



Immigrant Entrepreneurship: Intentions, Challenges and Strategies

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2025 Laurea



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Leading Transformational Change
Thesis
May, 2025

Acknowledgement

I love this section :). First, I give all the glory to Almighty God for the opportunity to be able to write this thesis. Regardless of the ups and the downs, this too is done, as the bible noted “They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” Psalm 125:1 King James Version.

I would also like to thank my advisor and supervisor Prof. Ville Saarikoski for his guidance and advice in this thesis and particularly in the Leading Transformational change program.

My gratitude also goes to my wife, Ruth, and my children Bliss and Obed thanks for always being patient and having my back. I thank my parents and siblings, sis. Seun and sis. Folake and all my ‘Family’ for their endless support in various ways.

Special thanks also go to the immigrant entrepreneurs that took their time out to respond to my survey and interview. Without your contribution, I wouldn’t have been able to graduate. I am really grateful, and I look forward to further collaborating with you.

Oluwafemi Adekola

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Year	2025	Number of pages	68
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This thesis examines the entrepreneurial journey of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, focusing on their intentions, challenges, and strategies. It is set against the backdrop of increasing globalisation and immigration in Finland, highlighting the need to support and encourage immigrant entrepreneurship. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to investigate lived experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and in-depth interviews with selected participants. Although the response rate was limited, rich qualitative insights were obtained. The results reveal that immigrant entrepreneurial intentions in Finland are shaped by both internal motivations and external constraints. While personal traits such as autonomy, creativity, and resilience play a significant role, systemic challenges such as language barriers and limited institutional support, often limit perceived opportunities. Additionally, entrepreneurship was found to be both a proactive and reactive choice, depending on individual circumstances. Key strategies for overcoming challenges include active networking, personal drive, and language acquisition. The study suggest that Finnish institutions adopt more inclusive support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of immigrant entrepreneurs, fostering a more equitable and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, while Immigrant entrepreneurs are encouraged to build strong networks and pursue language learning.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, and challenges

Contents

Acknowledgement	3
1 Introduction	7
1.1 Background of this study	7
1.2 Research Objective and Research Questions	8
1.3 Significance of this study	9
1.4 Research structure	9
2 Migration and immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland	10
2.1 Entrepreneurial activity and trends in Finland	10
2.2 Immigration	11
2.3 Immigrant entrepreneurship.....	12
3 Literature review.....	13
3.1 Who is an entrepreneur?	13
3.2 Theoretical perspectives of entrepreneurship	13
3.3 Entrepreneurship intentions and factors influencing it	15
3.4 Approach to entrepreneurial intentions in this study	21
3.5 Challenges of entrepreneurship	22
3.6 Immigrant entrepreneurship and its challenges	24
4 Research Methodology	27
4.1 Research method	27
4.2 Research approach	28
4.3 Sampling technique	29
4.4 Data collection and Analysis.....	29
4.5 Research ethics.....	32
5 Results	34
5.1 Descriptive analysis.....	34
5.2 Thematic analysis of qualitative data.....	41
5.2.1 Factors influencing entrepreneurial intention	41
5.2.2 Challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship	43
5.2.3 Strategies for overcoming challenges	45
6 Discussion.....	47
6.1 Factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions	47
6.2 Challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland	48
6.3 Strategies for overcoming challenges	49
6.4 Implications of this study	50
7 Conclusion.....	51
References.....	53

Figures	62
Pictures	62
Tables	62
Appendices	63

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of this study

Entrepreneurship is central to economic development, innovation, and job creation (Raposo, Rodrigues, Dinis, Do Paço and Ferreira 2014). It has the capacity to stimulate technological advancements, improve products and services, and harness local resources. It not only boosts productivity but also promotes social mobility and poverty reduction (Yu, Khalid and Ahmed 2021). By fostering diverse economic activities and enhancing government revenue, it accelerates national development, making it an essential force in shaping both local and global economies.

As the world continues to become globalised and people move from one location to another for various reasons, immigrant entrepreneurship has emerged as a vital and growing area of research (Nazareno, Zhou and You 2019; Malerba and Ferreira 2020). Immigrant entrepreneurship has been “generally understood as the undertaking of entrepreneurial activities by immigrants” (Dabić, Vlačić, Paul, Dana, Sahasranamam and Glinka 2020, p. 25). Immigrant entrepreneurs often create businesses that bridge cultural and market gaps, foster innovation, and stimulate economic growth in their host countries (Dheer 2018; Huang and Liu 2019). Consequently, immigrant entrepreneurship has been increasingly recognized as a vital mechanism for economic integration and a catalyst for societal advancement (Ramos-Escobar, García-Pérez-de-Lema and Valdez-Juárez 2022).

Immigrants often face unique challenges and opportunities in their host countries, making their entrepreneurial intentions shaped by a distinct set of factors compared to native populations (Dharel 2022). Entrepreneurial intention is defined as the state of mind guiding individuals toward starting new business ventures (Yıldırım, Çakır and Aşkun 2016).

In the Nordic context, Finland provides a unique setting for studying immigrant entrepreneurship, given its recent increase in immigration and the socio-economic challenges this has brought (Webster and Kontkanen 2021). Immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland, as in other countries, faces a complex array of challenges, and entrepreneurial intentions are impacted by various factors. Early studies have identified some of these barriers and challenges, ranging from cultural and linguistic barriers to regulatory hurdles and limited access to financial resources.

For instance, Kaluarachchige (2024) highlights that language proficiency and cultural understanding are critical challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, compounded by limited access to funding, social integration difficulties, inadequate entrepreneurial networks

(Némethová 2022), and entrepreneurship services that are often characterized by ambiguity (see also Bogdanova and Rantanen 2024). Likewise, earlier studies have identified numerous factors that influence these decisions, ranging from personality traits like risk tolerance and achievement motivation to cultural, economic, and social variables, such as financial independence and lack of job opportunities (Walter and Heinrichs 2015; Sambou 2020).

In Finland, a country experiencing increasing immigration (Statistics Finland 2024a), exploring the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions of immigrant entrepreneurs and the challenges they face is of growing significance. Understanding these factors has implications not only for supporting the entrepreneurial ambitions of individuals but also for fostering inclusive economic growth. As Finland continues to experience migration, recognizing the potential of immigrant entrepreneurs and addressing the challenges they face will be crucial for ensuring their contribution to the Finnish economy.

1.2 Research Objective and Research Questions

In Finland, there are approximately 29,000 self-employed individuals of foreign origin (Statistics Finland 2024b). Collectively, their businesses employ around 30,000 people and generate a turnover of €3.5 billion (Manai 2019). Companies founded by immigrants have been suggested to create more employment opportunities than other businesses in the country (Dharel 2022). This highlights the need to understand the factors influencing their entrepreneurial intentions, as insights into these motivations and challenges could help inform policies and programs that enhance entrepreneurial success and economic contributions within the immigrant community.

