

Esenam Adetunji

**ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY MINORITY ENTREPRENEURS IN
THE NORTHERN FINLAND AREA: CASE OF AFRICAN FEMALE ENTREPRE-
NEURS.**

**ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY MINORITY ENTREPRENEURS IN
THE NORTHERN FINLAND AREA: CASE OF AFRICAN FEMALE ENTREPRE-
NEURS.**

Esenam Adetunji
Bachelor's Thesis
Autumn 2024
Degree Programme in International
Business
Oulu University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Degree Programme in International
Business

Author(s): Esenam Adetunji

Title of the thesis: **ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY MINORITY ENTREPRENEURS IN THE NORTHERN FINLAND AREA: CASE OF AFRICAN FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS.**

Thesis Supervisor: **Yanhong Xi**

Term and year of thesis completion: **Autumn term 2024** Pages: 73

Abstract:

This thesis is about African female entrepreneurs in the Oulu region. The study assessed their challenges and the opportunities available to them on their entrepreneurial journey. We interviewed three African female entrepreneurs from various countries to examine their business environment. We looked at their motives, obstacles, and strategies for building successful businesses. Our result reveals the real motives behind their entrepreneurship journey. Despite acknowledging the limited job opportunities and difficulties in the Finnish labour market, most of the interviewees started because of the opportunities they found in the market and also because of the desire to build something for themselves. Entrepreneurship in Finland has become attractive to African females, but they face challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and the inability to secure financial assistance. Despite these obstacles, African female entrepreneurs in Finland rely on social networks, support mechanisms, and government policies and initiatives to succeed. While the findings align with previous research on immigrant entrepreneurship, this study highlighted the particular case of African female entrepreneurs and discovered some unique key challenges for African female entrepreneurs in Finland such as the inability to penetrate the very closed Finnish business circles and networks. Our recommendation is the importance of addressing structural barriers, enhancing support services, and fostering diversity and inclusion in entrepreneurship ecosystems to help African female entrepreneurs further succeed in their business endeavors.

Keywords: Minority entrepreneurs, Northern Finland, challenges, access to finance, cultural barriers, discrimination, networks, institutional constraints, inclusive entrepreneurship

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
1.1	Background and purpose of the study	6
1.2	Research questions	7
1.3	Structure of the thesis	7
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1	Entrepreneurship	9
2.2	Female entrepreneurship	11
2.3	Immigrant entrepreneurship	12
2.3.1	The motivation behind immigrant entrepreneurship	13
2.4	Female Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Finland	15
2.4.1	The business environment for African female entrepreneurship in Finland	16
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	23
3.1	Research design and approach	23
3.2	Data collection	24
3.3	Profile of the Participants	25
4	DATA RESULTS ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS	26
4.1	Motivation to start a business as an African Female immigrant	26
4.1.1	Real market opportunities for African female entrepreneurs	27
4.1.2	Finnish supportive business environment and innovative ecosystem	28
4.2	Challenges Faced by African females Entrepreneurs in the Oulu Region	29
4.2.1	Language and Cultural Barriers	29
4.2.2	Access for resources to scale the business	30
5	SOLUTIONS & SUGGESTIONS	31
5.1	Support Mechanisms and Interventions	32
5.1.1	FINANCIAL SUPPORT MECHANISM	34
5.1.2	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	36
5.1.3	COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION	39
5.1.4	CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING	42
5.2	Government Policies and Initiatives	46
5.2.1	Existing policies and support structures	48
5.2.2	Inclusive Financial Policies	51

5.2.3	Expanding outreach and accessibility.....	52
5.3	Role of Business Support Organizations.....	54
5.4	Community-Based Support Networks.....	57
5.5	Future Directions and Recommendations.....	59
5.5.1	Addressing Structural Barriers.....	60
5.5.2	Enhancing Support Services.....	61
5.5.3	Fostering Diversity and Inclusion in Entrepreneurship Ecosystems.....	63
6	CONCLUSIONS.....	65
7	SUMMARY.....	69
	REFERENCES.....	73

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and purpose of the study

Entrepreneurship among immigrants, whether motivated by the desire to break through job obstacles or by people looking for new chances, has been demonstrated to positively affect the economies of both the host countries and the immigrant communities (Kushnirovich 2015). This is especially crucial in Finland, where immigrants generate income and pay taxes partly because of their intellectual property, among other things. In order to stabilize the workforce, Yle (2022) reports that the Etna Economic Research Institute recommends that immigration in Finland almost triple, or 44,000 persons each year. Growing immigration has the potential to be beneficial for Finland because it would support economic growth and make public finances much more sustainable.

Nonetheless, newcomers face considerable difficulties assimilating into Finnish society. With the challenging weather, professional employment prospects are scarce, and newcomers must overcome the extra challenge of learning Finnish, among the hardest languages to learn. Language hurdles, job discrimination, racism and inequality, and a lack of integration opportunities are the four main areas of difficulty for immigrants in Finland, according to data gathered from 103 of them (Nshom 2022).

These difficulties continue as more immigrants come to Finland, especially for employment or education (Migri, 2023). Many people find that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative, but it is not without its own set of challenges that can result in failure. Considering these ongoing obstacles, it is imperative that anybody interested in the entrepreneurial experiences of immigrants comprehend these issues.

In order to help immigrants thrive in their entrepreneurial endeavors, this thesis will look at the particular difficulties that they encounter and propose workable solutions. Further investigation into the research question is whether immigrants' entrepreneurship stems from a sincere wish to launch a firm or from a lack of job opportunities. Additionally, by understanding the needs of immigrants

and creating tailored support programs to help them on their entrepreneurial journeys, organizations like Business Oulu will benefit from the information this thesis will provide them.

1.2 Research questions

The questions this research aims to answer are as follows:

1. How well do African female entrepreneurs in Finland fail or succeed in business?
2. What are the main challenges faced by African female entrepreneurs in Finland?
3. What are the solutions available for them to succeed in Finland?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters, each of which focuses on a significant finding from the study of the challenges faced by African women business owners in Finland. A summary of the study's background and objectives is given in the first chapter, which also introduces the subject. The importance of comprehending the experiences of African female entrepreneurs is emphasized, and the research topics that will direct the study are outlined.

The second chapter offers a thorough literature review after the introduction. The main ideas and philosophies of entrepreneurship are examined in this chapter, with an emphasis on the entrepreneurship of women and immigrants. To set the stage for the empirical investigation, it also looks at earlier research that clarified the difficulties African women in Finland encountered as they pursued their entrepreneurial dreams.

The research approach employed in the study is described in the third chapter. This contains an explanation of the data collection method, which is qualitative and centers on semi-structured interviews with female African entrepreneurs. The methods utilized for data analysis and participant selection are also covered in detail in this chapter.

The fourth chapter provides the study's results. This chapter analyzes the interview data, highlighting recurring themes, including reasons for launching a business, obstacles faced, and methods for overcoming obstacles. The findings are examined in light of the body of current literature.

The fifth chapter explores the initiatives and support systems accessible to female African entrepreneurs in Finland. It critically assesses how community networks, business support organizations, and government initiatives assist these entrepreneurs in navigating the Finnish business climate.

The thesis is finally concluded in the sixth chapter, which summarizes the key discoveries and explores their wider ramifications. It also identifies areas that need greater investigation, especially in creating more efficient systems of assistance for immigrant entrepreneurs.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is about the Literature review, discussing key terms and concepts, current studies, and theories related to entrepreneurship, particularly immigrant entrepreneurship. The last part of this chapter will discuss immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland.

2.1 Entrepreneurship

Numerous definitions of entrepreneurship exist, and academics all have different points of view on the topic. An entrepreneur is a person who embarks on endeavors; the name comes from the French word meaning "one who undertakes." This broad meaning, however, sometimes leads to arguments regarding its vagueness and the problem of arriving at a universally agreed definition Dollinger, M.J. (2008).

Despite these challenges, a few crucial concepts are evident. In addition to taking on managerial and financial risks, entrepreneurs risk their entire careers when they pursue the establishment of a stand-alone business, according to Gartner (1990). An entrepreneur is a critical player in the early phases of a new firm, and their success is closely linked to the enterprise. This endeavor usually takes the shape of a for-profit company, though starting as one is unnecessary. For instance, a leveraged buy-out of a section of a larger company may qualify as an entrepreneurial venture even in the absence of new goods or services if certain conditions are met.

It is further emphasized by Gartner (1990) that entrepreneurship includes all actions associated with starting and running a small or startup business. This covers both starting new companies and purchasing already existing ones. It is vital to emphasize that entrepreneurship extends beyond typical start-ups and can encompass new enterprises within established firms, non-profits, or governmental institutions.

Persistence is considered the most crucial quality of an entrepreneur, viewed as a leader who launches and manages a for-profit or nonprofit organization. Although managers usually prefer

moderate risks, entrepreneurs are naturally risk-takers, and their views on risk may differ significantly. Onuoha (2007) defines entrepreneurship as building new organizations or revitalizing old ones, primarily in response to perceived possibilities. The emphasis on possibilities, innovation, and expansion that characterizes this entrepreneurial mindset can be found in huge enterprises and socially conscious groups (Allen, 2006).

According to Schumpeter (1989), an entrepreneur is a person who successfully converts innovative ideas into profitable commercial ventures by producing goods and services.

According to Drucker (1970) and Knight (1921), taking risks is the fundamental component of entrepreneurship. According to Bolton and Thompson (2000), an entrepreneur is a person who regularly innovates and develops, adding value to opportunities they see. According to Hisrich (1990), an entrepreneur also shows initiative and inventiveness, efficiently manages resources, and is not afraid to take risks and experience failure.

According to Gartner (1990), entrepreneurship is the process of honing innovative ideas, modifying them for the market, and acquiring the resources required to support self-employment or profit-making.

It is evident from examining these varied definitions that entrepreneurs are typically associated with a number of essential traits. These include risk-taking, growth orientation, creativity, adaptability, motivation, confidence, discipline, leadership, invention, curiosity, and knowledge. The concept of entrepreneurship is so tightly related to individuals with particular personality traits, such as perseverance, dedication, vision, and autonomy, all of which are important for entrepreneurial success (Gartner, 1990).

2.2 Female entrepreneurship

This study focuses on businesses that are founded and run by female entrepreneurs. However, it is difficult to make direct comparisons because the criteria of women-owned enterprises vary greatly depending on the regional context. For example, a business that is either fully or predominantly owned by one or more women is considered to be women-owned in the United Kingdom (Marlow et al., 2008). On the other hand, a company is considered women-owned in the US if the majority of its shareholders, or the principal owner, is a woman and she controls at least 51% of the company (US Census Bureau, 2002).

Women's rights to participate in civil and political life were historically attained in the early 20th century, partly as a result of social movements made possible by greater educational opportunities. The push for gender equality had its start at this time. By the 1970s, these initiatives had had a major effect on social structures, redefining gender roles in the workplace among other things. Despite an increase over this period, women's labor force participation remained proportionately lower than men's (Lages, 2005).

The 1980s saw the beginning of female entrepreneurship's prominence as a topic of academic study. According to Gomes et al. (2014), the surge in female entrepreneurship during this time frame was a reflection of the growing number of women entering the workforce as both employees and business owners. However, women entrepreneurs during this time sometimes encountered misconceptions, especially when seeking loans from financial institutions. Financial agents typically held discriminatory beliefs, claiming that women lacked the required characteristics to succeed as entrepreneurs (Gomes et al., 2014). This bias originated from assumptions that women lacked the requisite traits to be effective corporate executives.

Research on female entrepreneurship has been typically underrepresented compared to that of male entrepreneurship. Men are thought to have better chances of succeeding in business because they can more easily leverage their networks, contributing to this discrepancy. Research has demonstrated that women's social networks are typically smaller and of a different quality than men's (Verheul & Thurik, 2001; Koellinger et al., 2013). According to Carter, Anderson, and Shaw (2001), networks play a crucial but little-studied role in female entrepreneurship. While some studies suggest that women do not engage as actively in formal or established networks (OECD, 1998),

others point out that self-employed women tend to have lower levels of networking (Katz & Williams, 1997) and often rely more on social networks than business networks (Baker et al., 1997).

Nevertheless, experts today universally accept the value of social capital and networking to the success of women-owned enterprises (Brush et al., 2006). According to a North Carolina study, men and women network at similar rates and use similar channels to obtain information. However, women tend to resort to other women for business support, whereas males are more likely to turn to other men (Aldrich et al., 1997). People of all sexes are open to asking for help from people outside of their close social networks, even from people they have never met before.

Brieger (2021) emphasizes further the particular difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs, especially those who are immigrants. Compared to men, women are frequently at a disadvantage since they are more likely to depend on a supportive environment to ensure their business success. Women are less likely to start their own businesses for various reasons, including limited access to start-up funding, undeveloped formal and informal networks, and restricted economic rights. According to Brieger (2021), these drawbacks emphasize the necessity of more robust environmental support systems to encourage women to pursue entrepreneurship, especially female immigrants.

2.3 Immigrant entrepreneurship

At some point, people who go abroad from their birth nation are considered immigrants (Wadhwa et al., 2007). The process via which these people locate, generate, and take advantage of business possibilities by starting new enterprises in their new countries is known as immigrant entrepreneurship (Shane, 2012). With major contributions from academics like Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), Portes and Jensen (1989), Kloosterman and Rath (2001), Jones et al. (2010), and Dana and Morris (2007), immigrant entrepreneurship has developed into a separate field of study throughout time.

People move in today's globalized world for various reasons, including work, opportunities, investments, education, or just to raise their standard of living. Many immigrants use entrepreneurship to accomplish these things in their new surroundings. Therefore, in many nations, immigrant entre-

preneurship has become a prominent and widespread phenomenon (Brzozowski et al., 2019; Desiderio & Mestres-Domenech, 2011; Kushnirovich, 2015). In host countries, about 12% of immigrants run their own enterprises, and compared to inhabitants of their home countries, immigrants are more likely to work for themselves. These statistics come from the European Commission (2015).

2.3.1 The motivation behind immigrant entrepreneurship

In order to get past obstacles to employment or as a calculated step to investigate attractive prospects in new areas, immigrants frequently launch enterprises. This phenomenon has produced benefits for the host economy as a whole as well as for ethnic immigrant populations (Kushnirovich, 2015).

There are two main types of motives for entrepreneurs: necessity-driven and opportunity-driven. Entrepreneurship driven by need is the term for businesses started by people with no other way to make a living, usually in areas with high unemployment rates. On the other hand, highly skilled entrepreneurs, especially those in developed nations who are motivated by innovation and take advantage of the plentiful job prospects, seem more likely to engage in opportunity-driven entrepreneurship (Bosma et al., 2017). Many immigration policies are based on the commonly held belief that immigrants are highly entrepreneurial and essential to economic growth and innovation (Malerba & Ferreira, 2021).

