

Many of the migrant business owners who are not interested in boycotting procedures have left with their businesses because of the frustration of not being able to register with their businesses. You cannot be here trying to establish business that will benefit both you and the local community by creating jobs, yet you are being frustrated while you try to formalize your business. Many of the migrant business owners I know who are intentional about their enterprise have had to leave because of these hostile treatments.

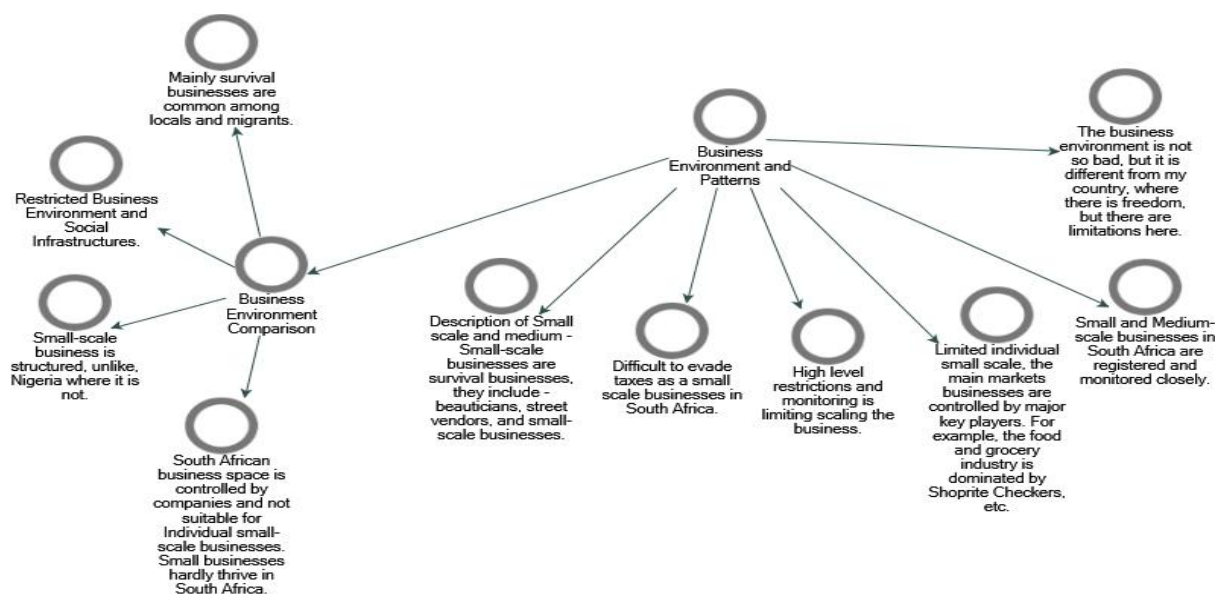


Figure 1. Operational business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs

Challenges and issues of integration

The impact of the lack of access to loans and business support for migrants' entrepreneurs has provoked many challenges of integration (see Figure 2). In many instances, while local enterprise is often supported with small business seeds for expansion, many migrants' entrepreneurs are secluded from this opportunity. In many instances, it is very rare to find a migrants entrepreneurs granted access to loans for business expansion, despite having the appropriate documentation. Most of the respondents argued that the loan system is not meant for migrants' business owners despite contributing hugely to the local economy growth of the country. It was explained that migrants'



entrepreneurs are constrained by intentional discrimination and seclusion policy when it comes to access to business loans. There is also evidence of lack of consideration of applications for loans from migrants by local businesses and financial institutions. While it is the responsibility of the government to ensure the continuous growth of small businesses, available evidence reveals the large mammoth of these responsibilities were to the allegiance of local South Africans, leaving migrants businesses owners out of the considerations. In addition, the available loans offered by financial institutions for business support are somewhat systemic with incessant isolation of migrants' business owners. One of the respondents explained below:

One of the integration challenges I think we face as migrants' entrepreneurs is the challenge of access to loan for our business. There is evidence of intentional discrimination against migrants' entrepreneurs when it comes to accessing loans and business support. I think that there are some institutional mechanisms that seem to be preventing migrants' entrepreneurs' access to loans and I really do not think this is healthy for the growth of our local economy. Migrants' enterprise contributes to the local economy and financial supports in terms of loans should not be restricted from them.