Research on entrepreneurial intentions has also expanded to consider how national culture and institutional frameworks impact entrepreneurial behaviour (Terjesen, Hessels and Li 2016). In Finland, a nation with a growing immigrant population, these cultural and institutional factors intersect with the experiences of immigrants, potentially shaping their entrepreneurial aspirations. Immigrants often face distinct challenges, including navigating new cultural landscapes, overcoming economic barriers, and accessing resources, which can either hinder or motivate entrepreneurial ventures. Consequently, investigating the specific factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among people of migrant backgrounds in Finland is vital for developing supportive policies and fostering inclusive economic growth.

While prior research has thoroughly explored entrepreneurial intentions of immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as the challenges they face (Fayolle, Liñán and Moriano 2014; Yu et al. 2021), there is limited focus on immigrants in specific national settings, particularly Finland. This study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, while also addressing the challenges they face. Furthermore, it seeks to propose actionable strategies for

overcoming these challenges, to foster a more supportive and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This thesis focuses on the perspective of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland. The study aims to examine entrepreneurial intentions, the challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship, and ways to overcome these challenges. To achieve the aim, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What are the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions?

RQ2: What are the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland?

RQ3: How can immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland overcome the challenges they face?

1.3 Significance of this study

This study expands the understanding of the intentions, challenges, and strategies of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, a topic of growing relevance amid increased globalisation and immigration. It contributes to ongoing efforts to support immigrant integration and economic inclusion, particularly by informing initiatives like the Immigrants as Business Mentors (IMIB) project. By highlighting structural barriers and effective coping strategies, the research provides evidence-based insights that can help shape targeted coaching, mentorship, and entrepreneurship training for international students and graduates. Additionally, the research process has been valuable on a personal level, allowing early entrepreneur like myself to learn from the lived experiences of other entrepreneurs and gain practical insights into navigating the Finnish entrepreneurial landscape.

1.4 Research structure

This study is structured as follows. The next chapter (Chapter Two) provides an overview of migration and immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland. Chapter Three reviews earlier studies focusing on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, and the factors that influence them, as well as immigrant entrepreneurship and its challenges. Chapter Four describes the methodology used in this study, particularly the procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter Five presents the results of the data analysis, followed by a discussion, thereafter the conclusion. In this report, ChatGPT was used for language to editing of the text and to make the text smoother.

2 Migration and immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland

This chapter lays the foundation of the geographical focus of this study. First, I look at the state of entrepreneurial activity and trends in Finland, followed by the migration situation in Finland and the concept of immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland.

2.1 Entrepreneurial activity and trends in Finland

Finland has been described a safe and attractive environment for starting a business, particularly for testing innovative technologies. With a highly educated, tech-savvy population, world-class digital expertise, and a reliable testing infrastructure, Finland stands out as an ideal destination for innovation and technological development (Balawi and Ayoub 2022; Business Finland 2025).

According to Business Finland (2025), Finland ranks among the top global environments for business and innovation, offering the second in best investment environment (Legatum institute 2023) and the first in business and labour landscape (Instead 2023). With a highly skilled, digitally advanced workforce and a culture rooted in collaboration, openness, and resilience (*sisu*), Finland fosters groundbreaking innovation. It is recognized as the first country in innovation (Consumer Technology Association 2023), supported by strong ties between industry, academia, and research. The country also ranks second in logistics performance (World Bank 2023), boasting nearly 90% carbon-free electricity, advanced 5G infrastructure, and ideal conditions for data centres. Additionally, Finland leads globally in sustainability, holding the first position in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller and Drumm 2023), reflecting its commitment to solving global challenges through innovation and cooperation (Business Finland 2025).

More information about the Finnish entrepreneurial trend has also been provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is one of the most influential global research projects into entrepreneurial activity and trends (Björk, Saarela, Kotavaara and Muhos 2022). According to the GEM report, Finland's entrepreneurial ecosystem has shown positive development since 2016, with global leadership in areas like entrepreneurial financing, school-level entrepreneurship education, physical infrastructure, and support for women's entrepreneurship. The country benefits from a highly educated workforce, strong R&D transfer capabilities, and growing informal investment activity. However, challenges persist, including cultural and social norms that do not fully support risk-taking or entrepreneurship, particularly among women, who still face a significant gender gap in skills perception, access to finance, and entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, entrepreneurship intentions have declined since 2015, especially among women and older age groups, while fear of failure has increased, more so for women than men (Björk, Saarela, Kotavaara and Muhos 2022).

The report also noted that Finland lags behind peers like Sweden and the Netherlands in growth ambitions, export activity, and job creation expectations among entrepreneurs. This reflects the need for stronger support in fostering ambition and scaling potential. Despite strengths in sustainability and motivation driven by impact, the overall trend suggests that while the foundation is strong, Finland must address cultural barriers and ambition gaps to unlock its full entrepreneurial potential (Björk, et al. 2022).

2.2 Immigration

Early record of immigration in Finland has been traced back to the time of Finland's independence. Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917, this prompted an early wave of migration, with thousands of Karelians and Russians fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution (Nshom, Sadaf and Khalimzoda 2022). While many Russians later left during World War II, post-war migration increased with the resettlement of Karelians from territories ceded to the USSR and the return of Ingrian Finns in the 1990s after the Soviet Union's collapse. The immigrant population grew from 0.8% in 1990 to around 10.3% by 2024, with 583,155 people of foreign background living in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2025). Major immigrant groups include Estonians, Russians, Iraqis, Somalis, and others. Finland's EU membership in 1995 and Schengen entry in 2001 also boosted European migration (Nshom et al. 2022).

In the recent years, there have been significant increase in immigration in Finland. As noted by Statistics Finland (2024a), as of December 2023, Finland's population reached 5,604,558, reflecting a growth of 40,588 people over the year. This increase was entirely due to net immigration, with 58,496 more people moving to Finland than leaving (see Figure 2 below).

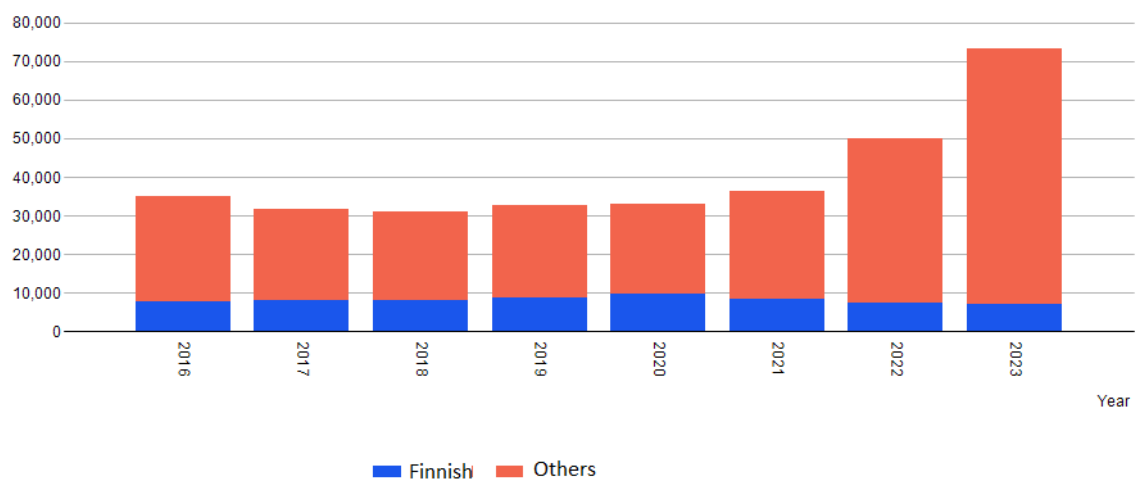


Figure 1. Immigration to Finland (Statistics Finland, 2025)