Studies corroborate the notion that immigrant-led companies are typically more inventive and employ more proactive tactics (Nathan & Lee, 2013; Chaganti et al., 2008). Additionally, these businesses have greater success with their internationalization initiatives (Hart & Acs, 2011; Morgan et al., 2018). Including non-immigrant and ethnically diverse members in founding teams encourages creative thinking, which helps these businesses deal with the unpredictabilities of the business world (Chaganti et al., 2008).

Malerba and Ferreira (2021) further highlight the competitive advantages of immigrant entrepreneurs, which are derived from their ability to initially leverage resources within their ethnic communities (ethnic enclave strategy), followed by their integration into the host country's mainstream

market (break-out strategy). Lastly, many immigrant business owners use transnational business operations (internationalization tactics) to grow their businesses abroad.

A greater incentive to perform better exists for those whose motives are driven by achievement. This drive is referred to as N-ach. For immigrant entrepreneurs, achieving results is crucial (Wright 2009, p. 135). According to McClelland, individuals with a high need for achievement are often the best leaders and have a strong desire to attain goals, which can motivate those around them.

A person will put in more effort to better himself if reaching goals is their primary driving force. They take satisfaction in surpassing their peers and strive to surpass expectations. These folks prefer mentally demanding work and prefer to be in control of their own achievements. (Wright, 135 (2009).

For most immigrant entrepreneurs, the only thing that drives them is achievement. They frequently have an unyielding drive to succeed, which is essential for survival in a foreign country. Wright (2009), 135

From another perspective, another motivation that can drive an immigrant to become an entrepreneur can be categorized into pull and push factors. Pull factors include exogenous variables, like employment, dissatisfaction or discontent in a current job, and challenges in making career advancements. Pull factors are used to highlight the opportunities that markets present and personal traits like the drive for self-actualization, high achievement motivation, and independence. These traits are frequently linked to a person's propensity for becoming an entrepreneur. It is crucial to remember that a person's personal and professional experiences will greatly influence their business decisions. The conditions that foster the development of business clusters or favorable conditions in certain communities or geographical areas will vary from nation to nation.

The majority of immigrants are kept in low-paying positions due to obstacles such as poor language proficiency, trouble balancing work and school, unfamiliarity with the labor market requirements of the new country, and instances of discrimination in employment possibilities. Even though push factors are typically linked to the decision to become an entrepreneur, a number of studies show that pull factors also play a significant role in the motivation of immigrant entrepreneurs to launch a business (Joronen, Pajarinen & Ylä Anttila, 2002).

2.4 Female Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Finland

Based on data from Statistics Finland (2023), immigration to Finland hit a record high of 49,998 in 2022, up from 29,000–36,000 in prior years. With regard to business demographics, Suomen Yrittäjät (2024) states that, excluding agriculture, forestry, and fishing, there are 443,731 enterprises functioning in Finland that employ 1.45 million people in total. These businesses contribute a substantial tax revenue, which goes toward paying for public services. Interestingly, 95% of these companies employ fewer than ten people. Roughly ten thousand of these businesses were started by businesspeople who immigrated to Finland. According to Suomen Yrittäjät (2019), the aggregate turnover of these immigrant-founded firms is €3.5 billion, with approximately 30,000 employees.

Suomen Yrittäjät (2019) confirms further that enterprises formed by immigrants typically generate more jobs than companies founded by natives. There is still much room for expansion even though the productivity and compensation in enterprises started by immigrants may be lower. Immigration to Finland is clearly on the rise; this is demonstrated by the fact that almost one in three clients of the Finnish Enterprise Agencies in the Helsinki area are immigrants.

Despite economic difficulties, the number of firms founded by immigrants increased throughout the crisis. The number of firms started by immigrants rose by over 9% between 2013 and 2016 (Suomen Yrittäjät, 2019). The rate of entrepreneurship among native Finns is similar to that of immigrants; nevertheless, between 2006 and 2014, the number of foreign entrepreneurs increased in tandem with the growth in the labor force. However, entrepreneurship rates fluctuate dramatically between immigrant groups; for instance, approximately 40% of the Turkish immigrant population is self-employed, compared to only 4% of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Foreign residents' contributions to the influx and outflow of entrepreneurs have grown over time (Fornaro, 2018).

According to Juvonen (2018), immigrants in Finland encourage entrepreneurship: "Entrepreneurship persists when there are no other jobs available in the labor market.". He also points out that since it is hard to find a job sometimes, immigrants are encouraged to become entrepreneurs.

Millions of individuals worldwide value and rely on entrepreneurship as a source of income. Without entrepreneurs, modern economies would not function in any nation in the world since there would not be enough labor to meet everyone's needs.

Because gender equality has progressed well in Finland, it is safe for women to start their businesses. Finland is ranked third in the world in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report (Finland Toolbox, 2020). The job market in Finland is equally represented by men and women, despite continuous discussions about the state of gender equality in the country. However, we may assert that compared to many other nations, gender equality is significantly better in Finland. It is possible to start your own business regardless of the gender you identify with.

Every year, the number of African immigrant women-owned businesses in Finland increases. They nevertheless decide to launch their company in Finland despite obstacles like operating environments, legal forms, cultural and linguistic difficulties, and language barriers. Analysing Finland's enterprises from the viewpoint of foreigners can be done by examining the reasons for this choice.

Starting a new company takes a lot of work, patience, and mental toughness; it is never easy. As a result, when someone embarks on an entrepreneurial journey, opportunities and problems are always present and await their resolution. There are numerous reasons why people choose to relocate abroad and establish their businesses in nations other than their own, even though being an entrepreneur in one's native country is inherently challenging and much more so abroad.

2.4.1 The business environment for African female entrepreneurship in Finland

Finland is renowned for being among the first nations in the world to grant women the ability to run their enterprises and exercise their political rights. Finland has the 16th-best entrepreneurial climate for women among comparator nations, according to the 2021 GEM report (Global et al.). In Finland, women make up about 33% of entrepreneurs, and 5% are immigrants or have foreign backgrounds. Even in this progressive setting, starting and expanding a business remains extremely difficult for female entrepreneurs, especially those with international origins.

Finland is subject to the previously mentioned Europe 2020 Strategy, Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, and EU Action Plan on integrating third-country nationals in entrepreneurship promotion among migrants. The state also participates in global initiatives to encourage young immigrants to pursue business. For example, under the initiative Migrants Empowerment for Change (Me2Change), Junior Achievement Finland (JA Finland) works with organizations in Germany, Italy, and Belgium to build mentorship and education programs for young immigrants that focus on entrepreneurship. Students in school, college, and university from 7 to 25 years old can take advantage of JA Finland's business training programs.

In general, Finland is still in the process of modifying its social and legal structures to meet the demands of migrant business owners better. According to the OECD (2017), the services offered by migrant entrepreneurial organizations seem to be redundant and disorganized. However, the nation has already established the first information support systems.

In addition to networking and mentorship opportunities, free professional consultations are offered to immigrants through 29 Finnish Enterprise Agencies spread across the nation's major cities. The comprehensive manual on starting a business in Finland, "Becoming an Entrepreneur in Finland," is accessible in English, Russian, Arabic, Turkish, and Somali. An additional business consulting organization called "NewCO Helsinki" was founded by the City of Helsinki and is based in the state capital.

Additionally, a sizable contingent of Finnish organizations finances the ventures of migrant entrepreneurs. In 2018, the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovations (Tekes) and the trade promotion organization Finpro joined forces to form a new entity known as Business Finland. This organization is primarily focused on offering assistance, advice, and mentorship to prospective businesses with the aim of fostering a competitive and enduring business landscape in Finland. Concurrently, the Finnish Startup Permit was introduced alongside the creation of Business Finland and the Finnish Immigration Service.

It helps citizens of third-world countries acquire the legal status required to engage in business in Finland. The Employment and Economic Development Office (TE Office), the Center for Economic

Development, Transportation and Environment (ELY), and Finnvera, the Finnish Export Credit Agency, offer financial help and pertinent training.

Immigrant businesses are frequently beset with restrictions, hurdles, and discriminatory practices. In fact, it is widely known that immigrants encounter a variety of language, cultural, and legal challenges when conducting business in their new country. Researchers have also observed that the government is frequently the primary agent in creating and maintaining inequality. Any restrictions ingrained in the local opportunity structure that either directly or indirectly impact migrants' self-employment activities are considered structural barriers to entrepreneurship. These restrictions may be brought about by national and subnational organizations that have an impact on several facets of the lives of migrants.

The economic opportunities available in host communities can pose challenges for newcomers. This underscores the importance of implementing inclusive policies to recognize and support those who are marginalized as they pursue entrepreneurship. Some argue that employing an intersectional approach, which examines the interconnected nature of privilege and oppression, can help advance these goals. This is particularly crucial because an intersectional analysis prompts us to consider forms of inequality that may not be immediately apparent. Hankivsky and Cormier assert that intersectionality could have wide-ranging benefits across various policy areas.

The concept of intersectionality plays a crucial role in empowering immigrants and shaping anti-discrimination policies. Recent national and subnational initiatives supporting migrant entrepreneurship highlight the significance of intersectionality in understanding the complexities of oppression and empowerment in real-life scenarios.

In essence, policymakers should prioritize the development of well-structured policies that facilitate the seamless integration of migrants into the economic and social fabric of society.

Regarding social dynamics, the Finnish opportunity structure currently lacks expertise in managing cross-cultural business interactions. This deficiency has resulted in cultural incompetence, limited understanding of international markets, and discrimination based on various criteria. Consequently, Finnish business professionals often shy away from engaging in economic partnerships with female Black Africans to mitigate perceived risks.

The success of African female entrepreneurs in Finland is greatly impacted by specific linguistic and cultural constraints. These obstacles, which arise from linguistic difficulties and cultural disparities, make it difficult for these women to network, conduct business, and integrate into Finland's entrepreneurial community. We may gain a deeper understanding of African female entrepreneurs' experiences, pinpoint the challenges they encounter, and investigate potential solutions by delving into the intricacies of these hurdles.

Communicating in another language is essential for success as an entrepreneur, particularly in a place like Finland, where the majority language is Finnish. The Finnish language frequently presents a substantial barrier for African American women business owners. There is ample evidence that learning Finnish is challenging, and many immigrants use English as their primary language for business and daily communication. However, using Finnish in legal papers, business dealings, and customer relations poses challenges for non-fluent speakers of the language. This statement encapsulates the difficulties of numerous African women who pursue entrepreneurship, as their inability to speak Finnish restricts their access to resources, networks, and customers.

Nshom (2022) emphasizes that linguistic limitations are one of the main difficulties immigrants face in Finland. The study, which collected data from 103 immigrants, found that many struggle to learn Finnish because of its complexity, which hinders their capacity to interact with people in social and professional contexts. According to Nshom, immigrants frequently struggle to obtain professional work if they do not speak Finnish well. As a result, many of them resort to entrepreneurship as a means of overcoming these obstacles.

Most communication in Finnish society, including the corporate world, is done in Finnish. Because of this, those who are not fluent are frequently shut out of crucial administrative procedures, networking events, and business dealings. According to Suomen Yrittäjät (2019), language barriers are a common problem for immigrant business owners, particularly when interacting with financial institutions, the government, and clients who might prefer or need to communicate in Finnish.

Fluency in Finnish is generally necessary to fully integrate into the local market, even in corporate environments where English may only be used as a bridge language. This aligns with the findings of Fornaro (2018), who studied immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland and discovered that language hurdles impacted access to critical support systems, including funding, networking, and

mentorship in addition to business operations. Immigrant businesses that do not speak Finnish fluently face limited development and expansion chances.

Furthermore, communication with partners, suppliers, and government agencies may be hampered by language problems. If they do not speak Finnish, it might be challenging for business owners to deal with bureaucratic procedures, including business registration, permit applications, and loan acquisition. This adds levels of difficulty that highly skilled immigrants or native speakers of Finland do not experience. According to Migri (2023), numerous procedures, including business registration, tax filing, and permit acquisition, call for fluency in Finnish due to the complexity of Finland's legal and administrative environment. Many immigrants still struggle to comprehend the subtleties of legal and business jargon in their non-native languages, despite the fact that certain resources are available in English. This problem is made worse by the possibility that many business associates and government representatives prefer or demand communication in Finnish, further alienating individuals who are not fluent in the language.

Due to cultural disparities, African women in Finland have additional challenges in their entrepreneurial endeavors. The high-context communication style of Finnish society is well-known, in contrast to the more direct communication patterns prevalent in many African cultures. This cultural mismatch may result in misunderstandings in business negotiations, networking gatherings, and client contacts. Nshom (2022) emphasizes that immigrants frequently encounter difficulties assimilating into Finnish society because of disparities in social mores, communication patterns, and commercial procedures. Finland's communication style is commonly called "high-context," which indicates that much of it depends on non-verbal clues and implicit understanding, which can be challenging for outsiders to decipher. It can be difficult for immigrants from African nations, who might be more used to direct communication styles, to adjust to this cultural difference, particularly in work environments.

This sense of exclusivity is not unusual among immigrant entrepreneurs, especially African American women. African female entrepreneurs find it more difficult to create the networks required for commercial success in Finland due to the close-knit character of the country's business circles as well as cultural prejudices and preconceptions. Numerous African female entrepreneurs claim that they experience cultural exclusion from Finnish networks.

According to Fornaro (2018), business circles in Finland are frequently considered "closed" and challenging for outsiders to enter. Black women are especially affected by this since they may experience prejudice on the basis of both gender and race. With its emphasis on long-standing relationships and trust, Finnish corporate culture can be challenging for immigrants to penetrate without strong local ties. This feeling of alienation is a reflection of larger cultural tendencies in which immigrants, particularly those of African heritage, may experience marginalization in social and occupational settings. While Finland is frequently commended for its dedication to gender equality, Juvonen (2018) contends that immigrant women, especially those of African descent face additional challenges as a result of racial and cultural prejudices that can impede their ability to succeed professionally and integrate into Finnish society.

Stereotypes about gender roles are another way that cultural obstacles show up. African female entrepreneurs still encounter obstacles because of cultural norms surrounding women, both in Finland and in their own cultural origins, despite Finland's high ranking for gender equality. These women confront a triple challenge of navigating the patriarchal systems of their home cultures and the pervasive gender biases that persist in Finland due to their intersectionality of gender, race, and immigrant status. According to Brieger (2021), women business owners, particularly those with immigrant backgrounds, are frequently considered less competent or less likely to be successful than their male or native-born counterparts. These prejudices can appear in numerous ways, from trouble procuring funds to being overlooked for business partnerships or mentorship possibilities

The experiences of African female entrepreneurs in Finland are significantly shaped by discrimination and unfavorable preconceptions. Racial and ethnic prejudices that these women frequently encounter hinder their capacity to obtain capital, form alliances, and draw clients. One of the biggest obstacles to African immigrants' entrepreneurial endeavors is the belief that they, especially women, lack the finances or abilities necessary to thrive in business. The lack of recognition for African women entrepreneurs in Finland's business community exacerbates these issues. African women who want to enter the market may feel even more alone due to the perception that they are not cut out for business, which is reinforced by a lack of role models and representation.