This suggests that many migrants' entrepreneurs often grow on their own with little or no access to loans or financial support from government and financial institutions. Majority of the respondents explained that the need to access loans from other sources is quite challenging and these efforts are not yielding appropriate measures in some instances. When it does, the impact on their business is overwhelming to say the least. In a sense, there is no opportunity for financial inclusion within the broad scale of business support.

Personally, as a migrant business owners living in South Africa, I do not think we are in the scheme of any support or access to loan for our business. We only do things on our own and try to sustain our business the best possible ways we can without any financial assistance or help from the government and financial institutions. A lot of us need to seek financial help elsewhere with stringent conditions attached. Most of the times, it does not materialize and we just continue with the struggle. Many migrants' businesses have had to close due to lack of support.

The study established the challenge of language and cultural barrier as cogent in migrants' entrepreneurs' integration in South Africa. Language and cultural barrier were found to be the cause of the lack of access and mistreatment that many migrants entrepreneurs are confronted with in South Africa. A clear understanding and interpretation of the local language is important for migrants' entrepreneurs to penetrate the local economy and expand their enterprise. Some of the reasons have to do with the plurality and cultural distinctions of South Africa. In instances like this, it will be difficult for migrants' entrepreneurs to understand and interpret the various languages. While Isi-Zulu remain the dominant language of communication, many respondents argued that there is still difficulty in their ability to speak and interprets the local language in business transactions causing them delayed integration and penetration. Most South Africans expect that as a migrant business owner, the barest minimum should be your ability to speak Isi-Zulu before they can patronize your business. One of the respondents explained.

I think the challenge of language and culture is one thing I know has been limiting the integration of many migrants' entrepreneurs into the South African business space. The business space is language and culture bond; hence access and integration require that one is fluent in the language to a certain extent. I have seen several business owners stalk because of their inability to speak local language. For instance, it will be difficult to have business in rural townships without a clear understanding of the

local language. Such business will stalk and remain slow in terms of sales. This is so because people at the rural end want you to speak and communicate with them in their local dilate before they patronize you.

Many of the migrants' entrepreneurs interview acknowledged the challenge of documentation and paperwork constraints. It was explained that many migrants' entrepreneurs are intentionally constrained with documentation in terms of visa application and renewal of existing visas. The arguments reflect the widespread perception of South Africans against migrants. There is also evidence that migrants' entrepreneurs are being frustrated for possible extortion and permission. Documentation and paper remain pivotal in business transaction and expansion of enterprise. The absence of it means that migrant's enterprise will continue to suffer setbacks with poor integration. One of the migrants' entrepreneurs said the following:

We are also challenged with the constraint of documentation and paperwork. It is extremely difficult to operate as a business owner without documentation and proper paperwork. The difficulties are multilayer including intentional denial and refusal to renew in most cases. We have also seen in some cases where denials or delays are based on the need to use the back doors before the permit can be granted. These things are happening to everyone even those considered to be legal resident in South Africa. Put together, the absence of documentation is really affecting how far one can go as migrants' business owner.