2.3 Immigrant entrepreneurship

Finland has continued to experience a notable increase in immigration. This shift has been driven by labour shortages, return migration, and policy reforms. Although immigrants faced challenges such as language barriers, non-recognition of qualifications, and discrimination, Finland responded by gradually improving its immigration policies (Némethová 2022). Programs like Work in Finland and Talent Boost were introduced to attract skilled workers and international talent while also promoting labour market integration. Immigrant entrepreneurship began to rise during the 1990s and has since grown, with foreign-born entrepreneurs establishing thousands of businesses, particularly in metropolitan areas (Némethová 2022). Despite early ethnic-based ventures, immigrant entrepreneurs have continued to increase over the years (see Figure 3) and have subsequently become increasingly diverse, contributing significantly to the Finnish economy (Manai 2019).

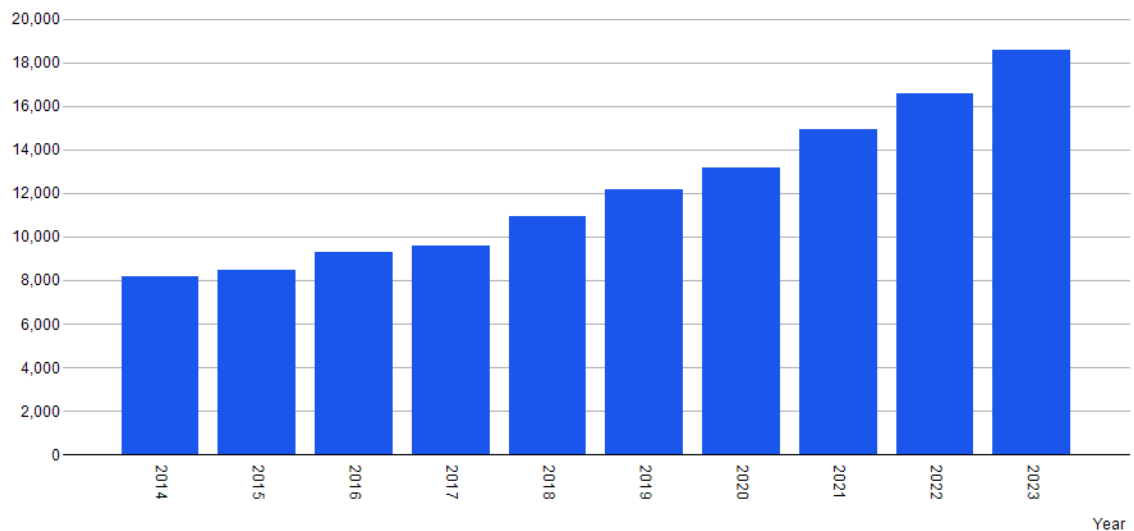


Figure 2. Population of Foreign-born entrepreneurs in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2025)

To support both native and immigrant entrepreneurs, Finland has implemented several policies and provided structured services for business development. These include streamlined residence permit procedures for self-employed individuals, funding opportunities, and a stable, innovation-driven economy with a supportive regulatory environment (Némethová 2022). The Finnish government has emphasized the importance of attracting and retaining international talent by facilitating entrepreneurship through programs, mentorship, and access to financing, reinforcing its status as a top EU country for starting a business (Li 2020).

3 Literature review

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intention and the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, it is essential to clarify key concepts utilized in this study. This section provides definitions of significant concepts, particularly in the context of their application within this study. Furthermore, it reviews previous research on entrepreneurship and immigrant entrepreneurship highlighting early studies and theories that have shaped the discourse in the field.

3.1 Who is an entrepreneur?

Earlier studies have noted that the word entrepreneur is from the French word 'entreprendre' meaning 'to undertake something'. Literally, 'undertaking something' could be seen from different perspectives because of different possible ways entrepreneurial acting and/or thinking, hence having a unified definition of an entrepreneur is difficult (Fischer, Rosilius, Schmitt and Bräutigam 2021).

The difficulty of a universal definition has been reflected in the existence of the long-standing debate on the definition of who an entrepreneur is, particularly in the field of entrepreneurship, with the existence of various definition of 'who an entrepreneur is' (Howorth, Tempest and Coupland 2005). For instance, very early studies in the field have defined entrepreneur as someone "who has founded his or her own enterprise" (Begley and Boyd, 1987). Similarly, Masters and Meier (1988, p. 32) defined an entrepreneur as a "major owner of a small business or the major owner and manager of a small business". According to Filion (2021), most people generally see an entrepreneur as someone "who owns and leads a business". Additionally, European Union Commission has defined entrepreneur as someone "acting upon opportunities and ideas and transforming them into value for others, which can be financial, cultural, or social" (Fotache and Bucșă 2020). All these definitions have described entrepreneur from various perspectives.

However, as this study is not focused on identifying the best definition of an entrepreneur, the study adopts a broader definition suggested by Walter and Heinrichs (2015) that define entrepreneur as someone owning and managing a business. This definition enables this study to have a more comprehensive depiction of who an entrepreneur is. Hence, in this study the word entrepreneur encompasses diverse forms, such as part-time entrepreneur, light entrepreneur, solo entrepreneur, franchising entrepreneur and start-up entrepreneur.

3.2 Theoretical perspectives of entrepreneurship

The study of entrepreneurship is enriched by diverse theoretical perspectives that offer various lenses through which to understand the motivations, behaviours, and outcomes

associated with starting and managing new ventures. Walter and Heinrichs (2015) provide a detailed analysis of the diverse theoretical perspectives that have been developed over the years of the study of entrepreneurship. These perspectives include the trait, affective, cognitive, learning, intentions, and economic approaches, each contributing distinct insights into the entrepreneurial process (see, Walter and Heinrichs 2015). The trait perspective focuses on individual characteristics and dispositions that predispose certain people to entrepreneurial activities. This approach suggests that personality traits such as risk-taking, innovativeness, and persistence are critical for entrepreneurial success (House, Shane and Herold 1996). The trait perspective posits that these personality traits are partly shaped by social learning and partly by inherent characteristics influenced by national culture (Mueller and Thomas 2001). The trait perspective is supported by theories like the five-factor model of personality, which outlines how traits such as openness and conscientiousness are related with entrepreneurial behaviour (Costa and McCrae 2008).

Cognitive perspective emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in entrepreneurial decision-making. This approach argues that entrepreneurship is driven by how individuals acquire, process, and use evidence rather than by fixed personality traits (Baron 2004). Entrepreneurs are alleged to depend on heuristics or "rules of thumb" to make decisions in uncertain and complex situations (Busenitz and Barney 1997). Cognitive biases such as anchoring, availability, and representativeness are key concepts in this perspective, influencing how entrepreneurs perceive and react to opportunities (Tversky, Kahneman and Slovic 1982).