As a means of gaining access to opportunities, information, and resources, networking is essential to the success of an entrepreneur. However, developing the social capital required for business growth is frequently a challenge for African female entrepreneurs in Finland. The language barrier,

prejudice, and cultural disparities hinder their capacity to establish robust networks inside the Finnish business community.

In Finland, social and professional networks are often homogeneous, providing little chance for outsiders to become involved. African women in particular, may feel left out of male-dominated immigrant and Finnish business networks. Their capacity to locate mentors, investors, and collaborators, all critical for growing a business, is hampered by a deficiency of networking possibilities. Compared to their Finnish counterparts, African female entrepreneurs are less fortunate if they do not have access to these networks.

In their research on immigrant entrepreneurship, Dana and Morris (2007) argue that linguistic proficiency is critical in predicting entrepreneurial success, especially in non-English-speaking nations like Finland. They claim that immigrants encounter major difficulties in obtaining financial resources, creating business networks, and navigating legal frameworks if they are not fluent in the language of the country they are relocating to.

A solid basis for comprehending the difficulties encountered by African women business owners in Finland is provided by the literature. Theoretical frameworks pertaining to entrepreneurship, immigration, and female entrepreneurs provide an important context for understanding the common challenges these women encounter. However, without sufficiently addressing the interaction of gender, race, and immigration status, a large portion of the research that is currently available concentrates on immigrants or women as homogenous groups.

The study of entrepreneurship has several important gaps: the paucity of attention paid to African women entrepreneurs and the demand for more intersectional methods. In Chapter 4, we will look deeper into the unique possibilities and constraints experienced by African female entrepreneurs in Finland. The findings in this chapter serve as a foundation for future research. The following analysis aims to contribute to the academic conversation about immigrant entrepreneurship by highlighting the stories of individuals navigating this challenging terrain.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and approach

The research methodology used in "Assessing the Challenges Faced by Minority Entrepreneurs in Northern Finland: The Case of African Female Entrepreneurs" is described in this chapter. The research design and the qualitative research methodology used to examine the participant experiences are described in detail. This study is especially well-suited for qualitative research since it looks at phenomena in their natural environments in order to analyze and comprehend them thoroughly. Qualitative research emphasizes individual viewpoints, subjective experiences, and interpretations more than quantitative research, which is more concerned with statistical analysis and quantifiable facts.

The social, economic, cultural, or physical contexts in which people live can impact their experiences and behaviors. Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020) state that qualitative researchers frequently observe people in their natural environments. A greater comprehension of the motivations behind people's choices and actions can be achieved with this method. Using qualitative approaches, this study was able to fully address the research problem by providing insight into the lived experiences and perceptions of African female entrepreneurs in Finland.

In this study, primary and secondary data were utilized. Semi-structured interviews with a sample of African female entrepreneurs residing in the Oulu region were used to gather the primary data. These interviews aimed to obtain in-depth knowledge about their circumstances and professional experiences in Finland. Secondary data was obtained from already published works and earlier research, offering a more comprehensive framework to validate the results.

3.2 Data collection

As previously indicated, semi-structured interviews with a chosen sample of female immigrant entrepreneurs from the Oulu region provided the data for this study. The sample comprised three female African entrepreneurs who represented a range of business sectors and originated from distinct African nations, including Senegal-Gambia, Zambia, and Nigeria. These entrepreneurs were all registered in Finland and had been conducting their enterprises for at least three years.

The participants were contacted and given a thorough explanation of the study's goals prior to the interviews. To allow the interviewees time to prepare, a questionnaire was sent to them one week before the interview. Afterward, the interviews were done virtually at each participant's convenience using the Teams platform. Every interview was taped in order to make transcription and analysis easier. By using this approach, the researcher was able to address the main research issues and obtain a greater comprehension of the experiences of the entrepreneurs. This was good for the qualitative approach, providing insightful information about the participants' lives.

Before conducting the interviews, information about the participants' cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds was gathered. This was essential to comprehending their entrepreneurial beginnings. They were also questioned about general and personal aspects of their experiences as immigrants launching enterprises in Finland. The participants were questioned regarding the reasons for their decision to pursue entrepreneurship, the opportunities they came across, and the assistance they got from institutional or governmental sources. The interviews primarily delved into the diverse obstacles that the entrepreneurs encountered during their entrepreneurial journeys, spanning from the first stages of startup to the present state of their businesses.

Additionally, participants were encouraged to consider the tactics they used to get past the difficulties they faced. It was part of discussing any adaptable steps they took to keep their enterprises going in a foreign setting. Lastly, the participants recommended how the government and nonprofits could help foreign business owners in Finland more effectively. Through this intensive line of questioning, the study got a full picture of the specific experiences experienced by African female entrepreneurs in the Oulu region

This is the set of questionnaires that helps us to conduct a successful interview for this research:

1. Can you briefly tell me about your background, (cultural, economic, and educational)?
2. What motivates you to start your own business in Finland?
3. How does your background influence your experience as an African female entrepreneur?
4. Do you find the Finnish government supportive of Immigrant entrepreneurship? From starting to running the business.
5. What challenges do you face as an entrepreneur, immigrant entrepreneur, and African female entrepreneur?
6. What strategies do you employ to overcome these challenges?

3.3 Profile of the Participants

Entrepreneur	Country of origin	Education	Industry	Business size	Previous employment	Finnish skills
N1	Nigeria	Master in Business Administration	Fashion business	1 to 5 people	Redcross and freelance jobs	Average
N2	Sene-Gambia	Master in international business	Service business	1 to 5 people	An office worker in a tech company	Poor
N3	Zambia and Finnish	Bachelor in Business Administration	Beauty business	1 person	Worker in a moving company	Poor

All the 3 entrepreneurs were females between the age of 30 to 35, and all of them immigrated to Finland between 3 to 7 years

4 DATA RESULTS ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will examine the conclusions from the empirical data collected as primary data. Interviews with the 3 African female entrepreneurs detailed in previous chapters are the source of the empirical data. With this study, we attempt to understand better and answer our thesis questions below.

1. How well do African female entrepreneurs in Finland fail or succeed in business?
2. What are the main challenges faced by African female entrepreneurs in Finland?
3. What are the solutions available for them to succeed in Finland?

4.1 Motivation to start a business as an African Female immigrant

The researchers aimed to discover the real reasons behind the three African women entrepreneurs' business endeavors throughout the interviews. The main goal was to ascertain if their entrepreneurial endeavors were largely motivated by a real desire to become entrepreneurs or, as the literature analysis suggested, by a restricted number of employment opportunities.

It became clear that the three participant reasons for starting a business went much beyond the fact that they all agreed that the lack of job opportunities was a major factor in their decision. Their entrepreneurial pursuits were motivated by deeper goals.

Entrepreneur N2 explained: ***“Moving to Finland presented a new opportunity for me to pursue my entrepreneurial dreams. Finland’s supportive business environment, access to resources, and innovative ecosystem fueled my ambition to start my venture. I saw it as an opportunity to not only contribute to the local economy but also create employment opportunities and make a positive impact in my community.”***

Her statement makes clear that she decided to start a business in order to take advantage of Finland's supportive entrepreneurial environment and address her desire to give back to her community in addition to the difficulties she was having finding work.

The desire to launch a firm outweighed the lack of work prospects for Entrepreneur N1. From an early age, she had always had an entrepreneurial mindset. She recognized a gap in the market and saw a chance to fill it after relocating to Finland. Beyond achieving personal achievement, her goals included supporting the African population in Oulu and her home community in Africa. She intended for African culture to flourish in even the far-off city of Oulu. She hoped other community members would be encouraged to start their own businesses by her own success. She added that starting her business was made easier for her by the business climate in Finland and the assistance she received from different groups.

Entrepreneur N3 was driven by the desire to capitalize on a particular market need and the advantageous business climate in Finland. She agreed, like N2 and N1, that Finland provided business-friendly conditions, which gave her even more motivation to launch her project.

From these conversations, it can be inferred that Finland does, in fact, offer a business-friendly atmosphere and that the government is eager to help immigrants launch their enterprises. These entrepreneurs' reasons for starting enterprises show that, although job difficulties may be a contributing factor initially, their motivation to create businesses stems from a desire to serve their communities, meet market demands, and take advantage of opportunities within a nurturing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

4.1.1 Real market opportunities for African female entrepreneurs

Apart from the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries, Finland is home to 443,731 firms (Statistics et al., 2022). Together, these companies employ 1.45 million people and pay taxes into government coffers that support universally accessible services. Remarkably, 95% of these businesses employ fewer than ten people. Ten thousand or so of these entrepreneurs are immigrants who have opened companies in Finland. According to Suomen Yrittäjät (2019), these immigrant business owners employ 30,000 people and have a total revenue of €3.5 billion. The data demonstrates the historical prospects for immigrants to establish and expand enterprises in Finland.

The analysis of the interviewees' motivations revealed that African immigrants in Oulu had access to a plethora of unexplored markets and economic opportunities, especially for African female entrepreneurs. Statistics Finland (2023) reports that immigration to Finland hit a record high of 49,998 new arrivals in 2022, a notable rise over prior years when the numbers varied from 29,000 to 36,000.

Oulu's African immigrant population will likely keep growing in the upcoming years. The University of Oulu, which draws African students looking for educational possibilities, is one element influencing this trend. As the African immigrant community expands, there will be more economic opportunities for those who are eager to take advantage of them.

4.1.2 Finnish supportive business environment and innovative ecosystem

Finland has one of the fastest-growing startup ecosystems globally, with a thriving network of venture capitalists, angel investors, accelerators, and robust government assistance. Thanks to its highly educated workforce, collaborative culture, and top-notch research institutions, the nation is an ideal place to test new technology. In addition to enjoying equal possibilities with Finnish-owned enterprises, foreign-owned companies operating in Finland are eligible for a wide range of government and EU subsidies. Business Finland supports research, product development, and other business growth needs with several national, regional, and local organizations (Business Finland, 2024).

After examining the interview responses, it was clear that all three business owners thought Finland greatly assisted in launching a company. The encouraging atmosphere was one of the main things that inspired them to start their businesses. Organizations in Oulu that give immigrants the tools they need to start their businesses are Startup Refugees and Business Oulu.

The business owners emphasized the priceless advice, instruction, money, and mentoring they obtained when they first started out. They said that this help was crucial and that without it, they would not have been able to launch their companies.

4.2 Challenges Faced by African females Entrepreneurs in the Oulu Region

4.2.1 Language and Cultural Barriers

The language barrier was one of the main issues that all entrepreneurs mentioned. Many immigrants consider Finnish a challenging language to learn, and most of them choose English as their common tongue when residing in Finland. However, in the commercial world, there are frequently circumstances in which English is insufficient.

Entrepreneur N1 highlighted this challenge by stating, **“The first challenge would be the language barrier. And it was because I was not speaking the language. So, that was a huge barrier for my business. Moreover, how did I overcome that? I learned the language. There are no two ways about it. I think Finland operates as a very closed system or a closed economy. They prefer their own ways and their own people. Outsiders face difficulties breaking in. While they are gradually opening up, it was very much a closed system when I started, and even now, it’s still challenging.”**

As an immigrant entrepreneur, Entrepreneur N2 further elaborated that her biggest challenges included not knowing the local business scene, cultural disparities, and language obstacles. Likewise, Entrepreneur N3 noted that learning Finnish was a major obstacle that hindered her progress significantly, particularly in terms of obtaining important information.

In addition to the language barrier, all three firm owners mentioned having trouble fitting in with Finnish corporate culture. They viewed the Finnish business environment as fairly closed off, making it challenging to make connections due to cultural obstacles and a lack of familiarity with the local business scene.

Entrepreneur N3 observed, **“Acclimating to the entrepreneurial environment was difficult at first because immigrants usually have a focal point of contact, and outsiders might struggle to break in. There are cliques, I find, and since the female entrepreneurship community is so small in Finland, it limits the connections.”**

4.2.2 Access for resources to scale the business

All business owners acknowledged adequate support in Finland for launching a company, but they also pointed out that this support frequently wanes after the initial phases. Entrepreneurs are mainly left to handle the expansion and scaling of their businesses on their own when they are launched. Entrepreneur N1 expressed this challenge by stating, **“Another major difficulty I faced was securing enough capital to fund my business. It was not easy to come by, which is why I also maintain a separate job to generate income that I can invest into the business. As an immigrant, obtaining business loans from banks is increasingly difficult. The capital required, coupled with the high interest rates, is a significant burden these days. It’s helpful to have enough capital to build the business, like securing a space and acquiring the necessary resources, but access to funds is limited. There’s little support from the government, and it often feels like you’re left to manage everything by yourself, which becomes exhausting over time.”**

Entrepreneur N2 also spoke of having severe financial limitations. She stressed that it is frequently required to take on multiple tasks to finance the firm or even pay oneself a salary, making it more challenging to concentrate on expanding the company.

Similar difficulties were emphasized by entrepreneur N3, who said, **“As an immigrant, finding financial backing was a huge difficulty.” It was challenging for me to start up the business in the manner I had envisioned because I lacked the assets to secure a business loan. The first stock had to be bought with my own money, and I kept putting money back into the company. It is a significant task. If I could have obtained financing to assist in operating the company, it would have been a lot simpler.**

5 SOLUTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

It has long been understood that entrepreneurship is essential to social mobility, economic empowerment, and innovation. However, the path to success in entrepreneurship is paved with serious obstacles for some demographic groups, such as African female entrepreneurs in Finland. As was mentioned in the previous chapters, these difficulties are caused by institutional, cultural, and structural obstacles that disproportionately impact minority and immigrant business owners. The problems include prejudice, cultural misalignment, difficulty accessing financial resources, linguistic hurdles, and inadequate business networks.

In Finland, African female entrepreneurs are at the crossroads of several forms of marginalization. In addition to their gender and immigration status, they are frequently at a disadvantage because of linguistic and cultural barriers. African women who move to Finland may be shut out of important business possibilities, networks, and resources in a society where speaking the local language and establishing connections are essential for success as entrepreneurs. Discriminatory behaviors and attitudes exacerbate their lack of access to mentorship and financial capital.