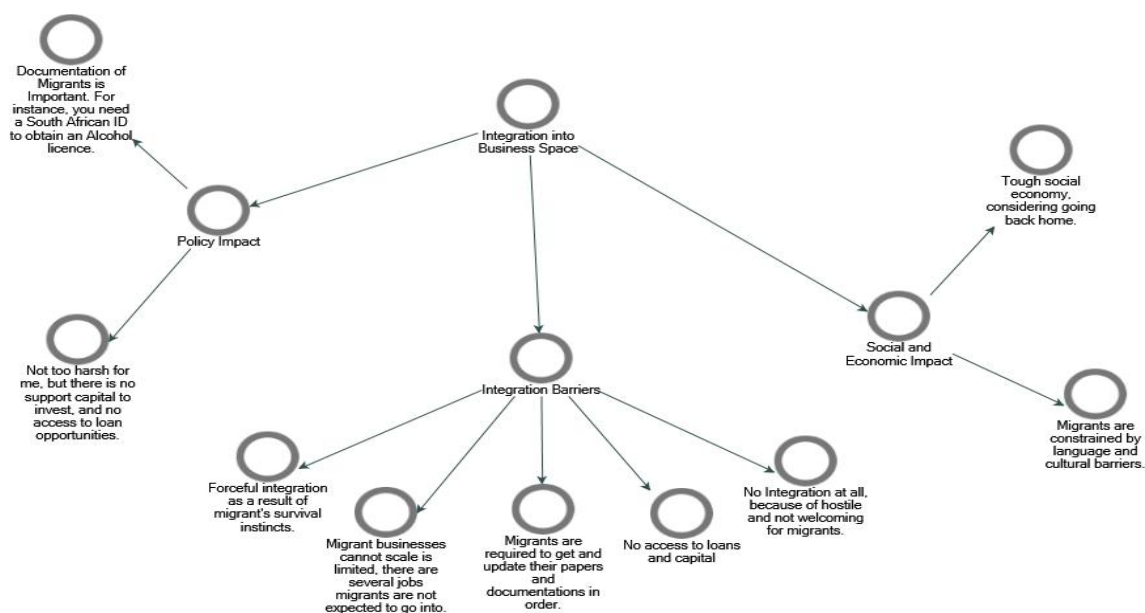


Figure 2. Integration challenges of migrants' entrepreneurs

The future of migrants' enterprise in post covid-19.

The post covid-19 pandemic no doubt provokes economic and business disruptions across the globe including South Africa as shown in Figure 3. The South Africa case like any other developing country is grossly affected with her high number of informal economy concentration. While there are several businesses in the local businesses, migrants' enterprises are also hugely present in this sector. Respondents argued that migrant enterprises are mostly affected by the disruptions of the pandemic due largely to the lack of intervention and palliatives from the government for sustainability measures. The respondents argued that local businesses were relieved of the pandemic by provision



of financial palliatives by the South African government leaving out migrants' enterprise. This is coming even with the huge role of migrant enterprise in the local economic development of the country. Thus, many of the migrant's entrepreneur argued that the future of their business was uncertain with the lack of support from government. As argued, government should be able to render sustainable support for the revival of their enterprises that were badly affected by the disruptions of the covid-19 pandemic. One of the respondents explained about the uncertainty of the future of migrant businesses below:

I am not sure migrants' business have future here in South Africa. Apart from the hostile environment, while the impact of the disruptions of the covid-19 was felt by both the local and migrants' businesses, local business owners were offered palliatives for the resuscitating of their businesses. So, for this reason, many migrants' business had to close due to their inability to continue with business. I mean as you know, the pandemic affected several things and small businesses being one of them. So, I do not see any future for migrants' business owners.

The future of migrants' enterprise is not certain for majority of migrants small business owners. For instance, aside from the fact that migrants' entrepreneurs are secluded from the privilege of palliatives, the impact of poor business growth also largely impacted migrants' businesses. While local businesses were rusticated, migrants' entrepreneurs were forced out of businesses with their inability to maintain their business enterprise by being unable to afford basic amenities like electricity and rents.

When you asked about the future of migrants' enterprise after the devastating effect of the pandemic, I was just not sure of what to say. I say this because there is nothing else left that one is doing here. We are just sleeping and waking. Our business has been crushed, and we do not have hope of any sort. What kind of future do one talk about when the uncertainty is clear? It will be easy to talk about future if we are supported, but this is not the case. So, for me, I think there is no future for migrants' business owners. We just must accept that.

Another respondent speaks about how the pandemic changes the face of amenities for the sustainability of their business. For instance, it was argued that social amenities become infrequent during post pandemic with consequential impact on the business growth of many migrants' entrepreneurs. This position was explained below:

The sustainability and continuity of our business as migrants were affected by the challenges of post-covid. One of these challenges is the issue of electricity. The post pandemic saw infrequent supply of electricity, and this largely affected our business. The impact was more severe on us because we could not improve due to the lack of support on like other local business owners.