The affective perspective brings attention to the role of emotions and feelings in entrepreneurship. This view posits that affective states, including moods and emotional responses, influence cognitive processes and, subsequently, entrepreneurial behaviour (Baron 2008). Positive affect, for example, is associated with enhanced creativity and better resource acquisition, which can facilitate entrepreneurial success (Goss 2005). The affective perspective is underpinned by theories such as the affect infusion model and affect event theory, which explain how emotions impact decision-making and social interactions (Forgas 1995; Ashkanasy, Härtel and Daus 2002).

The learning perspective, grounded in social learning theory, emphasizes the role of observational learning in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour. According to Bandura (1977), individuals learn by perceiving the behaviours of others and the results of those behaviours. This perspective highlights the importance of role models and social reinforcement in fostering entrepreneurial intentions. Observing successful entrepreneurs or receiving positive feedback can encourage individuals to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones 1976).

The economic perspective integrates concepts from human capital and decision theory to explain entrepreneurial choices. This perspective views entrepreneurship as a rational decision-making process where individuals weigh the benefits and costs of starting a business against the alternatives (Douglas and Shepherd 2002). Human capital theory supports this by suggesting that individuals evaluate expected returns and costs of entrepreneurship based on their skills and training (Boskin 1974). This perspective provides a quantitative basis for understanding why individuals choose entrepreneurship over wage employment. Additionally, there is the intentions perspective that explores the drivers behind entrepreneurial intentions, which are seen as critical precursors to entrepreneurial action. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits that entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, Shapero's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event identifies perceived desirability, feasibility, and propensity to act as key factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions (Shapero, 1984). This perspective integrates the cognitive and motivational aspects of entrepreneurial decision-making, providing a comprehensive understanding of how intentions translate into entrepreneurial activities.

Another perspective that has been well researched, particularly amongst immigrant and minorities is the push and pull theory. Immigrants often exhibit higher rates of entrepreneurship when compared to native-born populations (Clark and Drinkwater 2000). This trend has often been explained by the push-pull theory, which differentiates between motivations for entrepreneurship: push factors, like unemployment or job dissatisfaction, have been noted to compel individuals into entrepreneurship out of necessity, while pull factors, such as the pursuit of independence or financial gain attract individuals who see business ownership as an opportunity (Okeke-Ihejirika, Nkrumah, Amoyaw and Otoo 2023). This push and pull theory clarify whether entrepreneurial endeavour is driven by necessity or opportunity. Each of these aforementioned theoretical perspectives offer valuable insights into different aspects of entrepreneurship, which contribute to the understanding of entrepreneurial process.

3.3 Entrepreneurship intentions and factors influencing it

Entrepreneurial intention represents an individual's mindset, which drives them toward the creation and execution of new business ideas (Yıldırım et al., 2016). Entrepreneurial Intention is a critical concept within entrepreneurship research, representing an individual's commitment to start and manage a new venture. It reflects the cognitive and motivational readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities, which precedes the actual initiation of a business (Hamidi, Wennberg and Berglund 2008). This intention is more than just a desire; it is a deliberate plan that individuals formulate based on their assessment of the entrepreneurial endeavours' feasibility and desirability (Davidsson and Delmar, 2008).

Entrepreneurial Intention is thus a precursor to entrepreneurial action, encapsulating the mental and emotional preparedness to take on the challenges of entrepreneurship. For over three decades, the study of entrepreneurship intentions has garnered significant scholarly attention, and it has been argued extensively that understanding these intentions is pivotal for fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems and informing policymaking (for instance, Nabi and Holden 2008; Akhtar, Azeem, Basiouni and Mir 2023). Consequently, a wide range of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions have been identified by previous studies. Hence, drawing from various earlier studies, a synthesis of key factors influencing entrepreneurship intentions is presented below.

According to Ibdunni, Mozie and Ayeni (2020), psychological traits such as self-efficacy and risk tolerance prominently influence entrepreneurial intentions. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2021) discussed Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which suggests that individuals who believe in their capabilities are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This theory posits that high self-efficacy boosts confidence in one's ability to succeed, thereby increasing the likelihood of pursuing entrepreneurship. Maheshwari and Kha (2022) conducted empirical research supporting this theory, establishing a strong correlation between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions. The study found that individuals with high self-efficacy are more proactive, persistent, and willing to take risks, which are crucial traits for entrepreneurs. Conversely, Chatterjee, Shepherd and Wincent (2022) added that individuals with low self-efficacy may shy away from entrepreneurship due to perceived insurmountable challenges and fear of failure, highlighting the importance of psychological empowerment in fostering entrepreneurial intentions.

Furthermore, Kobylńska (2022) stated that social and cultural contexts also play a critical role in determining entrepreneurial intentions. In Bugaje, Abd Rahman, Said and Jo (2023) study using Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, the study added to that of Kobylńska (2022), positing that societies with high individualism and low uncertainty avoidance tend to have higher entrepreneurial activities. Individualistic cultures emphasise personal achievement and independence, which align with entrepreneurial values. In addition, Litzky, Winkel, Hance and Howell (2020) and Kayed, Al-Madadha and Abualbasal (2022) conducted studies that support Hofstede's theory, finding that cultural values significantly shape entrepreneurial intentions. They discovered that individuals are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures in cultures where innovation and risk-taking are valued. This suggests that nurturing a pro-entrepreneurial culture through societal norms and values can enhance entrepreneurial intentions, making culture a critical factor in the entrepreneurial system.

Psychological traits and social and cultural factors already discussed above, Amini-Sedeh, Abootorabi and Zhang (2021) and Nakara, Laouiti, Chavez and Gharbi (2020) noted that

economic factors, including access to capital and economic stability, significantly influence entrepreneurship intentions can be another factor. Shahzad, Khan, Saleem and Rashid (2021) argued that individuals are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship in environments where financial resources are readily available. Sivotwa, Jaiyeoba, Roberts-Lombard and Makanyeza (2022) corroborated this by suggesting that access to capital reduces the economic barriers to starting a business, encouraging more individuals to consider entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2020 reports, as reported by Hill et al. (2023), consistently highlight the importance of financial support systems in boosting entrepreneurial activities. These reports show that countries with well-developed financial infrastructures and supportive economic policies tend to have higher levels of entrepreneurial activity. However, economic instability can deter potential entrepreneurs due to perceived risks and uncertainties, Etemad (2020) stated that when the economy is unstable, individuals may prefer the security of employment over the uncertainties of entrepreneurship, underscoring the need for a stable economic environment to foster entrepreneurial intentions.

In addition, another point is that educational background and entrepreneurial education are critical in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, as Shah, Amjed and Jaboob (2020) identified. Amofah and Saladrigues (2022) argue that entrepreneurship education enhances knowledge, skills, and attitudes conducive to entrepreneurial activities. Their research indicates that exposure to entrepreneurial concepts during education increases the likelihood of developing entrepreneurial intentions. They found that students who participated in entrepreneurship education programs were more confident in their ability to start a business and more aware of the opportunities and challenges involved. However, Seyfried and Pohlenz (2020) mentioned that the impact of such education may vary based on the quality and context of the programs offered. Erkollar (2023) concluded that effective entrepreneurship education should include practical experience, mentorship, and exposure to real-world business challenges to prepare individuals for entrepreneurial endeavours.