Despite these challenges, African female entrepreneurs have proven to be remarkably resilient and adaptable in navigating Finland's business scene. Numerous individuals have crafted inventive solutions and leveraged their cultural expertise and life experiences to establish distinctive enterprises. However, it is imperative to remove the institutional and systemic obstacles preventing this group of people from realizing their full potential. In this setting, the necessity for focused answers and recommendations emerges.

Implementing the tactical and strategic solutions outlined in this chapter can foster a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment for African female entrepreneurs. The emphasis is on grassroots projects and policy-level actions that can improve these women's support systems. More focused strategies that address the unique difficulties faced by African female entrepreneurs are still required, even though the Finnish government has already made progress in encouraging entrepreneurship through several programs and projects.

Recognizing the structural obstacles that must be overcome, especially about access to capital and commercial resources, is the first step toward establishing a more inclusive atmosphere. It is challenging for entrepreneurs to grow or maintain their firms without enough funding. For African women and many first-time company owners, the traditional lending channels are not always accessible since they heavily emphasize collateral and credit history. In addition, the inability to communicate in the same language makes navigating legal and administrative procedures even more challenging for them.

This chapter highlights the significance of cultural and social integration in addition to structural and financial support. Encouraging diversity in leadership, providing specialized linguistic support for entrepreneurs, and creating inclusive business networks are essential elements of a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem. These remedies can aid in bridging the divide between immigrant entrepreneurs and Finnish society, as can the promotion of cultural competency in corporate and governmental institutions.

The goal is to transform Finland's entrepreneurial environment such that it fully supports the varied and dynamic contributions made by African female entrepreneurs, while also being inclusive. By taking on these obstacles head-on, Finland can fully utilize the potential of this expanding population and promote innovation and economic growth.

5.1 Support Mechanisms and Interventions

African female entrepreneurs in Finland face many obstacles in their business lives, from language and cultural hurdles to restricted access to capital and professional networks. As previously discussed in the chapters, these obstacles might impede the expansion and long-term viability of enterprises owned and operated by African women, who frequently have to navigate a challenging and occasionally hostile business landscape. Given the vital role that entrepreneurship plays in social empowerment and economic growth, it is imperative to look into interventions and supportive systems that can successfully deal with these issues.

The particular circumstances of African female entrepreneurs in Finland, who experience many layers of marginalization because of their gender, immigration status, and cultural background, highlight the need for focused solutions. Since many traditional lending institutions have strict restrictions that keep out a large number of immigrant entrepreneurs, access to money is still a persistent problem. These women's struggles are further compounded by the dearth of mentorship, financial education, and culturally sensitive support programs.

A comprehensive framework of support must be created in collaboration with government agencies, financial institutions, and community organizations by various stakeholders who recognize these challenges. This framework should prioritize initiatives aimed at building capacity so that African women entrepreneurs have access to the networks, expertise, and resources they need to succeed, in addition to financial support. Finland can create a more welcoming entrepreneurial environment by addressing the structural impediments to entrepreneurial growth and the cultural elements that fuel feelings of loneliness.

Putting in place supportive measures that work well calls for a diversified strategy. Financial solutions that offer customized lending products and microfinance can supply the funds required for expansion and startup. Additionally, these women will be better equipped to handle the challenges of operating a business in Finland if they can access business development programs emphasizing marketing tactics, operational planning, and entrepreneurship training. The significance of social support networks cannot be emphasized enough, as these networks offer both chances for collaboration and practical assistance and emotional support, all of which are essential for an entrepreneur's success.

Fostering an inclusive atmosphere also requires businesses and institutions to provide cultural competency training. Biases can be lessened, and a more inclusive environment can be fostered by teaching stakeholders about immigrant entrepreneurs' varied backgrounds and experiences. In order to guarantee that the unique demands of African female entrepreneurs are satisfied, policy interventions based on their voices and experiences should also reflect this cultural understanding.

These interventions and support systems aim to enable African women entrepreneurs to prosper in the Finnish market. Finland can harness the potential of this dynamic group by addressing their particular issues with a mix of policy initiatives, financial support, training, and networking opportunities. This chapter will examine these interventions and support systems in-depth and thoroughly

examine each one's possible effects on the entrepreneurial environment for African women in Finland.

5.1.1 FINANCIAL SUPPORT MECHANISM

Financial support is one of the most important factors in facilitating business success, but for African female entrepreneurs in Finland, obtaining financing remains a major obstacle. Systemic obstacles, including strict credit standards, biased lending practices, and low knowledge of relevant financial instruments, aggravate the problem. As discussed in Chapter 4, many of these women find it difficult to get money for their projects because they do not have enough collateral, have a poor credit history, or are considered risks by traditional lenders. It is imperative to devise inventive and comprehensive methods to overcome these financial obstacles to empower African women entrepreneurs and promote their sustained prosperity.

Microfinance is useful for providing entrepreneurs without access to traditional banking systems access to capital. Due to their small size and lack of substantial collateral requirements, microfinance institutions (MFIs) make small, low-interest loans available to immigrant entrepreneurs who frequently find it difficult to meet standard lending requirements. Microfinance programs in Finland might be designed especially for African women business owners, providing them with much-needed financing while lowering the risks connected with conventional loans.

The Finnish Export Credit Agency, Finnvera, may lead in creating microfinancing to assist newcomer business owners. Finnvera could create funding programs that consider different types of collateral or financial assessments based on the viability of the entrepreneur's business model rather than their credit history by collaborating with regional NGOs and community organizations that have stronger ties to African female entrepreneurs. These initiatives would make it easier for African women entrepreneurs to launch or grow their enterprises by giving them access to cash.

A powerful alternative finance mechanism that democratizes capital access is crowdfunding. Using crowdfunding platforms, entrepreneurs can showcase their business concepts to a wide range of prospective supporters who might provide modest financial contributions to bolster the enterprise.

With the help of this model, business owners may assess consumer demand and get support from the community in addition to receiving finance.

Crowdfunding is an alluring substitute for conventional loans for female African entrepreneurs in Finland. It enables companies to appeal directly to the public rather than through traditional financial institutions, which frequently set stringent restrictions. Crowdfunding platforms have the potential to function as a dual means of fundraising and marketing, assisting businesses in cultivating a clientele prior to the official debut of their goods or services. Organizations like Business Finland should focus on teaching African female entrepreneurs how to use these platforms efficiently to improve access to crowdfunding. Workshops and training sessions might be provided to help business owners navigate the crowdfunding process, from developing attractive campaigns to maintaining relationships with backers.

In addition to microfinance and crowdsourcing, grants and loans guaranteed by the government constitute an essential financial support system. Numerous financial support programs for entrepreneurs are already available in Finland; however, language problems, lack of awareness, or complicated application procedures frequently prevent African female entrepreneurs from participating in these programs.

The Finnish government should create grant programs specifically for immigrants that give financial support to African female entrepreneurs and other underprivileged groups to address these problems. These funds, which might provide seed money or expansion capital, could concentrate on sectors like the service, creative, and food production industries, where African women already show strength.

Furthermore, establishing loan programs with low or no interest rates for African women business owners will supply much-needed funding free from the stress of hefty repayment schedules. Financial institutions and government organizations should collaborate to subsidize these loans, guaranteeing that African women entrepreneurs have favorable terms that promote business expansion.

Financial capital access is just one component of the answer. Education and financial knowledge are equally important in guaranteeing long-term success for African female entrepreneurs. However, it can be challenging for many entrepreneurs, particularly those with immigrant origins, to operate their enterprises successfully since they are unfamiliar with the financial systems of their new nations.

Thus, comprehensive financial literacy instruction must accompany any financial support system. To provide African female entrepreneurs the tools they need to make wise financial decisions, such training programs should address subjects including budgeting, financial planning, debt management, and investment techniques. Through partnerships with neighborhood organizations, Business Finland may provide training tailored to the needs of African women entrepreneurs, assisting them in gaining access to capital, understanding Finland's financial system, and practicing sustainable money management.

To sum up, financial support systems are critical to removing the obstacles African women business owners in Finland encounter. These business owners can obtain the cash they require to launch and expand their enterprises by utilizing microfinance, crowdsourcing, grants, and loans supported by the government. However, financial assistance on its own is insufficient. It must be combined with focused financial education initiatives to guarantee that business owners can properly manage their resources. These funding sources will enable African American women business owners to prosper, boost the Finnish economy, and remove the structural obstacles preventing them from realizing their full potential as entrepreneurs.

5.1.2 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Programs for company development are crucial in providing African women entrepreneurs in Finland with the abilities, information, and tools needed to successfully negotiate the nation's intricate commercial environment. While financial assistance offers the initial funding needed to launch or expand a firm, long-term success ultimately rests on the entrepreneur's capacity to effectively manage their enterprise, adjust as necessary to meet market demands and take advantage of possibilities. Chapter 4 emphasized the importance of customized business development initiatives, emphasizing the difficulties encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, especially those of African descent. In order to promote entrepreneurial resilience and facilitate long-term success, these programs are essential.

Entrepreneurship training is one of the most important components of business development programs. Although Finland offers comprehensive business education, African female entrepreneurs

frequently encounter particular difficulties that call for more specialized assistance. Many of these women might be negotiating uncharted territory regarding regulations, cultural norms, and market dynamics, which can challenge successful business operations.

Programs for entrepreneurship education should be created with these particular challenges in mind, emphasizing important topics like financial management, operational planning, and market analysis. Empowering African women entrepreneurs requires courses that impart practical knowledge on how to write business strategies, manage daily operations, and build successful budgets. These courses could be taught by groups rooted in the community and with a thorough awareness of the requirements of immigrant businesses or by organizations like Business Finland. Furthermore, arranging training courses designed for African female entrepreneurs and spreading information could be critical for local non-governmental organizations dealing directly with immigrant groups.

In the current global economy, corporate success requires high technological skills. Unfair access to technology and the internet, or the "digital gap," disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations, particularly female African entrepreneurs. Many women may lack the digital competencies to properly utilize online platforms for consumer engagement, sales, and marketing. Company development programs should include digital and technology literacy training to improve entrepreneurs' skills in e-commerce, social media marketing, and online payment systems.

African female entrepreneurs must be adept at utilizing digital platforms since they increasingly depend on them for business operations. This will help them reach a larger audience and streamline their operations. Entrepreneurs should be taught how to maintain their online shops, create a digital marketing plan, and use data analytics to make strategic business decisions. Incorporating cybersecurity and digital finance management training is vital to guarantee that entrepreneurs are adequately prepared to safeguard their enterprises against cyberattacks.

The COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted how crucial digital technologies are to preserving business continuity. With so many enterprises moving to internet platforms, those without digital infrastructure found it difficult to stay in business. Thus, assisting African female entrepreneurs in switching to digital models should be a top priority for business development programs. It will help them stay competitive in an increasingly digital economy.

As a means of connecting entrepreneurs with seasoned industry professionals who can provide advice, insights, and support, mentoring plays a critical role in the development of businesses.

According to what was mentioned in Chapter 4, African women who own businesses in Finland frequently feel alone and cut off from traditional business networks. Mentorship is a fundamental component of company development programs that can assist in closing this gap by matching African female entrepreneurs with seasoned mentors familiar with the Finnish business landscape. Group-based learning opportunities as well as one-on-one counseling can be provided through mentoring programs. For instance, entrepreneurs might be matched with prosperous company executives in their sector to receive specialized guidance suited to their unique requirements. Group mentorship sessions may also promote peer learning, in which business owners exchange experiences, difficulties, and solutions with one another, creating a supportive and community environment.

Moreover, consulting services ought to be made accessible to entrepreneurs so that they can offer continuous assistance as they manage regulatory obstacles, market entry tactics, and expansion plans. Partnerships between NGOs, the commercial sector, and state institutions like Business Finland can provide these services. These initiatives can assist African female entrepreneurs in addressing the operational difficulties that crop up as their enterprises expand by offering easily available and reasonably priced advisory services.

Networking is a key component of business development since it enables entrepreneurs to establish connections with possible partners, investors, and clients. Integrating African female entrepreneurs into mainstream business networks in Finland can present challenges because of cultural and linguistic difficulties and exclusion from established circles. Therefore, business development programs must establish inclusive networking opportunities targeting immigrant entrepreneurs. These networking gatherings could be planned with local chambers of commerce, company incubators, and multicultural organizations that support diversity in the corporate world.

In addition, creating chances for business cooperation amongst African female entrepreneurs themselves might result in synergies that boost their overall success. Co-working spaces, cooperative marketing campaigns, and pooled resources are examples of collaborative endeavors that can cut expenses and offer a support network that improves resilience.

Programs for business development are essential to the long-term prosperity of African women entrepreneurs in Finland. These programs give entrepreneurs the tools they need to succeed in a

market that is becoming increasingly competitive by providing them with specialized entrepreneurship training, digital literacy instruction, networking opportunities, and mentorship. In addition, promoting cooperation among governmental bodies, commercial enterprises, and community groups can establish an all-encompassing assistance network that empowers African women entrepreneurs to surmount the distinct obstacles they encounter. Ultimately, these initiatives enable African women to develop profitable enterprises and enhance Finland's varied economic environment.

5.1.3 COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Collaboration between government institutions, private sector actors, and community organizations is vital in creating a robust support ecosystem for African female entrepreneurs in Finland. Community organizations, in particular, are crucial in providing culturally sensitive support, advocacy, and practical assistance to immigrant entrepreneurs. These organizations often serve as a bridge between immigrant communities and the broader Finnish society, helping to address barriers related to language, cultural differences, and access to resources.

The experiences of the African female entrepreneurs interviewed in Chapter 4 underscore the importance of community organizations in their entrepreneurial journeys. Many of these women highlighted their difficulties in navigating the Finnish business landscape without adequate support. For instance, one interviewee remarked:

“I didn’t know where to start or how to apply for the right permits. A local immigrant organization helped me understand the system and gave me confidence to move forward.”

This testimony illustrates how community organizations provide invaluable guidance in navigating the regulatory and legal frameworks that often seem overwhelming to newcomers. Such organizations offer practical assistance and empower African female entrepreneurs by fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion in a foreign environment.

Language problems, a lack of social capital, and a lack of knowledge with Finnish business conventions sometimes result in African female entrepreneurs being shut out of mainstream business

networks. Community organizations are in a good position to close this gap because of their long history within immigrant communities. These organizations are frequently better equipped to offer meaningful and easily available help because they have a deeper awareness of the cultural and social circumstances in which African female entrepreneurs operate.

For instance, community organizations like Startup Refugees and Moniheli have made significant strides in supporting immigrant entrepreneurs by offering tailored training programs, networking opportunities, and mentorship schemes. They serve as intermediaries between immigrant entrepreneurs and larger business networks or governmental support agencies such as Business Finland. By partnering with these organizations, African female entrepreneurs can gain access to essential resources, including training in Finnish business practices, legal compliance, and financial management.