For majority of the respondents, the future is exiting plan from the Republic. Respondents argued that there have outstayed their presence and thinking of exit plan since all they have had gone with the pandemic without sustainable help from any quarter. This narrative explains that the bulk of migrants' businesses are no longer functioning, and this is as good as quitting by exiting. What is evident from the above narrative is the verity that the desire to quit on the part of most migrants' entrepreneurs is not entirely related to the disruption of the pandemic but also include the discriminatory practices against migrants' business owners on many grounds. In agreement with this, most of the respondents argued that quitting and exiting is more preferred than wasting a lifelong year without anything tangible to ascertain. One of the respondents explained.

I think majority of the migrants' entrepreneurs are already thinking of exit plans and quitting. The general perception reflects that migrants' business venture has become a shadow of itself with the economic disruption of many migrants' business. For some, exiting is more honourable than wasting precious years chasing what seems to have been lost or not possible to retrieve.

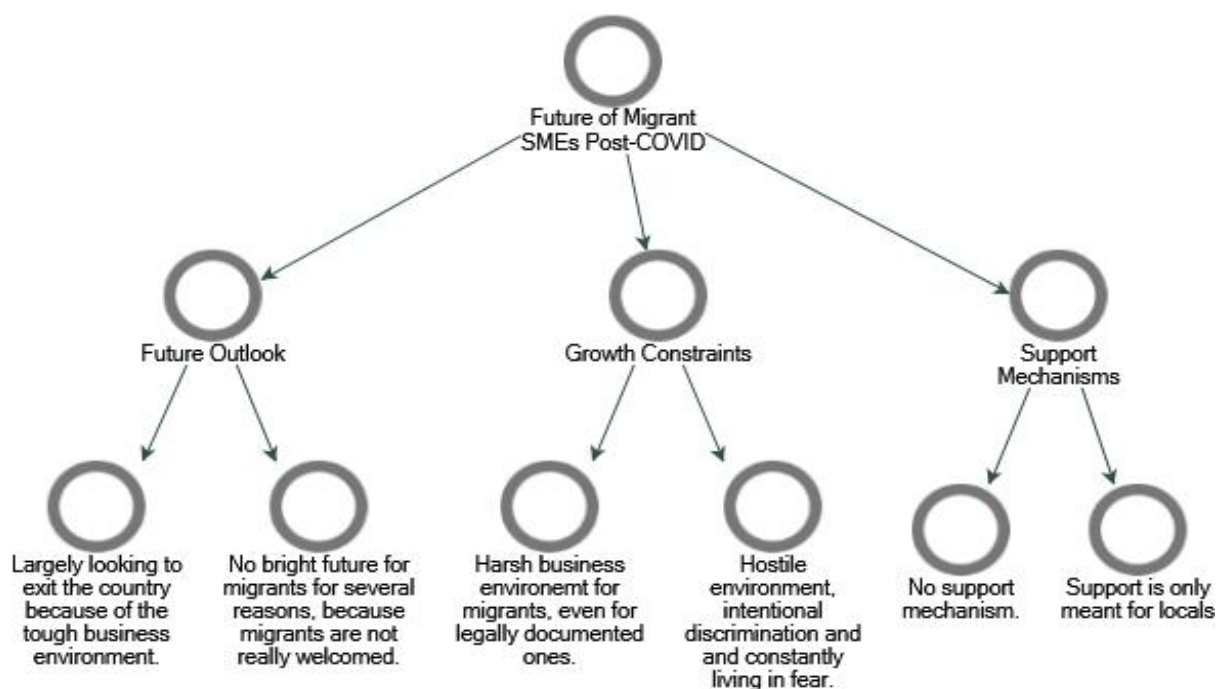


Figure 3. Future of migrants' entrepreneurs post covid-19

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The focus of this paper has been to understand migrants' entrepreneurs' socio-economic integration and business survival challenges in post COVID-19 in South Africa. The South Africa's case offers a rich deliberation on migrants' entrepreneurs' discourse and associated issues in the context of events that characterized migrants-local relationship. While several media statements and policy have been pronounced to address the conflictual relationship between migrants' business owners and locals, there is evidence that migrants' entrepreneurs' integration have consistently been constrained. As shown from the findings, the operational business environment of migrants' entrepreneurs is characterized by restricted access, tax compliance challenges, business registration puzzles, and seclusion from operating in certain business ventures. For instance, it was established that the restriction of business access explains that migrants' business owners are ineligible to compete in certain sectors of the economy including the alcohol economy. It was also established from the findings that the business operational environment in terms of compliance differs from local business owners, as stringent measure are employed to ensure migrants entrepreneurs' compliance. The operational businesses of migrants' entrepreneurs are also characterized with nuances in terms of business registration. These results support existing studies (Ngota et al., 2018; Mueller et al., 2023; Msomi et al., 2021; Mosweunyane & Chipunza, 2022).

The challenge of integration for many migrants' entrepreneurs is established. These include access to loan and business support, language and cultural barriers, hostility and xenophobic