Arshad, Farooq, Atif and Farooq (2021) state that personal motivations, such as the desire for autonomy and financial independence, significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions. Karimi and Makreet (2020) revealed that personal satisfaction and independence are primary motivators for entrepreneurs in developing countries. Their research highlighted that individuals often pursue entrepreneurship to achieve personal goals and gain control over their work and life. Subedi (2021) corroborates these findings, noting that individuals driven by intrinsic motivations, such as the desire for personal fulfilment and the need for autonomy, are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. This suggests that personal motivations play a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and that fostering these motivations can enhance the entrepreneurial spirit.

According to Georgescu and Herman (2020), family background and support systems significantly affect entrepreneurial intentions. Patuelli, Santarelli and Tubadji (2020) and Zaman, Arshad, Sultana, and Saleem (2021) find that individuals with entrepreneurial parents are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions due to exposure and support. Their study indicated that growing up in an entrepreneurial environment provides individuals with unique insights, experiences, and encouragement that can foster entrepreneurial aspirations. Patuelli et al. (2020) add that family support often provides the necessary social capital and resources, such as financial backing and mentorship, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success. This familial influence creates a conducive environment for developing entrepreneurial intentions and highlights the importance of family dynamics in the entrepreneurial process.

According to Dubey and Sahu (2022), other factors to consider are environmental and infrastructural factors, such as technological advancements and market conditions, which are vital in influencing entrepreneurial intentions. Agu, Kalu, Esi-Ubani and Agu (2021) highlights that favourable market conditions and technological access can spur entrepreneurial intentions by creating innovation and business development opportunities. The study argue that technological advancements reduce the cost of starting a business and open new market opportunities for entrepreneurs. Conversely, Isichei, Agbaeze and Odiba (2020) contribute to the discourse that lacking infrastructure can hinder entrepreneurial efforts by increasing operational challenges and limiting access to necessary resources. This suggests that creating a supportive infrastructure and embracing technological advancements are crucial for fostering entrepreneurial intentions and encouraging business development.

Also, Salami, Ekakitie and Ebinim (2023) mention that regulatory and policy frameworks significantly impact entrepreneurial intentions. Wang, Chen, Chen and Xu (2024) reiterate that government policies promoting business ease, providing tax incentives, and protecting intellectual property rights can enhance entrepreneurial activities. In their recent publication, Ajayi-Nifise, Tula, Asuzu, Mhlongo, Olatoye and Ibeh (2024) stipulated that regulatory frameworks reduce bureaucratic barriers and support entrepreneurship, which are crucial in fostering entrepreneurial intentions. Their research showed that countries with supportive regulatory environments have higher levels of entrepreneurial activity, as these environments reduce the costs and risks associated with starting and running a business. However, Kofman (2023) note that overly stringent regulations can stifle entrepreneurial endeavours by creating unnecessary hurdles and increasing the cost of compliance. This underscores the need for balanced regulatory frameworks that support and encourage entrepreneurship without imposing excessive burdens.

Shi, Nyedu, Huang and Lovia (2024) also note that peer influence and social networks are critical in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. To corroborate this earlier statement,

Sundararajan (2020) sampled Granovetter's theory of the strength of weak ties to suggest that diverse social networks can provide access to valuable information and resources, enhancing entrepreneurial intentions. The research indicates that weak ties, such as acquaintances and professional connections, are more likely to provide new information and opportunities than strong ties, such as close friends and family. Troise, Dana, Tani and Lee (2022) support this theory, showing that entrepreneurs often rely on their social networks for support and resources during the startup phase. These networks provide access to financial resources, mentorship, and market information, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success. It can be inferred that this highlights the importance of building and maintaining diverse social networks to support entrepreneurial intentions.

Finally, personality traits such as innovativeness, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness, collectively known as entrepreneurial orientation, significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions, according to Saha, Kumar, Dutta and Tiwar (2021) and Wadood, Alshaikh, Akbar and Mahmud (2022). Bernoster, Mukerjee and Thurik (2022) argue that individuals with high entrepreneurial orientation are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Their research indicates that traits such as innovativeness, which involves creativity and the willingness to experiment; proactiveness, which consists of taking initiative and anticipating future needs; and competitive aggressiveness, which involves a solid drive to compete and outperform rivals, are crucial for entrepreneurial success. They found that fostering these traits can enhance entrepreneurial intentions, thereby contributing to the growth of entrepreneurial ecosystems. This suggests that personality traits play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and that developing these traits can support entrepreneurial endeavours. A summary of the factors identified from the literature has been presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions

	Factors	Variables	Authors
PBC	Psychological	Self-efficacy (proactive, persistent) and risk tolerance	Ibidunni et al. (2020), Schunk and DiBenedetto (2021), Maheshwari and Kha (2022), Chatterjee et al. (2022)
SN	Social and cultural	Individualism, cultural values, and uncertainty avoidance	Kobylińska (2022), Bugaje et al. (2023), Litzky et al. (2020), Kayed et al. (2022)

	Factors	Variables	Authors
SN	Family background and support systems	Parental interest in entrepreneurs, insights, experiences, and encouragement	Georgescu and Herman (2020), Patuelli et al. (2020), Zaman et al. (2021)
SN	Social networks	Peer influence, financial resources, mentorship, and market information	Shi et al. (2024), Sundararajan (2020), Troise et al. (2022)
PA	Personal motivations	Desire for autonomy and financial independence	Karimi and Makreet (2020), Subedi (2021), Arshad et al. (2021)
PA	Personality traits	Innovativeness, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness	Saha et al. (2021), Wadood et al. (2022), Bernoster et al. (2022)
EF	Environmental and infrastructural	Technological advancements and technological access	Dubey and Sahu (2022), Agu et al. (2021), Isichei et al. (2020)
EF	Government policy	Regulatory, policy frameworks, business ease, providing tax incentives, and protecting intellectual property rights	Salami et al. (2023), Wang et al. (2024), Ajayi-Nifise et al. (2024), Kofman (2023)
EF	Academic background	Educational background and entrepreneurial education	Shah et al. (2020), Amofah and Saladrignes (2022), Seyfried and Pohlenz (2020), Erkollar (2023)
EF	Economic	Access to capital, economic stability, and financial support systems, market conditions	Shahzad et al. (2021), Sivotwa et al. (2022), Hill et al. (2023), Etemad (2020)

SN= subjective norms, PBC= perceived behavioural control, PA= personal attitude, and EF= environmental factor

In the Table (1), the factors identified from the literature have been generally classified into four key factors, they include personal attitude (PA), subjective norms (SNs), and perceived behavioural control (PBC), this first three are adapted from the TPB theory. The fourth factor

is summarised as environmental factors (EFs). In this study the environmental factors entail external conditions and influences that impact entrepreneurial activity (see, Gnyawali and Fogel 1994; Lucky and Ibrahim 2015). Understanding these influences is crucial for developing targeted interventions to foster entrepreneurship. Additionally, by addressing these factors, policymakers, relevant organisations (governmental and non-governmental), and educators can create a supportive environment that nurtures entrepreneurial intentions and drives economic growth through innovation and business development.