Subjects interviewed in Chapter 4 consistently emphasized the critical role of these community organizations. One entrepreneur explained:

"Without the help from the local immigrant association, I would never have understood the legal requirements to start my business. They provided advice on the permits, helped with translating documents, and connected me with people who could help me financially."

Such testimonies reflect the importance of community-based interventions in ensuring African female entrepreneurs can access the necessary resources to formalize and grow their businesses. These organizations also serve as important advocacy groups, raising awareness about the specific challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face and lobbying for more inclusive policies at the governmental level

The capacity of community organizations to offer culturally competent support is one of their most important assets. Due to cultural differences, African female entrepreneurs frequently encounter difficulties that traditional support networks do not always sufficiently handle. Community-based groups provide culturally appropriate assistance that speaks to African women's experiences and recognizes their unique needs.

The subjects from Chapter 4 often spoke about how their cultural background influenced their entrepreneurial journey. For example, one entrepreneur mentioned:

"There is a cultural gap between how business is done in Finland and what I was used to in my home country. The local community group helped me understand Finnish expectations while respecting my own background."

This example underscores the need for support that focuses on technical aspects of entrepreneurship and acknowledges and integrates the entrepreneur's cultural identity into their business development process. Community organizations, therefore, play a dual role: they help African female entrepreneurs adjust to the Finnish market while also helping them maintain their cultural identity and values.

Collaboration between community organizations and other key stakeholders, such as government agencies and private sector businesses, is crucial for scaling up support efforts. Government institutions like Business Finland and local municipalities can work closely with community organizations to ensure that their programs reach African female entrepreneurs effectively. By pooling resources and expertise, these partnerships can create more tailored support mechanisms that address the unique needs of African female entrepreneurs.

For instance, government grants or loans can be administered through community organizations that have direct access to African female entrepreneurs. These organizations can also assist in navigating bureaucratic hurdles by offering translation services and helping entrepreneurs prepare necessary documentation. Similarly, private sector actors can contribute by providing mentorship, sponsorship, and opportunities for African female entrepreneurs to integrate into larger business networks.

The subjects interviewed in Chapter 4 noted the potential benefits of stronger collaboration between community organizations and larger institutions. One interviewee shared:

"If the government worked more with local community groups, it would be easier for women like me to get the help we need. The community groups understand our problems better, and they can explain things in a way that makes sense to us"

This statement reflects the need for a more integrated approach where community organizations, with their grassroots understanding, act as the conduit through which African female entrepreneurs can access broader support systems

To sum up, cooperation with neighborhood organizations is essential to Finland's ecosystem of assistance for African women business owners. These groups lobby for more inclusive policies, bridge the gap between immigrant entrepreneurs and official institutions, and offer culturally competent support. Through collaborative efforts with governmental bodies and private sector entities, community organizations may guarantee that African women entrepreneurs have the customized assistance required for their success. The stories of the women interviewed for Chapter 4 serve as a reminder of how crucial these partnerships are to overcoming the particular difficulties African female entrepreneurs have, making them indispensable allies in the development of a more diverse business environment in Finland.

5.1.4 CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

For African female entrepreneurs in Finland, cultural competency training is an essential instrument for creating a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere. Chapter 4 emphasizes that cultural misconceptions and prejudices frequently hinder immigrant entrepreneurs from gaining access to essential resources, building fruitful business partnerships, and assimilating into the larger Finnish entrepreneurial ecosystem. By providing African female entrepreneurs and the organizations that support them with the knowledge and abilities needed to successfully negotiate cultural differences, cultural competency training aims to close these gaps.

For African female entrepreneurs in Finland, cultural competency training is essential for creating a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere. Chapter 4 emphasizes that cultural misconceptions and prejudices frequently hinder immigrant entrepreneurs from gaining access to crucial resources, building fruitful business partnerships, and assimilating into the larger Finnish entrepreneurial ecosystem. By providing African female entrepreneurs and the organizations that support them with the knowledge and abilities needed to negotiate cultural differences successfully, cultural competency training aims to close these gaps.

The ability of individuals and organizations to comprehend, interact, and communicate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds is referred to as cultural competency. It entails accepting and

honoring cultural variances while embracing actions, customs, and viewpoints that are cognizant of these variances. Cultural competency training is crucial for the personal and professional success of African female entrepreneurs, who frequently find themselves working in corporate environments that differ significantly from those in their native countries.

The need for cultural competency was underscored by several of the interviewees in Chapter 4. For example, the interviewee, who moved to Finland from Nigeria, explained how she struggled with understanding Finnish business norms:

"In Nigeria, business is very direct, but here, there are more subtle expectations. I wasn't sure how to approach clients or even how to interact with Finnish partners."

Her experience illustrates a common challenge faced by African female entrepreneurs. Navigating a high-context communication style, where much is left unsaid, and meaning is derived from non-verbal cues and implied understanding, can be particularly difficult for immigrants from cultures that tend to favor more explicit and direct communication styles. Cultural competency training can help African female entrepreneurs like Mary adapt to these nuances while maintaining their cultural identity.

Similarly, the female entrepreneur from Senegal emphasized the importance of understanding Finnish cultural expectations in building professional relationships:

"In Senegal, we build relationships first before doing business. Here, it seems the relationship comes after. It was hard for me to understand the approach."

the statement reflects a significant cultural difference that can impact the way African entrepreneurs approach networking and business development. Cultural competency training can give African female entrepreneurs insights into how relationships and trust are built in the Finnish business environment, enabling them to engage more effectively with clients, partners, and investors.

For African female entrepreneurs, cultural competency training should focus on helping them understand the specific cultural dynamics at play in the Finnish business context. This training could cover areas such as Finnish communication styles, social norms, and business etiquette, which

are essential for successful integration into the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These programs should also address how cultural differences might impact customer relations, negotiations, and partnerships.

The interviewee from Somalia also stated that the lack of understanding of Finnish business culture made it difficult for her to build relationships with customers:

"I didn't know that people here like more formal business interactions. In my country, it's common to be more casual, but that seemed to confuse some of my customers."

This experience highlights the importance of cultural competency in customer relations. Through targeted training, African female entrepreneurs can learn to recognize cultural differences in customer expectations, helping them adjust their approach while preserving their unique cultural identity. For instance, workshops on intercultural communication, customer service expectations, and navigating Finnish professional networks would be invaluable for entrepreneurs like her.

Training in cultural competency is crucial for Finnish institutions and companies that deal with African female entrepreneurs, as well as for the women themselves. The institutions that are supposed to assist African female entrepreneurs are often plagued by cultural prejudices and misinterpretations, which lead to a number of systemic problems. To properly assist immigrant entrepreneurs, Finnish organizations such as banks, government agencies, and business support organizations must undergo cultural competency training.

The main goal of these training initiatives should be to inform Finnish workers and corporate executives about the varied cultural origins of immigrant entrepreneurs. Finnish institutions can become more open and supportive by learning about African female entrepreneurs' particular difficulties and viewpoints. Training courses might, for instance, emphasize dispelling cultural preconceptions, fostering empathy, and fostering candid communication between Finnish employees and immigrant business owners.

Chapter 4 also revealed that several of the interviewees faced challenges when interacting with Finnish institutions due to cultural misunderstandings. one explained that:

"Sometimes, I felt they didn't take me seriously, maybe because they didn't understand my background. I think if they knew more about where I come from, it would be different."

This sentiment reflects a broader issue of cultural misalignment that can be addressed through competency training. By educating Finnish institutions about the diverse entrepreneurial approaches that African female entrepreneurs bring, businesses would receive the support they need without being hindered by cultural biases.

To implement effective cultural competency training, collaboration between community organizations, governmental bodies, and private sector businesses is essential. Organizations like Startup Refugees and Moniheli, already well-versed in supporting immigrant entrepreneurs, could partner with governmental agencies like Business Finland to create and deliver tailored cultural competency programs.

These training sessions should be designed to be interactive and practical, allowing both African female entrepreneurs and Finnish professionals to practice real-world scenarios. For instance, role-playing exercises that simulate business negotiations or customer interactions can help participants develop the skills needed to navigate cultural differences in business settings. Moreover, follow-up sessions and continuous feedback mechanisms should be built into the training process to ensure lasting impact.

Building a welcoming and encouraging environment for African women entrepreneurs in Finland requires cultural competency training. These training programs can assist in overcoming the prejudices and misconceptions that frequently impede the expansion of businesses by giving entrepreneurs and Finnish institutions the tools necessary to negotiate cultural differences. Cultural competency is crucial for understanding consumer expectations, establishing fruitful business partnerships, and assimilating into the Finnish entrepreneurial environment, as demonstrated by the interviewees' experiences in Chapter 4. Cooperation between government agencies, business sector players, and community organizations will be essential to administer these training programs properly.

5.2 Government Policies and Initiatives

The foundation of entrepreneurial ecosystems is government policies and efforts, which provide the legal and structural frameworks that either facilitate or obstruct the growth of businesses. These rules are especially important for African women entrepreneurs in Finland, who must navigate an environment characterized by institutional, financial, and cultural constraints. The ability of the government to create and execute inclusive policies that specifically address the obstacles these entrepreneurs confront is crucial to their success, in addition to their own fortitude and the support of their communities. This section explores the programs and policies that are currently in place to encourage entrepreneurship, assesses how well they meet the requirements of African female entrepreneurs, and suggests areas for improvement.

The role of entrepreneurship in promoting social inclusion, innovation, and economic progress has long been acknowledged. Finland's government has created several initiatives to support entrepreneurship, especially through organizations like Business Finland and Finnvera. These organizations offer small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) financial support, consultancy services, and assistance with internationalization. However, as noted in Chapter 4, many female African entrepreneurs discover that the initiatives already in place do not sufficiently consider their particular set of conditions. Language problems, intricate bureaucratic procedures, and a deficiency of focused outreach to immigrant groups frequently cause the inability to obtain resources.

The interviewees' experiences in Chapter 4 illustrate the disconnect between the broader entrepreneurial policies in Finland and the specific needs of African female entrepreneurs. One of the interviewees for example, shared her frustrations about how difficult it was to apply for government support due to the language in which the information was provided:

"I could not complete the application on my own. The information was all in Finnish, and I had to rely on others to help me. It was frustrating and made me feel like these programs weren't really meant for people like me."

Her experience reflects a common challenge faced by many immigrant entrepreneurs. The lack of multilingual resources limits their ability to access government initiatives, excluding them from opportunities that could significantly benefit their businesses. Although Finland ranks highly in terms of support for SMEs, the design and implementation of its policies often fall short of addressing the

specific hurdles faced by African female entrepreneurs, who are already marginalized due to their gender, race, and immigrant status.

While programs like Startup Refugees have emerged as important vehicles for integrating immigrant entrepreneurs into the Finnish business landscape, these initiatives remain relatively niche and localized. Broader government efforts, particularly those spearheaded by Business Finland, have yet to fully adapt to the needs of a more diverse entrepreneurial population. The subjects interviewed in Chapter 4 emphasized the importance of government programs catering to immigrant entrepreneurs. It was noted:

"There are programs out there, but they don't always feel accessible. We need something that speaks to us directly and helps us deal with our challenges, like getting access to finance and understanding the legal system."

This testimony highlights a critical gap in existing government initiatives. While programs exist, they often fail to address African female entrepreneurs' unique challenges in securing funding and navigating Finland's legal and regulatory frameworks. This is particularly important in light of the financial constraints identified in Chapter 4, where multiple entrepreneurs mentioned the difficulties of obtaining loans from traditional financial institutions. These barriers are compounded by stringent lending criteria requiring credit histories and collateral resources many immigrant entrepreneurs, especially women, do not possess.

The Finnish government is under increasing pressure to address these issues by creating more financial products tailored to immigrants and broadening the scope of current initiatives to include more people. One way to do this is by offering grants and loans that consider African female entrepreneurs' particular financial and social circumstances. Rather than depending exclusively on collateral or credit history, such initiatives should concentrate on assessing the sustainability of the business proposal. The government might also collaborate with neighborhood groups to provide information in many languages and financial literacy courses, enabling business owners to take full advantage of the funding sources that are accessible to them.

Government strategies must address the structural underrepresentation of African female entrepreneurs in policy deliberations in addition to financial inclusion. The fact that those creating these

rules frequently lack a thorough understanding of the real-world struggles faced by immigrant entrepreneurs is one of the main obstacles. By integrating African female entrepreneurs' perspectives into policymaking procedures, the government can develop initiatives that more accurately align with their requirements. Focus groups and advisory councils made up of immigrant business owners would offer insightful information about the difficulties they encounter and guide the creation of more inclusive laws.

Ultimately, government policies and initiatives must evolve to reflect the growing diversity of Finland's entrepreneurial community. While existing programs provide a strong foundation, there is a clear need for more inclusive and immigrant-friendly policies recognizing African female entrepreneurs' unique challenges. The experiences shared by the interviewees in Chapter 4 underscore the urgency of these reforms, making it evident that targeted government interventions are necessary to foster a more equitable and supportive entrepreneurial environment.

5.2.1 Existing policies and support structures

The Finnish government has made significant efforts to create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, particularly through various agencies and initiatives to promote small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Key institutions like Business Finland and Finnvera are central in facilitating access to funding, providing advisory services, and supporting internationalization efforts. These structures have proven valuable for the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, as evidenced by the entrepreneurs interviewed in Chapter 4, these programs often fail to address the specific needs of African female entrepreneurs, who face unique challenges related to language barriers, bureaucratic complexity, and cultural integration.

Business Finland is a government agency responsible for fostering innovation and supporting the internationalization of Finnish businesses. Its core mandate includes providing grants, loans, and business advisory services to help Finnish companies scale and expand into international markets. For entrepreneurs seeking to develop innovative products or services, Business Finland offers a variety of funding opportunities, such as innovation vouchers, research and development (R&D) grants, and export promotion funding.

While Business Finland has been instrumental in promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, the feedback from the entrepreneurs in Chapter 4 indicates that many African female entrepreneurs find it difficult to access these resources. One common issue is the complexity of the application process, which often requires a high level of proficiency in Finnish or English and a deep understanding of the bureaucratic requirements. These barriers can be insurmountable for immigrant entrepreneurs with limited language skills or unfamiliarity with Finland's regulatory environment.

The entrepreneurs interviewed expressed frustration over navigating the various application procedures and understanding the eligibility criteria. Some felt excluded from the support structures simply because they lacked the necessary language skills or familiarity with local business practices. This gap highlights the need for more inclusive policies that simplify access to resources for immigrant entrepreneurs and provide multilingual support to bridge language barriers.