attacks, and the challenge of documentation among others. To be sure, migrants' entrepreneurs suffer challenges of integration into the local economy because of lack of access to credit and loan facility for the sustainability of their enterprise. In essence, it was established that loan and credit facility were for the preference of locals, leaving migrants business owners despite their contributions to the growth of the South African economy. The language and cultural challenges possess serious integration challenges to migrants' business owners. For instance, the findings established that local South Africans prefer patronizing individuals who have the knowledge and understanding of South African language/s. Thus, for migrants' entrepreneurs to appropriately penetrate and integrate into the local economy, the knowledge and understanding of local language becomes important. The integration challenge of documentation also comes to bear. The findings showed an array of issues unconnected to legal documentations, including delayed approval and intended refusals. These issues were explained as constrained to the integration efforts of many migrants' business owners. Ensuring the bottlenecks associated with documentation challenge are swiftly addressed will follow with an increase in integration of migrants' business and the expansion of local economy in South Africa. Several similar studies shared same sentiments (Mago, 2020; Jolofet al, 2022; Arora, S. & Majumder, 2021; Akanle, 2022).

The findings on the future of migrants' enterprise in post COVID-19 in South Africa show a mix of commentaries. These include exit plan, absence of government intervention and poor business growth indicator. The findings show that majority of migrants business owners were staunchly affected by the economic disruption of the pandemic without adequate support or palliatives. The arguments for many are exit from South Africa. This corroborates the position for many that business growth has since dwindled with the impact of the pandemic. The position for many of the migrants' entrepreneurs explain the intentional exclusion of migrant's entrepreneurs from government sustainability support program and initiatives in post COVID-19. These results support existing studies (Engidaw, 2022; Arora & Majumder, 2021; Castro & Gomez-Zermeño, 2021; Mueller et al, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The need to expand the migrants' commentaries in South Africa beyond the existential understanding to a more robust discussion of the socio-economic integration challenges of migrants' entrepreneurs seeks to offer a fresh nuance of the significance of migrants' entrepreneurship in the local economy of South Africa. The study concludes on the evidence of the array of socio-economic challenges of migrants' entrepreneurs and the urgency to address them for a more effective migrants-local relationship. While it is no doubt that migrants' entrepreneurs represent a sizable number of the informal economy, the need for strategic policy that supports their socio-economic integration cannot be overemphasized. The Department of Labour and allied Departments must institute policy directives that support migrants' businesses for a broader local economy growth. In line with this, the Labour Department must pursue effective documentation of migrants' business owners. This position will help improve business sustainability. The study concludes that registered migrant's business must be supported through palliatives to ameliorate the economic disruptions and impact of COVID-19 on local businesses. Future studies can focus on a comparative analysis of migrants' entrepreneurs and local business to understand the trend of disparities in the functionalities of these businesses.



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