3.4 Approach to entrepreneurial intentions in this study

This study adopts the TPB because, on the first hand there is a growing belief among researchers that entrepreneurial intention studies should focus more on understanding the entrepreneurial process within a social context rather than on profiling the psychological traits of individual entrepreneurs. The process-oriented approach of TPB aligns well with this shift, as it captures how social and contextual influences affect entrepreneurial intentions and actions (Yu, Khalid and Ahmed 2021). On the other hand, intention-based models like TPB are empirically shown to be stronger predictors of actual behaviour compared to models relying on single variables, as TPB integrates multiple factors, such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This multidimensional perspective improves the model's predictive power, making it better suited for explaining entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes (Jeger, Sušanj and Mijoč 2014; Yu, Khalid and Ahmed 2021).

The TPB model explains how human intentions drive behaviour, emphasizing that intentions are influenced by three key factors: personal attitude (PA), subjective norms (SNs), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Ajzen 1991). According to TPB, personal attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluations of the behaviour based on expected outcomes; subjective norms capture the impact of social expectations or pressures from others; and perceived behavioural control involves one's confidence in their ability to perform the behaviour given potential facilitators or obstacles (Tornikoski and Maalaoui 2019; Yu, Khalid and Ahmed 2021).

Generally, TPB has been widely adopted in entrepreneurial intention research. According to Yu, Khalid and Ahmed (2021), the widespread adoption has been due to TPB'S comprehensive framework that integrates both individual and social factors, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial motivations. Unlike other models, TPB considers not only personal attitudes but also subjective norms (SNs), which account for society's specific attitudes toward entrepreneurship rather than generalised cultural norms. This model is particularly suitable for entrepreneurship, as starting a business is generally a planned, rather than spontaneous, behaviour. Furthermore, TPB has consistently shown high predictive accuracy across various intentional behaviours and has demonstrated reliability over more

than 30 years, with over 2,000 empirical studies supporting its effectiveness (see, Tornikoski and Maalaoui 2019). This strong empirical foundation has made TPB a trusted and robust model in the field of entrepreneurial intention research (Yu, Khalid and Ahmed 2021).

However, while TPB is a well-established and effective model in researching entrepreneurial intentions, the model can still be enhanced by integrating additional factors (Sondari 2014). Ajzen (2005) suggests extending the model with variables such as demographic, social, personal and environmental factors, which can serve as mediators, indirectly affecting entrepreneurial intentions and subsequent behaviour. Additionally, scholars have suggested that research could benefit from examining moderating effects, which are factors that might strengthen or weaken the relationship between TPB's core elements (subjective norms, attitude, perceived behavioural control) and entrepreneurial intentions (see, for instance, Fayolle et al. 2014). This expansion can enrich TPB's explanatory power by accounting for a broader range of influences on entrepreneurial behaviours. Consequently, this study added one more variable (i.e., Environmental factors) that may explain entrepreneurial intentions as identified from earlier literature. Based on the explanation of the factors identified above, the following hypothesis are generated

Hypothesis 1: Personal attitude (PA) toward entrepreneurship has a positive effect on the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of entrepreneurs with foreign backgrounds in Finland.

Hypothesis 2: Subjective norms (SNs) have a positive effect on the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of entrepreneurs with foreign backgrounds in Finland.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived behavioural control (PBC) has a positive effect on the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of entrepreneurs with foreign backgrounds in Finland.

Hypothesis 4: Environmental factors (EF) have a positive effect on the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of entrepreneurs with foreign backgrounds in Finland.

3.5 Challenges of entrepreneurship

Generally, entrepreneurs face significant and multifaceted challenges in the wake of ongoing global disruptions. Geopolitical tensions, economic instability, natural disasters, and pandemics have collectively created an uncertain and volatile environment that hinders entrepreneurial activities (Doern 2021; Dvouletý, Fernandez de Arroyabe and Mustafa 2021). Events like the 2007-2008 financial crisis, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and thereafter the Russia-Ukraine war have not only disrupted business operations but also challenged foundational assumptions in entrepreneurship research (Ratten and Jones 2021). The complexity of recovery is compounded by the need to adapt to the "new normal," which demands reassessment of business models, resource allocation, and strategic orientation

(Sharma, Kraus, Liguori, Bamel, and Chopra 2024). Entrepreneurs must now incorporate crisis management strategies, engage in value co-creation, and leverage advanced technologies like AI and CRM to maintain resilience and competitiveness (Markovic, Koporcic, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, Kadic-Maglajlic, Bagherzadeh and Islam 2021).

Another significant challenge stems from the internal dynamics of entrepreneurship during and after global crises. The relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial success has grown more complex under crisis conditions, calling for deeper exploration of constructs like resilience, self-efficacy, and adaptability (Afshan, Shahid and Tunio 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic has revealed gaps in SMEs' governance structures and highlighted the need for both external policy support (e.g., public financing, crowdfunding) and internal governance reforms (e.g., knowledge management, resource orchestration) (Klonowski 2022). Entrepreneurs must also confront the challenge of rapid technological transformation, as disruptive technologies such as blockchain and big data analytics require swift integration into operations to remain viable (Saebi, Foss and Linder 2019). The post-pandemic era thus calls for not only innovative thinking but also systemic changes in governance and business models to ensure sustainable recovery and growth.

In their study of entrepreneurship development across countries, Remeikienė, Gasparėnienė, Fedajev, Arsić and Noga (2023) notes that the quality of the business environment plays a significant role. Using 13 indicators from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and objective methods (TOPSIS and entropy), the study assessed and ranked European countries based on how supportive their environments were for entrepreneurs, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. According to the findings, countries like the Netherlands, Finland, and Norway were found to have strong support systems, including favourable policies and institutional backing (Remeikienė et al. 2023, p. 360). In contrast, countries in Eastern Europe and others with legacy command economies (e.g., Belarus, Greece) faced greater challenges due to weaker policy support and underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The study further reveals that beyond institutional support, entrepreneurship is hindered by a lack of basic entrepreneurship education, insufficient entrepreneurial knowledge, and weak attitudes toward business among young people (Remeikienė et al. 2023, p. 363). Many aspiring entrepreneurs, especially in weaker clusters, struggle due to limited access to training, experience, and resources. The COVID-19 crisis intensified these challenges by creating unpredictable market conditions, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and innovation. Together, the abstract and article underscore the structural, educational, and attitudinal barriers that continue to limit entrepreneurship in less supportive environments (Remeikienė et al. 2023, p. 363-364).

In examining the challenges of entrepreneurship, Coban and Tomşa (2017, p.127 - 128) note that digital entrepreneurship in Europe faces a variety of structural and operational barriers that hinder its growth. They emphasise key challenges such as fragmented legal and tax systems, logistical difficulties in cross-border trade, and inconsistencies in customs and transport regulations. Small businesses, in particular, are disadvantaged due to limited capital, workforce, and visibility in global markets. The lack of unified legal frameworks across countries complicates e-commerce operations, making it difficult to standardize practices and resolve disputes efficiently. Likewise, industry fragmentation and weak marketing strategies limit the ability of small enterprises to scale or compete effectively in international digital markets (Coban and Tomşa 2017).