Finnvera, Finland's state-owned financial institution, provides loans, guarantees, and export financing to businesses across the country. Finnvera is vital in supporting entrepreneurs struggling to secure traditional bank loans due to insufficient collateral or credit history. Through its loan programs, Finnvera aims to reduce the financial risks associated with starting and expanding a business, thus enabling more entrepreneurs to access the capital needed for growth.

Despite these efforts, many African female entrepreneurs in Finland face difficulties securing loans from Finnvera or other traditional financial institutions. As noted in Chapter 4, many immigrant entrepreneurs do not meet the standard lending criteria, such as having an established credit history or sufficient collateral. This leaves them without access to critical funding at the start-up phase or during business expansion.

Additionally, the criteria for accessing loans and guarantees through Finnvera tend to favor businesses with strong financial performance or significant growth potential, which can be challenging for many African female entrepreneurs just starting out or operating small-scale enterprises. These constraints highlight the need for more flexible financial products that consider the unique circumstances of immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly African women who may lack traditional forms of collateral but possess viable business models.

Startup Refugees provides a targeted approach to immigrant entrepreneurship as an alternative.

One noteworthy project that has made progress in addressing the unique needs of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland is Startup Refugees. With the help of both public and private sector partners, Startup Refugees seeks to integrate immigrants into the Finnish startup scene by providing networks, training, and mentorship. The program offers specialized assistance to assist immigrants in overcoming language, culture, and business acumen obstacles.

The entrepreneurs that were featured in Chapter 4's interviews gave Startup Refugees high marks for being approachable and culturally aware. Many said the program acknowledged their unique issues and offered helpful advice on how to deal with Finnish bureaucracy, create business strategies, and get money, among other things. Startup Refugees assists in bridging the gap between immigrant entrepreneurs and the larger business community by pairing them with mentors with experience in foreign and Finnish markets.

Although Startup Refugees has helped immigrant business owners succeed, its reach is still restricted. Due to the concentration of services in large cities like Helsinki, entrepreneurs in rural areas have fewer options for getting equivalent support. Furthermore, the program's limited ability to provide financial help means that business owners will still have difficulty obtaining the funding they require to expand. The impact of programs like Startup Refugees would greatly increase by reaching a wider geographic area and providing additional financial solutions specifically designed for immigrant entrepreneurs.

The Finnish government provides grants, tax breaks, and direct funding sources to assist SMEs in various industries. These rewards promote innovation, job growth, and company expansion. For instance, Finland offers R&D tax credits and incentives for enterprises that invest in research and development operations. Similarly, subsidies are provided to businesses trying to increase their environmental sustainability, digitalization, or international competitiveness.

While these incentives benefit SMEs, they are not always accessible to African female entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs interviewed in Chapter 4 were unaware of these programs or found the application processes too cumbersome. The technical language used in many of the guidelines and the lack of translation services create a barrier for entrepreneurs who may not be fluent in Finnish or English. This emphasizes how important it is for the government to reach out and assist

immigrant entrepreneurs more in order to make sure they are aware of and able to take advantage of these benefits.

While Finland has made strides in fostering immigrant entrepreneurship, there are still large gaps in laws that are specially designed to meet the requirements of female African entrepreneurs. Government programs focus on broader categories of entrepreneurs or certain high-growth sectors, such as technology. In contrast, immigrant entrepreneurs in service industries, small-scale retail, or cultural businesses often receive less attention.

A significant issue is the lack of grant programs or loan products designed to meet immigrant entrepreneurs' particular financial needs. In Chapter 4, the entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of developing more flexible and accessible funding sources. For example, microloans with low collateral requirements or grants that assess a company's viability more on its ability to benefit the community than on its profitability may provide more equitable access to finance for African women entrepreneurs.

5.2.2 Inclusive Financial Policies

Financial inclusion is another important area where government activities and regulations can bring about change. Due to stringent lending requirements, a lack of credit history, and lenders' perceptions of financial risk, as was covered in Chapter 4, many African female entrepreneurs find it difficult to obtain traditional financial services. Through agencies like Finnvera, the Finnish government provides financial help to SMEs, yet, many immigrant entrepreneurs feel that these programs are not customized to their particular circumstances.

The government might respond to this by introducing financial products designed specifically for immigrants that provide more accommodating loan terms and different kinds of collateral. For instance, grants or loans intended for immigrant business owners could evaluate the venture's viability and its impact on the community instead of just looking at credit history or conventional collateral. This will lessen the entry barriers for African female entrepreneurs, enabling them to access the cash they need to establish and develop their firms.

The Finnish government might also work with community organizations and microfinance institutions to develop microloan programs specifically designed for African women entrepreneurs. Small, low-interest loans that are less hazardous and simpler to get for immigrant business owners might be made available through such initiatives. Alongside these financial policies, financial literacy training should provide entrepreneurs with the tools they need to handle their money wisely and establish credit records that will facilitate their future access to traditional financial institutions.

5.2.3 Expanding outreach and accessibility.

Lack of awareness and outreach is one of the major obstacles that African female entrepreneurs in Finland face when trying to utilize government programs and support services. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, a lot of entrepreneurs are unaware of the resources that are out there and how to apply for grants, funding, or consulting services. This lack of exposure is made worse by linguistic obstacles, cultural disparities, and a dearth of focused outreach initiatives by government organizations. To guarantee that African female entrepreneurs are completely incorporated into Finland's entrepreneurial environment, outreach and program accessibility must be increased.

The absence of bilingual resources for immigrant entrepreneurs is one of the main concerns mentioned by the business owners in Chapter 4. Information is mostly provided in Finnish and occasionally in English by a number of government programs, such as those offered by Business Finland and Finnvera. This makes it extremely difficult for African female entrepreneurs who might not speak either language well to obtain the necessary services. Many of these entrepreneurs rely on unofficial networks or personal relationships to get through the application processes, which might result in miscommunications or missed chances.

To tackle this problem, the government should spend money creating multilingual materials that are available in many languages, including Swahili, Somali, and French, which are frequently spoken by communities of African immigrants. To support a variety of learning styles and reading levels, these materials ought to be offered in written form and through interactive web platforms, video lessons, and in-person seminars.

In order to efficiently distribute this information, government institutions should collaborate with regional immigrant associations and community organizations. The government may guarantee that information regarding available resources reaches the desired audience by collaborating with organizations that have developed links with immigrant communities. This would make it more likely that female African entrepreneurs would learn about the support services available to them and their companies.

In addition to improving the accessibility of information, the government should implement targeted outreach programs that proactively engage African female entrepreneurs. These programs could include government-sponsored information sessions, workshops, and networking events in collaboration with community organizations specializing in immigrant entrepreneurship.

In addition to offering information, these events could allow African female entrepreneurs to ask questions and get individualized guidance on navigating the application processes for various government programs. Local municipalities and business development agencies could, for instance, host information sessions for African female entrepreneurs, giving an overview of available grants, loans, and advisory services. These sessions could be held in venues that are accessible to immigrant communities, like community centers, places of worship, or cultural hubs.

Increasing government participation at community events and business expos that serve minority- and immigrant-owned businesses is another crucial component of focused outreach. Attending these events could allow government representatives to network with immigrant entrepreneurs and provide guidance and answers to their inquiries. By making a more visible effort to interact directly with African female entrepreneurs, the government can demonstrate its commitment to inclusiveness and ensure that these entrepreneurs feel welcomed and encouraged.

In the current digital era, utilizing online platforms is essential to extending the reach of government initiatives and services. Many African female entrepreneurs, particularly those who are balancing job and family obligations, are more likely to interact with digital content that they may access whenever convenient. The government may improve its online presence by developing specialized portals that make it easier to access resources for entrepreneurship.

The demands of immigrant entrepreneurs should be considered while designing these user-friendly portals. Features like live chat support, step-by-step application training, and language options help entrepreneurs manage the application process' complexity without feeling overwhelmed. Providing webinars, online workshops, and instructional films on how to apply for government loans or grants could also help make these processes more accessible.

Social media is another powerful tool that may be used to expand reach. Governmental agencies should consider leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to spread information about funding opportunities and entrepreneurial initiatives. These platforms are well-liked among communities of African immigrants and can be useful for quickly and efficiently disseminating information. The government can also reach more African female entrepreneurs by collaborating with social media influencers and community leaders.

As talked about in Chapter 4, many African female entrepreneurs look to community organizations for guidance and support when navigating the Finnish business landscape. To ensure accessibility and increase outreach to African female entrepreneurs, community organizations play a crucial role. These groups, many of which are closely associated with immigrant populations, can serve as a bridge between the government and the entrepreneurs needing assistance.

The government can contact the immigrant community by forming partnerships with local associations and providing more tailored support. Community-based organizations can help with organizing educational workshops, translating documents, and helping entrepreneurs complete their applications. They can also serve as a bridge across cultural divides, ensuring that government outreach programs are acceptable to the target demographic. This type of collaboration not only improves the accessibility of government programs but also fortifies the trust that exists between government institutions and immigrant communities.

5.3 Role of Business Support Organizations

The growth and viability of entrepreneurial endeavors are greatly aided by business support organizations (BSOs), especially for underrepresented groups like the African women entrepreneurs in Finland. These organizations provide a range of services, including funding, networking opportuni-

ties, advisory support, and capacity-building programs, all of which are essential for assisting business owners who are immigrants in overcoming challenges. BSOs can serve as a link between government policies and the real-world requirements of African female entrepreneurs by providing customized support that is sensitive to their particular situation and culturally competent in light of the systemic issues discussed in Chapter 4, such as language barriers, restricted access to capital, and cultural dissonance.

One of the critical roles of BSOs is to offer capacity-building programs that empower entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge essential to thrive in their companies. These programs involve financial management, marketing, business planning, and regulatory compliance training. Such training is necessary for African female entrepreneurs navigating new business environments in Finland to comprehend the characteristics of the local market and adhere to legal regulations. Entrepreneurs who are immigrants might benefit from workshops and training programs designed specifically for them by business support organizations such as Business Finland, Finnvera, and Startup Refugees. These programs can assist immigrants in overcoming the knowledge gap from cultural and legal disparities.

In addition to receiving formal training, BSOs offer advice services, which include individualized direction on financial planning, market expansion, and strategic decision-making. These organizations frequently employ seasoned experts as advisors who are familiar with the regional business climate and can provide African women entrepreneurs with customized guidance. As will be covered in Chapter 4, a number of the entrepreneurs we spoke with stressed how important it was to have access to professional advice that might help them deal with tricky business situations. Thus, advisory services are essential in helping these business owners progress from the startup to the expansion phases of their ventures.

BSOs are highly valuable in another crucial area: access to professional networks. Due to systematic prejudice, language obstacles, or unfamiliarity with Finnish business norms, African female entrepreneurs sometimes shut themselves out of conventional business networks. By fostering inclusive networking opportunities that enable African female entrepreneurs to meet with possible partners, clients, investors, and mentors, BSOs can help lessen this exclusion. BSO-organized mentorship programs, business incubators, and networking events help entrepreneurs develop social capital, which is essential for the expansion and success of their enterprises.

Mentorship, in particular, has been identified as a critical role in the entrepreneurial path of immigrant women. BSOs frequently arrange connections between mentors and mentees, giving seasoned business executives advice and assistance to African female entrepreneurs. These connections assist business owners in gaining self-assurance, understanding the experiences of others, and understanding how to operate in the Finnish market.

BSOs are crucial in assisting African female entrepreneurs with their biggest obstacle—obtaining funding. As mentioned in Chapter 4, loans for immigrant entrepreneurs are typically challenging to obtain due to the stringent requirements that traditional financial institutions frequently demand. Business support organizations can close this financial gap by providing microloan grant programs or introducing entrepreneurs to alternate funding sources like crowdfunding websites or angel investors. Businesses such as Finnvera offer customized loan programs designed to meet the unique requirements of SMEs, particularly those run by entrepreneurs who are immigrants.

Additionally, BSOs usually provide training in financial literacy, which is crucial in helping entrepreneurs acquire practical money management skills. These organizations offer financial literacy programs that cover budgeting, cash flow management, and financial planning. These initiatives give African women business owners the resources they need to make prudent financial decisions and establish enduring businesses.

The most crucial requirement for BSOs that assist immigrant businesses is that they offer culturally competent services. BSO staff members are guaranteed to be aware of and considerate of the cultural backgrounds of African female entrepreneurs through cultural competency training. This allows them to offer more effective and relevant assistance, considering the unique challenges these entrepreneurs face due to their social and cultural positioning. By employing inclusive practices, BSOs may create a welcoming environment that encourages participation and ensures that African female entrepreneurs have the support they need to be successful.

BSOs enable African female entrepreneurs to fulfill their entrepreneurial dreams and contribute to the Finnish economy by promoting inclusion and providing customized support.

5.4 Community-Based Support Networks

Support networks rooted in the community are essential to the prosperity of African women business owners in Finland. These networks, frequently created through associations of immigrants, local community groups, and religious institutions, offer a lifeline to business owners who encounter considerable obstacles when trying to get into conventional support systems. Community-based networks give African women entrepreneurs practical assistance, emotional support, and necessary resources to help them navigate the challenges of starting and expanding businesses overseas. The entrepreneurs interviewed for Chapter 4 repeatedly emphasized the importance of these networks and provided examples of how many African female entrepreneurs' business ventures are built upon them.

One of its main advantages is the social capital that community-based support networks offer. The ties, trust, and mutual support that people can rely on to accomplish shared objectives are referred to as social capital. Community-based networks facilitate linkages among persons with comparable cultural backgrounds and experiences, particularly in African female entrepreneurship. These connections are essential to assisting foreign business owners unfamiliar with the Finnish business environment to overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Through peer support, African female entrepreneurs can exchange their experiences, struggles, and triumphs, fostering a sense of camaraderie and encouragement. These networks often serve as informal business incubators where entrepreneurs exchange ideas, resources, and advice. As highlighted by several entrepreneurs interviewed in Chapter 4, peer support is significant for navigating the unique cultural and social challenges that African women face in Finland. These networks provide a space for entrepreneurs to seek advice on business matters, such as dealing with regulatory hurdles or finding reliable suppliers, while offering emotional support that helps them cope with the stresses of entrepreneurship.

Community-based support networks are also crucial for providing access to resources and information that may not be readily available through formal institutions. Many African female entrepreneurs in Finland rely on their community networks to learn about government programs, financial opportunities, and other business-related resources. These networks often bridge the gap between African female entrepreneurs and formal support systems by disseminating information in a way that is accessible and culturally relevant.

For instance, local immigrant associations often host workshops and training sessions to help entrepreneurs understand Finland's business environment, navigate legal requirements, and apply for funding. Community leaders or members who have successfully navigated these systems often act as mentors or guides, offering practical advice to those just starting their entrepreneurial journeys. These community-based interventions are essential for African female entrepreneurs, who face language barriers or cultural differences that make accessing information through traditional channels difficult.

Community-based support networks also benefit from having a thorough awareness of African female entrepreneurs' experiences and cultural backgrounds. Due to their innate cultural competency, these networks can offer support that aligns with the entrepreneurs' cultural values and real-life experiences. This is particularly crucial in Finland, where many immigrant business owners face prejudices or cultural misunderstandings while working with traditional institutions. In contrast, community-based networks provide a secure and encouraging setting where business owners can get advice from individuals who understand their particular struggles and share their cultural background.

An essential element of these networks is trust. In Chapter 4, several African women entrepreneurs talked about trusting their community networks more than official organizations when asking for help or guidance. Creating a sense of belonging and shared experiences within governmental or financial institutions might be challenging, yet these are the foundations of trust. Consequently, African female entrepreneurs frequently turn to community-based support networks as their first port of call when they encounter difficulties or require assistance.

Community-based support networks are essential, but working with formal institutions like government agencies, business support groups, and financial institutions can make them even more effective. Official institutions and community networks can provide African women entrepreneurs a more comprehensive support network. To ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of these services, local governments or business support organizations could collaborate with immigrant associations to offer specific programs and services to African female entrepreneurs. This would involve leveraging the trust and cultural competency of community networks.

These networks assist entrepreneurs in overcoming the obstacles they encounter in the Finnish business environment by offering social capital, peer support, resource access, and culturally competent counsel. The support provided to African female entrepreneurs can be further improved by enhancing the collaboration between official institutions and community-based networks. This would promote a more inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Finland.

5.5 Future Directions and Recommendations

The entrepreneurial landscape in Finland presents challenges and opportunities for African women business owners. There has been some assistance from the government, business support organizations, and community networks. However, there are still a lot of institutional obstacles that prevent immigrant entrepreneurs from succeeding, especially African women. These difficulties include systemic injustices, a dearth of inclusivity and diversity in the workplace, and restricted access to specialized support services. As was covered in earlier chapters, several obstacles, including limited access to money, exclusion from conventional business networks, and language hurdles, impede African women entrepreneurs from reaching their full potential as business owners.

It is crucial to think about suggestions and future paths that address these systemic problems and encourage a more diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in response to these challenges. These suggestions must be customized to the unique requirements of African female entrepreneurs while taking Finland's larger social and economic environment into account in order to bring about significant change. A multifaceted approach is required, involving policy reforms and enhancements in business support services, structural adjustments, and initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion.

The main issues that must be resolved to enhance the business environment for African women entrepreneurs in Finland are outlined in the following subtopics. To begin with, removing structural barriers is necessary to lessen the financial, administrative, and regulatory obstacles that disproportionately affect immigrant entrepreneurs. Second, improving support services is essential to guaranteeing that African women entrepreneurs have access to the networking, mentorship, and training opportunities required for long-term business growth. In conclusion, promoting diversity and inclusivity within Finland's entrepreneurial ecosystem is imperative to establish a conducive atmosphere for African female entrepreneurs to flourish, positively impact the economy, and assume leadership positions within the business community.

By putting these suggestions into practice, Finland can help African women entrepreneurs reach their full potential, overcoming structural obstacles and making a greater and more meaningful contribution to the economic and social fabric of the nation. The following parts will detail these potential paths forward and provide a road map for how community networks, business associations, and legislators may work together to make the environment more fair and encouraging for African women who want to start their own businesses.

5.5.1 Addressing Structural Barriers

The structural obstacles ingrained in the banking and business systems are among the biggest barriers African women entrepreneurs in Finland face. These obstacles prevent African female entrepreneurs from starting, expanding, and maintaining their firms. These obstacles include restricted access to money, language problems, and bureaucratic roadblocks. As discussed in Chapter 4, strict lending requirements that demand collateral and credit histories, both of which many immigrant entrepreneurs lack, make it difficult for many entrepreneurs to obtain traditional financing. To address these structural barriers, a multifaceted approach that includes modifying institutional structures, policy reform, and the development of more accessible financial products is required.

First and foremost, the government ought to prioritize the creation of financial products tailored to immigrants with more accommodating loan terms. These products could evaluate the feasibility of a business without depending on conventional metrics like collateral or credit history but instead on expected earnings and the entrepreneur's dedication to the venture. Expanding microfinance and small loan programs could give African women entrepreneurs the startup and growth money they need for their enterprises. Furthermore, the government can collaborate with commercial banks to subsidize loans, lowering the risk for lenders and increasing credit availability for newcomer business owners.

Second, for African women entrepreneurs in Finland, linguistic difficulties remain problematic. Due to their poor English or Finnish language skills, many entrepreneurs struggle to understand the

legal and regulatory frameworks. To solve this, government bodies, business support groups, and financial institutions need to offer additional culturally sensitive and bilingual services. This can involve translating crucial business documents, creating online tools that allow business owners to access information in their home tongues, and offering multilingual business advisory services. African female entrepreneurs will find obtaining essential information and support simpler if language barriers are eliminated.

Third, another structural impediment is the procedural complexities of registering and operating a firm in Finland. Registering businesses, requesting finance, and obtaining company permissions can be difficult and time-consuming, especially for immigrant entrepreneurs unfamiliar with Finland's legal system. The administrative load on African female entrepreneurs could be lessened by streamlining bureaucratic procedures and digitizing these activities. Governments might implement platforms for one-stop company registration, combining all essential applications into a single portal and drastically reducing the time and work needed to launch and run a business.

Lastly, increased involvement from immigrant entrepreneurs is needed for policy reform to remove structural barriers. Among the immigrant entrepreneurs who can organize advisory groups and provide meaningful feedback on developing policies that better address their needs and obstacles are African female firm owners. By integrating immigrant entrepreneurs' viewpoints in the policy-making process, governments can ensure that reforms are responsive to their real-world experiences and are more likely to result in major change.

5.5.2 Enhancing Support Services

Support services, which provide them with the tools, instruction, and mentoring required to traverse Finland's business landscape successfully, are essential to the success of African women entrepreneurs. As elucidated in Chapter 4, current support services, although beneficial, frequently fail to offer consistent and focused aid to immigrant entrepreneurs. Many African women entrepreneurs, especially those running smaller enterprises or residing in rural regions, do not have the

same access to support as their Finnish counterparts. Thus, it is essential to improve support services to make them more continuous, inclusive, and accessible to promote the development and success of these entrepreneurs.

Mentorship programs are one of the main strategies to improve support services. In order to help entrepreneurs navigate the many phases of company development, from idea generation to scaling operations, mentoring is essential. Although mentorship programs do exist, they are sometimes not easily accessible or specifically designed to meet the needs of female African entrepreneurs. To address this, successful entrepreneurs from immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds should work with government agencies and business support organizations to create peer-to-peer mentorship programs. These courses might be given in-person or virtually, making them available to business owners in all parts of Finland, even the rural ones.

Training for business development also has to be more inclusive and focused. The majority of training that is now offered concentrates on general business ideas, which could not address the unique difficulties faced by African female entrepreneurs. It is recommended that business assistance organizations create and provide customized training courses on digital marketing, financial literacy, and navigating the legal system in Finland. To ensure that they reach a wide audience, these programs should be provided in many languages and delivered in various formats, including workshops, online courses, and one-on-one advisory sessions. Furthermore, following the initial training, entrepreneurs should have access to follow-up help to ensure they do not have to navigate their company travels alone.

Having more networking chances is another area that needs attention. African female entrepreneurs frequently may not have access to the necessary professional networks for their businesses to expand. Business assistance organizations might construct inclusive networking platforms to facilitate connections between immigrant entrepreneurs, established business leaders, and potential clients and investors. These networks ought to be made to foster enduring connections and teamwork, providing African female entrepreneurs with continuous assistance as they grow their companies.

Enhancing funding access through support services is crucial, to sum up. A lack of financial understanding and connections prevents many African female entrepreneurs from acquiring loans or

investments, in addition to structural barriers. Business support organizations could provide financial advising services to help entrepreneurs draft strong company plans, prepare loan applications, and identify alternative funding sources like crowdsourcing or angel investors. If Finland provided extensive, continuous support services tailored to the unique requirements of female African entrepreneurs, it might create a more welcoming and encouraging business environment.

5.5.3 Fostering Diversity and Inclusion in Entrepreneurship Ecosystems

Diversity and inclusion are critical components of a thriving and healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, in Finland, poor representation in senior positions, cultural biases, and systemic discrimination frequently make it difficult for African women entrepreneurs to become part of the business community. Promoting diversity and inclusivity in the entrepreneurial ecosystem is morally and financially imperative because it makes it possible for a wider range of good ideas, opinions, and skills to contribute to the growth of the national economy. The public and private sectors need to work together to create a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem to address these problems.

First, encouraging diversity demands a more excellent representation of women in leadership roles. The prevailing belief is that the high concentration of native Finns in prominent roles in Finland's business sector contributes to numerous African female entrepreneurs' lack of exposure and credibility. To remedy this, corporate and governmental organizations should work to promote more diversity in leadership positions. Developing leadership development programs specifically for African female entrepreneurs and other underrepresented groups would be one approach to do this, providing them with the skills and resources necessary to take on leadership roles in their particular industries. Additionally, appointing immigrant entrepreneurs to advisory boards would allow African female entrepreneurs to influence laws and initiatives directly affecting them.

Secondly, promoting diversity in entrepreneurship requires the establishment of welcoming networking environments. Due to systemic biases, linguistic obstacles, and cultural disparities, African female entrepreneurs are frequently left out of traditional business networks, as covered in Chapter 4. The private sector and business support organizations should work together to organize multi-

cultural networking events that unite business owners from various backgrounds. By creating professional networks and encouraging intercultural communication and cooperation, these places would help African women entrepreneurs become more wholly integrated into the corporate world.

Third, raising awareness within the broader corporate community about diversity and inclusion is critical. Cultural biases and misconceptions can limit the opportunities available to African female entrepreneurs. As a result, the government and corporate associations should sponsor diversity education projects that call attention to the obstacles encountered by immigrant business owners and emphasize the financial advantages of promoting a diverse workplace. It should be mandatory for business executives, financiers, and other participants in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to attend these training sessions.

Lastly, government initiatives could show a dedication to diversity and inclusivity by rewarding companies that actively promote diversity in their leadership and workforce. This might come as tax benefits or subsidies for businesses seeking and supporting immigrant entrepreneurs. To provide equal access to money and other resources for African women entrepreneurs, government efforts should place a high priority on diversity when granting monies.

By encouraging diversity and inclusion within Finland's entrepreneurial ecosystem, the public and private sectors may assist African women entrepreneurs in realizing their full potential and positively impact a more innovative, dynamic, and inclusive economy.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explored the entrepreneurial experiences of African female entrepreneurs in Finland, focusing on the challenges they face and the opportunities available to them. Through the research, three key questions guided the study:

- (1) How well do African female entrepreneurs in Finland succeed or fail in business?
- (2) What are the main challenges faced by African female entrepreneurs in Finland?
- (3) What solutions are available to help them succeed?

Based on the literature and primary data from interviews, the analysis highlighted the structural, cultural, and financial barriers these entrepreneurs encounter. The study has provided a nuanced understanding of the intersection of gender, race, and immigrant status and how these factors uniquely shape the entrepreneurial journeys of African women in Finland.

Success and Failure Among African Female Entrepreneurs One of the main findings of this study is that African female entrepreneurs in Finland show remarkable resilience, creativity, and determination. Despite their structural and cultural challenges, many entrepreneurs interviewed expressed a desire to create value for themselves and their communities in Finland and their countries of origin. While some have experienced success, particularly those who have found niche markets or leveraged community support, many struggle to sustain their businesses due to lacking capital, exclusion from business networks, and limited access to government programs.

Success is often defined by financial gains and the ability to create social and cultural impact. The interviewees highlighted how entrepreneurship allows them to express their identity and contribute to society. Still, their success level is frequently constrained by external barriers, such as discrimination or financial difficulties.

The research has identified a range of challenges, which can be broadly categorized into three areas:

Structural Barriers: African female entrepreneurs face numerous structural barriers, such as difficulty accessing financial resources, navigating bureaucratic processes, and understanding Finn-

ish regulatory requirements. Due to the bureaucratic complexity and linguistic hurdles, these businesses find it challenging to obtain available resources, including loans, grants, and advisory services from organizations like Business Finland and Finnvera.

Cultural Barriers: Another significant challenge is the cultural mismatch between Finnish business norms and the cultural backgrounds of African female entrepreneurs. The interviewees consistently mentioned feeling excluded from Finnish business circles due to differences in communication styles, business etiquette, and networking practices. Additionally, cultural biases and stereotypes, including discrimination based on both gender and race, further limit their ability to integrate into the mainstream entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Financial Barriers: Access to capital remains one of the most pressing challenges. Many African female entrepreneurs lack credit history or collateral, which traditional financial institutions require to secure loans. This financial exclusion significantly hampers their ability to scale their businesses, forcing many to rely on self-funding or informal financial networks, which are often unsustainable.

Available Solutions and Interventions The study explored various solutions to help African female entrepreneurs overcome these challenges. Government policies, business support organizations, and community-based support networks are critical in fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment. The research shows that while some initiatives, such as Startup Refugees and Finnvera's loan programs, have been helpful, they are often not easily accessible to African female entrepreneurs due to language barriers, bureaucratic complexity, and a lack of targeted outreach.

On the other hand, community-based support networks have proven invaluable resources. These networks provide practical and emotional support, helping entrepreneurs navigate the complexities of the Finnish business environment. However, there is still a need for more targeted mentorship, financial support, and inclusive policies to address the unique challenges African female entrepreneurs face.

This thesis effectively answers the research questions by analyzing the challenges and opportunities available to African female entrepreneurs in Finland.

In terms of success and failure, the research demonstrates that while some African female entrepreneurs have achieved notable success, the majority face significant obstacles that hinder their

ability to grow and sustain their businesses. The factors contributing to failure are primarily external, stemming from structural, financial, and cultural barriers not adequately addressed by current policies and support structures.

The study also identifies these entrepreneurs' main challenges, emphasizing the barriers' intersectional nature. African female entrepreneurs are marginalized not only as immigrants but also as women and as members of a racial minority, which amplifies their difficulties in accessing resources and integrating into Finnish society.

Finally, the thesis outlines the solutions and interventions available, highlighting the importance of more inclusive government policies, enhanced support services, and community collaboration. The research suggests that the key to fostering success lies in creating more accessible financial products, offering culturally competent business development programs, and facilitating networking opportunities that include immigrant entrepreneurs.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it adds to the limited research on African female entrepreneurs in Finland. This group has been underrepresented mainly in both academic literature and policy discussions. By examining the unique intersection of gender, race, and immigrant status, this thesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of African women's challenges and opportunities in the Finnish business environment.