According to Coban and Tomşa (2017), cultural and language differences add another layer of complexity, affecting business practices and consumer interactions in diverse markets. Issues related to online payments, such as high costs, fraud risks, and lack of efficiency, further discourage digital business participation. While digital technologies offer new opportunities, they also demand strategic adaptation, government support, and a more integrated digital infrastructure.

3.6 Immigrant entrepreneurship and its challenges

To understand what immigrant entrepreneurship is, there is need to first understand who an 'immigrant' is. According to the UN (1998, p. 5), "immigrants are non-residents arriving in a country with the intention to remain for a period exceeding one year." Non-residents in this definition refers to both nationals and aliens. Similarly, the Official Journal of the European Union defines immigrant as:

"A person establish[ing] his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country"
(Regulation 862/2007, Article 2)

For the purpose of this study, an immigrant is generally described as someone residing outside his/her country of origin, i.e., someone who moved from another country to Finland, with the intention of remaining in Finland over a long period of time. Hence, an immigrant entrepreneur is an immigrant that undertakes a business endeavour. The term has also been "generally understood as the undertaking of entrepreneurial activities by immigrants" (Dabić et al., 2020, p. 25).

Immigrant entrepreneurs often face unique challenges and opportunities in their host countries, making their entrepreneurial journey to be shaped by a distinct set of factors compared to native populations (Dharel 2022). In the US, Rathod (2012) identifies some of the

challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs as language difference, inadequate access to information and resources and cultural and community division. The study emphasizes the important role that language barrier plays in inhibiting the establishment and growth of immigrant-owned businesses. Rathod (2012) notes that almost all immigrant entrepreneurs have to deal with various governmental agencies when establishing a business and follow the important legal compliance. Consequently, it would be difficult for an individual with limited understanding of the official language(s) to understand or meet the necessary regulatory requirement. In most countries, the basic tasks for a new entrepreneur are to register their company, fill several forms and obtain permits where necessary, and enter into agreements with potential clients, etc. Without adequate understanding of the language used in the documents and for interacting with the governmental agencies, it will be difficult for such entrepreneur to survive. The language issue also extends to the problem of inadequate access to critical information and resources. When the language is not well understood, immigrant entrepreneur may not be able to have access to critical information and resources that may help their enterprise, not because the information is unavailable rather it is because of inadequate understanding of the language in which the information is communicated.

Similarly, Barth and Zalkat (2020) note that challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs can be referred to as the 'liability of newness'. The study examines the challenges faced by Syrian agribusiness immigrant entrepreneurs in Sweden and the strategies taken to overcome the challenges. The main challenges identified by the study include lack of funding, support resources and business networks, inadequate government support, local customers' resistance to ethnic agriproducts and hiring problem. The study notes that the immigrant entrepreneurs applied various strategies to overcome their challenges. For instance, to overcome the financial challenges they access public and private resources by applying for loan from banks and making use of the business advisory services provided by the government. Additionally, they hire their family members and harness their cultural networks coupled with the use of technology to facilitate business relationships and promote their companies (Barth and Zalkat 2020).

Taking an institutional theory approach to the study of the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, Abd Hamid (2020) notes that the formal institution of the host country are mostly significant in the beginning stages of an immigrant entrepreneurs venture, while the informal institutions play significant roles in the developmental and subsistence stages of the venture. Using the case study of immigrant entrepreneurs in Malaysia, the study categorised the challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship into four dimensions, namely, governing institutions, resource providing institutions, host country's society and competition (Abd Hamid 2020). The challenges related to the governing institutions include rules and legislations of the host country with special requirements, which creates hurdles for immigrant entrepreneurs. The resource providing institution relates to challenges that

pertains to funding and employment of labour. The host country's society dimension encompasses challenges that are related to the local's acceptance of an immigrant entrepreneur's venture/brand, while the competition dimension relates to the challenges faced as a result of having to compete with other local entrepreneurs (Abd Hamid 2020).

Sambou (2020) also examines the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly in Finland. The study notes challenges such as high taxes, limited financial assistance, language barriers, lack of cultural awareness, barriers in labour market and inadequate access to business information in English language. In the same vein, Ashaduzzaman (2024) identifies language obstacle, funding and first investment issue, excessive operational expenses, high tax rates, government regulation, trust issues and staff recruitment as the major challenges faced by South-Asian immigrant entrepreneur in Finland.

4 Research Methodology

In this chapter I present the research methodology. The chapter discusses the research method and approach in this thesis, including information on how data are collected and analysed to achieve the aim of this research.

4.1 Research method

This research adopts a mixed method approach to achieving its aim. A mixed method combines the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to address a research problem (Garcia and Zajicek 2022). Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches enables research to, an extent, provide both generalisable outcomes and deep, contextual insights (Strijker, Bosworth and Bouter 2020). Quantitative data offers broad patterns, while qualitative data explains the underlying reasons behind those patterns. This combination is ideal for fields that aim to inform interventions and policies, as it ensures that findings are both evidence-based and grounded in real-world contexts, making them more applicable and directly usable for practical decision-making and solutions (Strijker, et al. 2020). The use of mixed methods is often considered essential, especially when a researcher aims to take a holistic approach to addressing a research problem, as reality is typically too complex to be understood from a single perspective. (see, Bigler, Amacker, Ingabire, and Birachi 2019; Strijker et al. 2020).

Highlighting the advantage of using mixed methods approaches in entrepreneurship research, Maula and Starn (2020) note that mixed method approaches are promising because they combine the assets of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, enabling researchers to gather richer and more comprehensive insights. By integrating different types of data, such as numerical data from quantitative methods and descriptive data from qualitative methods, researchers can address the limitations of relying on a single method. This blend allows for a well-rounded understanding of complex entrepreneurial phenomena, resulting in findings that are more robust and insightful (Molina-Azorín, López-Gamero Pereira-Moliner and Pertusa-Ortega 2012). This research aims to examine the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions in people of migrant background in Finland. This study will approach this research problem in a holistic manner and provide recommendations that will be usable for decision-making, hence, the use of mixed method.

- Qualitative method

“Qualitative research aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans’ lives and social worlds” (Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott and Davidson 2002, p 1).

Qualitative research often aims at understanding and describing complex social and human phenomena that cannot be quantified, such as emotions, experiences, and thought processes. This research approach emphasizes understanding complex human behaviours, experiences, and social interactions rather than just surface-level observations. By prioritizing the context in which individuals and groups operate, qualitative research captures the richness and nuances of human experiences, aiming to uncover the meanings people assign to their interactions and behaviours (Klenke 2016). According to Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020, p 2), “qualitative research is characterised by flexibility, openness and responsivity to context”, which differentiates it from quantitative research.

Qualitative methods are used to collect data that is non-numerical in nature, such as the use of interviews, observations, documents, and open-ended questionnaires to interpret how experiences are created and given meaning (Garcia and Zajicek 2022). By focusing on local knowledge, social relationships, and the contexts that shape people's lives, qualitative research helps build new theories and provides deeper insights into human behaviour and social processes. Consequently, this study uses qualitative research method to facilitate in-depth understanding of the entrepreneurial intentions of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to overcome.