Moreover, this research has practical implications for policymakers, business organizations, and community leaders. It highlights the need for more inclusive and immigrant-friendly policies that recognize the contributions of African female entrepreneurs while addressing the structural barriers they face. The results also emphasize the need for more cooperation between local associations, government offices, and business assistance programs to establish a more encouraging and just entrepreneurial environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

A few issues need more research, even if this thesis has shed light on the entrepreneurial experiences of African women in Finland. The scope of this study could be increased by incorporating a

more extensive and varied sample of African female entrepreneurs from other industries and geographical areas. An extended analysis of the development of these entrepreneurs through a longitudinal study would also offer a more profound comprehension of the long-term effects of public policies, business assistance initiatives, and community-based initiatives.

Future studies may also concentrate on the function of digital entrepreneurship, mainly because the COVID-19 pandemic accelerates the use of digital technologies in company operations. Gaining knowledge on how African female entrepreneurs use digital platforms to overcome conventional obstacles may help us better understand how technology may help level the playing field in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Final Reflections

This thesis has demonstrated, in summary, how African women entrepreneurs in Finland encounter particular difficulties because of their intersecting identities as women, immigrants, and members of a racial minority. The institutional, cultural, and financial obstacles that impede their success in the Finnish entrepreneurial environment exacerbate these difficulties. Nonetheless, these business people's fortitude, inventiveness, and tenacity demonstrate their capacity to impact Finland's economy and populace substantially.

For this potential to be fully realized, deliberate actions need to be taken by legislators, corporate groups, and community leaders to establish an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is more inclusive and supportive. Finland can unleash the potential of African female entrepreneurs and promote economic growth, social integration, and diversity by tackling the institutional and cultural obstacles that presently impede them.

7 SUMMARY

This thesis delves into the experiences of African women entrepreneurs in Finland, emphasizing the obstacles and prospects they faced during their entrepreneurial journey. The study examines these business owners' success and failure rates, primary challenges, and potential ways to overcome them. The study uses qualitative and quantitative research to clarify African female entrepreneurs' structural, cultural, and financial obstacles. It also explores how these challenges relate to the concerns of gender, immigrant status, and racial identity.

Innovation, economic empowerment, and social mobility have all historically been linked to entrepreneurship. Particularly when facilitating immigrants' integration into the host nation, immigrant entrepreneurship is essential since it offers employment options where more conventional routes might not be available. African female entrepreneurs in Finland have specific hurdles, including cultural barriers, access to funding, and integration into the Finnish business ecosystem. Their gender and racial identity add to these obstacles, making them doubly disadvantageous in the fiercely competitive economic world.

This thesis examines the variables that affect African female entrepreneurs' chances of success or failure in business in Finland. The study sought to identify the primary barriers and ascertain how business support groups, government legislation, and community-based networks may be utilized to mitigate them. In doing so, the study provides valuable insights into how entrepreneurship might support social and economic empowerment despite persistent structural impediments.

A qualitative methodology was used in the study, enabling a thorough examination of the individual experiences of African female entrepreneurs. Three African women business owners in the Oulu area participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews revealed rich, qualitative information about their experiences, motives, difficulties, and methods for overcoming barriers. The thematic analysis examined the data to find recurrent themes, trends, and revelations associated with the study topics.

The study provided a theoretical framework for comprehending the larger context of the difficulties faced by African female entrepreneurs in Finland, which also used secondary data from the body

of literature on entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship, and immigrant entrepreneurship in addition to primary data. The literature evaluation concentrated on essential topics like gender roles, entrepreneurship theory, and the unique difficulties immigrant entrepreneurs face in industrialized nations like Finland.

Key Findings

Motivations for Entrepreneurship:

According to the survey, there are several reasons why African women start their businesses, such as the need to overcome scarce job prospects, the desire to create jobs for their communities, and the need for financial independence. For many, becoming an entrepreneur is a conscious decision to start a business that enables them to further their objectives and positively impact society rather than just a way to cope with unemployment. Numerous entrepreneurs also cited the government's support programs as a driving force behind Finland's hospitable business environment.

Challenges Faced:

The research highlighted several challenges faced by African female entrepreneurs, including:

Language Barriers: One of the main obstacles mentioned was that Finnish is one of the most complex languages for immigrants to learn. Entrepreneurs have reported challenges in navigating legal and regulatory systems due to the prevalence of Finnish in government paperwork, commercial software, and communications.

Cultural Differences: Their close-knit business networks and high-context communication techniques make it difficult for African American female entrepreneurs to fit in with the Finnish business culture. Numerous business owners felt excluded from traditional business networks, which hindered their ability to get essential partners, clients, and resources.

Financial Barriers: Obtaining financing continues to be one of the biggest obstacles. Many immigrant entrepreneurs lack collateral and credit histories, which traditional financing institutions frequently need. Due to this financial exclusion, many entrepreneurs are forced to rely on personal resources or unofficial networks, which hinders their capacity to grow their company.

Role of Community-Based Networks and Government Support:

According to the study, African female entrepreneurs' success is greatly influenced by their access to community-based support networks. These networks offer social and emotional support, crucial for overcoming loneliness, and helpful aid, including guiding business owners over administrative roadblocks. Government initiatives such as Finnvera and Business Finland provide financial and advisory assistance. Still, due to a lack of focused outreach and linguistic obstacles, they are frequently unattainable for African female entrepreneurs.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this thesis have important implications for policymakers, business support organizations, and community leaders. Several key recommendations emerged from the research:

Improve Access to Financial Resources: One of the most critical interventions needed is the creation of immigrant-specific financial products that consider the unique challenges African female entrepreneurs face. Microfinance programs, grants, and alternative funding sources, such as crowdfunding, should be expanded to provide more accessible options for entrepreneurs who may not meet the traditional loan criteria.

Enhance Multilingual Resources: Government agencies and business support organizations should provide more multilingual resources to ensure African female entrepreneurs can access information, programs, and support services in languages they understand. This includes translating key business documents, offering advisory services in multiple languages, and creating digital platforms accommodating different linguistic needs.

Cultural Competency and Inclusivity: Business support organizations and government agencies must increase their focus on cultural competency. This involves training staff to understand African female entrepreneurs' cultural backgrounds better and designing culturally inclusive programs. Additionally, fostering diversity and inclusion within Finland's business networks is essential for ensuring that African female entrepreneurs are not excluded from collaboration, mentorship, and investment opportunities.

Simplify Bureaucratic Processes: Simplifying the processes for business registration, permit applications, and accessing government support would reduce the administrative burden on African female entrepreneurs. One-stop digital platforms that consolidate all necessary applications into a single portal could streamline these processes and make them more accessible to immigrant entrepreneurs.

Strengthen Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations: Community organizations have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by African female entrepreneurs and are well-positioned to provide targeted support. Strengthening partnerships between government agencies, business organizations, and community networks would enhance the reach and effectiveness of support programs.

By highlighting the particular difficulties African female entrepreneurs face in Finland, this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on immigrant entrepreneurship. A large portion of the material now in publications on immigrant entrepreneurship views immigrants as a monolithic group, failing to take into consideration the intersectional problems brought about by the confluence of immigrant status, gender, and race. This study closes this knowledge gap by giving a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of African female entrepreneurs and offering helpful suggestions for removing the structural obstacles they encounter.

The study is significant in the Finnish context, where it is becoming more widely acknowledged that immigrant entrepreneurship contributes to cultural variety and economic prosperity. The results of this study can help shape more welcoming laws and services that facilitate the assimilation of foreign business owners into Finland's commercial environment.

The entrepreneurial path of African women entrepreneurs in Finland is characterized by perseverance and significant obstacles. Even while many have shown a remarkable capacity for adaptation and success in the face of hardship, to build an entrepreneurial environment that is more inclusive and fairer, it is necessary to address the structural, cultural, and financial constraints that they encounter. Finland can help African female entrepreneurs reach their full potential and make a more significant contribution to the economic and social fabric of the country by putting the proposals made in this thesis into practice.

The intricate dynamics of immigrant entrepreneurship have been better-understood thanks to this study, which has also brought attention to the need for more specialized and inclusive support systems. Lawmakers, business associations, and community leaders can contribute to developing an atmosphere that fosters the success and growth of African female entrepreneurs by tackling the issues raised and putting the suggested solutions into practice.

REFERENCES

dos Santos¹, V.F., Morais, G.M., de Araújo Ribeiro, F.F. and Jardim, D., 2019. Female entrepreneurship: Evolution, current challenges, and prospects. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 10(5).

Anderson, R., J.M. Quigley and M. Wilhelmsson (2005) Agglomeration and the spatial distribution of creativity, *Papers in Regional Science* 83(3): 445-464.

Aspinall, P. 2009. The future of ethnicity classifications. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35: 1417–1435.

Audretsch, D.B. and Feldman, M.P. (2004) Knowledge spillovers and the geography of innovation, *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics* 4: 2713-2739.

Bosma, N., A. Coduras, Y. Litovsky, J. Seaman, J. F. Carmona, and F. Wright. 2017. *GEM Manual: A Report on the Design, Data and Quality Control of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Boston, MA: GEM Consortium.

Blanka, C. (2019). An individual-level perspective on intrapreneurship: a review and ways forward. *Review of Managerial Science*, 13(5), 919–961. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-018-0277-0>

Burgelman, R.A., 1983. Corporate entrepreneurship and strategic management: insight from a process study. *Manage. Sci.* 29 (12), 1349–1365.

Burgelman, R.A., 1984. Designs for corporate entrepreneurship in established firms. *Calif. Manage. Rev.* 26 (3), 155–166.

Borjas, G. J. 1986. “The Self-Employment Experience of Immigrants.” *The Journal of Human Resources* 21 (4): 485–506.

Berliant, M., and Fujita, M. 2009. The dynamics of knowledge diversity and economic growth. Paper presented at the 56th Annual North American Meeting, Regional Science Association International, San Francisco.

Duranton, G. and D. Puga (2001) Nursery cities: urban diversity, process innovation, and the life cycle of products, *American Economic Review* 91(5): 1454-1477.

Pinchot, G., 1985. *Intrapreneuring: Why You Don't Have to Leave the Corporation to Become an Entrepreneur*. Harper & Row, New York.

Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. 2008. *Innovation nation*. London: Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills.

Dheer, R. J. S. 2018. "Entrepreneurship by Immigrants: A Review of Existing Literature and Directions for Future Research." *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 14 (3): 555–614.

Kushnirovich, N. 2015. "Economic Integration of Immigrant Entrepreneurs." *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review* 3 (3): 9–27.

Lee, N. 2011. Ethnic diversity and employment growth in English cities. *Urban Studies* 48: 407–425.

Sobel, R. S., Dutta, N., & Roy, S. (2010). Does cultural diversity increase the rate of entrepreneurship? *The Review of Austrian Economics*, 23(3), 269–286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11138-010-0112-6>

Mateos, P. 2007. A review of name-based ethnicity classification methods and their potential in population studies. *Population, Space and Place* 13: 243–263.

Shane, S. 2012. "Reflections on the 2010 AMR Decade Award: Delivering on the Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research." *Academy of Management Review* 37 (1): 10–20.

Rafaela Camara Malerba & João J. Ferreira (2021) Immigrant entrepreneurship and strategy: a systematic literature review, *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 33:2, 183-217, DOI: [10.1080/08276331.2020.1804714](https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1804714)

Brzozowski, J., M. Cucculelli, and S. Aleksander. 2019. "Exploring Transnational Entrepreneurship. Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Foreign-Born Returnees in the Italian ICT Sector." *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship* 31 (5): 413–431.

Chaganti, R. S., A. D. Watts, R. Chaganti, and M. Zimmerman-Treichel. 2008. "Ethnic Immigrants in Founding Teams: Effects on Prospector Strategy and Performance in New Internet Ventures." *Journal of Business Venturing* 23 (1): 113–139.

Dollinger, M. J. (2008). *Entrepreneurship*. Marsh Publications.

Nshom, E. 2022. Perceived challenges living and integrating into Finnish society: A study among immigrants in Finland. Date of retrieval 16.02.2024 [https://immi.se/intercultural/article/view/1182-Nshometal-60#:~:text=Drawing%20on%20data%20collected%20from,%2C%20and%20\(4\)%20fewer%20opportunities](https://immi.se/intercultural/article/view/1182-Nshometal-60#:~:text=Drawing%20on%20data%20collected%20from,%2C%20and%20(4)%20fewer%20opportunities)

Hong, L., and Page, S.. 2004. Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 101: 16385–16389.

Romer, P. (1990) Endogenous Technological Change. *Journal of Political Economy* 98(5):71-102. 66.

Mirbabayev, R. (2015). Relationship between innovation and cultural diversity: Review of concepts. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(29), 105-115.

Yle, 2023, Study: Immigration needs tripling to maintain Finland's labor force. Date of retrieval 17.02.2024 <https://yle.fi/a/74-20016231>

Page, S. (2008). *The Difference*. Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830282>

Schumpeter, J.A. 1989. *Essays on Entrepreneurs, Innovations, Business Cycles and the Evolution of Capitalism*. Oxford, UK: Transaction Publishers (Reprint of a volume originally published in 1951 by Addison-Wesley Press)

Statistics Finland (2023), Number of immigrations nearly 50,000 in 2022. Date of retrieval 27/03/2024
<https://www.stat.fi/en/publication/cl8n2djzw3b360cvz35t3up2r>

Fornaro, P. (2018). Immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland (No. 83). ETLA Report.

Suomen Yrittäjät, (2019), Entrepreneurship among immigrants to Finland on the rise. Date of retrieval 27/03/2024 <https://www.yrittajat.fi/en/news/blog-post-entrepreneurship-among-immigrants-to-finland-on-the-rise/>

Hart, D. M. 2014. "Founder Nativity, Founding Team Formation, and Firm Performance in the U.S. High-Tech Sector." *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 10 (1): 1–22.

Hart, D. M., and Z. J. Acs. 2011. "High-Tech Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the United States." *Economic Development Quarterly* 25 (2): 116–129.

Gartner, W. B. (1990). What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship? *Journal of Business Venturing*, 5(1), 15–28. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9026\(90\)90023-M](https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9026(90)90023-M)

Wadhwa, V., A. Saxenian, B. A. Rissing, and G. Gereffi. 2007. "America's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Part I". Duke Science, Technology & Innovation Paper (23).

Jacobs, J. (1969) *The Economy of Cities*, New York, Random House.

Business Finland (2024), The Finnish Business Environment. Date of retrieval 26/06/2024

<https://www.businessfinland.com/why-finland/the-finnish-business-environment/>