- Quantitative method

Quantitative research, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2017), encompasses examining social or human problems by testing a theory composed of variables, which are measured with numerical data, and analysed using statistical methods to assess whether the theory's predictions hold true. This research method is used to describe, explain, predict, or control variables and phenomena of interest through the collection and subsequent analysis of numerical data (Sandelowski 2000). It is especially suitable when there is pre-existing knowledge about the subject, allowing standardized data collection techniques such as surveys (Boeren 2018). Quantitative research aims to generalise findings from a sample to broader perspectives, employing logical and empirical methods to test theories. Influenced by empiricism and positivism, it emphasizes objectivity and the importance of measurable evidence (Bryman, 2016), enabling the identification of specific qualities and differences that help to generate deeper understanding and conclusions about a research problem. The quantitative method is applied to enable an assessment of the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, particularly, immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland.

4.2 Research approach

Two major research approaches have been identified in the entrepreneurship literature. They are inductive and deductive research approaches. However, entrepreneurship researchers sometimes rely on the “constant interplay between the two to get closer to the truth” (Hall,

Savas-Hall and Shaw 2023, 989). On one hand, inductive approach in research enables conclusions to be drawn from observations. Inductive approach involves collecting raw data and drawing conclusion from such data to make broad generalisation. Deductive approach on the other hand, give researcher the opportunity to use existing theory to examine meanings. This approach contributes to research by enabling re-examination of previously published studies, either empirical or non-empirical, that can lead to greater support or refutation of what is being studied (Hall et al. 2023).

In this study, I use a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. As suggested by earlier studies, the application of the two approaches can enable a researcher to get closer to the 'truth' (Hall et al. 2023). Due to the nature of this research, the information regarding this study has been collected from relevant existing literature and subsequently, empirical data are collected to enable more understanding and possible support or refute of existing paradigm.

4.3 Sampling technique

The sampling technique used in this study is snowball sampling, which is widely employed to collect data from hard-to-reach or not easily accessible populations and in low-information contexts (Dosek 2021). A few initial respondents were first identified and approached, after which they were asked to refer others who might be willing to participate in the study. Snowball sampling was particularly suitable for this research because immigrant entrepreneurs are not easily accessible, only a handful responded to the invitation to complete the questionnaire or participate in interviews. For example, among those who did respond, some declined to be interviewed, stating that immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland has become a "cliché phrase [research topic] without any practical positive outcome in the country." Others expressed interest but were unable to find a convenient time for the interview. Initially, the study employed a quantitative method using a questionnaire. However, due to the low response rate, I proactively decided to incorporate qualitative semi-structured interviews, particularly for those respondents who preferred this format. This shift significantly contributed to the adoption of a mixed-methods approach in the study.

4.4 Data collection and Analysis

Data collection is referred to as the process of gathering information or evidence to gain insights into a research topic (Taherdoost 2021). The primary goal of data collection is to collect relevant evidence that helps answer research questions or test hypotheses. As a crucial part of any research, data collection ensures that the study is based on empirical evidence and leads to valid conclusions (Rani, Sanap, Gupta and Pal 2023).

The quantitative aspect seeks to identify measurable patterns and differences that enhance understanding. The insights gained from the literature review were used to develop the questionnaire for the quantitative aspect of the research. Subsequently, primary data were gathered using online survey. The questionnaire includes two parts. The first part includes demographic questions regarding the respondents. The second part enquired information on respondent's perception of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions adapted from earlier similar research based on a five-point Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. The respondents were asked to rank how the factors influence entrepreneurial intentions from their perspectives. The questionnaire is distributed through google forms using snowball sampling technique described in the previous section (4.3). The data collection was planned and executed between November 2024 and March 2025. Due to the low turnout of respondents to the questionnaire, only seven responses were gotten.

The target population for this study are the immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland. The intention is to let respondents answer the question retrospectively, i.e. the potential participants were asked to answer the questions based on the period they planned to become entrepreneurs, looking back before they started their entrepreneurial endeavours in Finland. Similar approach has been used by previous study (e.g. Yu et al. 2021).

This study aims to understand the unique perspectives of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, particularly in relation to their entrepreneurial intention and journey (with regards to challenges and strategies for overcoming it). Therefore, complementing the quantitative aspect of this study, the qualitative component of this study provides in-depth insights into the human behaviours and social dynamics surrounding immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland, with particular focus on entrepreneurial intentions, challenges, and strategies for success. As noted by Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), semi-structured interview "permits interviews to be focused while giving investigators the autonomy to explore other pertinent ideas" (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik 2021, 1360). Hence, for this qualitative part, semi-structured interview is used as the primary data collection method. The semi-structured interview questions include five questions which are the same for all interviewees. Some of the interviewees requested for the questions before the interview while others did not. The data collection was planned and executed between November 2024 and March 2025. Due to the low turnout as well, only seven interviews were conducted, with the interviews ranging between 27 minutes to one hour, totalling 256 minutes of visual and audio data. The profile of the interviewees is presented below in Table 2.

Table 2 Profile of interviewees

Entrepreneur	Country of origin	Municipality	Type of Business	Entrepreneurial experience in Finland	Length of Interview
A	Ghana	Espoo	Educational and social welfare services	2+ years	1.00 hr
B	Austria	Helsinki	Upcycling	25+ years	40.51 mins
C	Ecuador	Helsinki	Property management and Fabric product design	4+ years	35.41 mins
D	NA*	Helsinki	Construction	6+ years	31.04 mins
E	Colombia	Espoo	Fashion	15+ years	34.31 mins
F	Nigeria	Helsinki	Wellbeing	8+ years	29.56 mins
G	Gambia	Oulu	Non-Medical Technology	5+ years	27.32 mins

*The country of origin is omitted for confidentiality.

The interviews were arranged with the interviewees by asking them to suggest a comfortable time. Subsequently, online meetings were scheduled by the interviewer using the Zoom meeting platform. All interviews are recorded for subsequent analysis with the consent of the interviewees. The video recordings of the were subsequently turned into written transcripts to facilitate in-depth analysis of the primary data.

- Data analysis

The data collect from the quantitative questionnaire is intended to be analysed using two approaches, descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize and characterise the main features of the collected data, with a focus on measures of central tendency (such as mean and median) and measures of dispersion (like range and variance).

This first analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the variables involved, helping to illustrate general patterns and distributions within the dataset.

For inferential statistics, the study intends to utilise Pearson's correlation and multiple regression techniques. Pearson's correlation assesses the strength and direction of relationships between pairs of variables within a model, allowing the researchers to identify how variations in one variable may relate to variations in another (Ali, Zhu, Jiang, Huolin, Ashraf, Zhang and Hussain 2024). Meanwhile, multiple regression analysis examines the predictive relationships among multiple independent variables and the dependent variable (Saraswathi, Renukadevi, Nandhinidevi, Gayathridevi and Naveen 2021). These approaches have also been used by earlier studies (for instance, Kibler, Kautonen and Fink 2017; Yu et al. 2021). However, due to the very low number of responses, the quantitative data analysis has been limited to descriptive statistics performed using Microsoft Excel.

The qualitative data collected during the video semi-structured interviews was transcribed. To analyse the data, this study uses thematic analysis approach, which is one of the widely used method in qualitative research (Blum, Beasley, Ikejiani, Goldstein, Bakitas, Kavalieratos and Gelfman 2023). Thematic analysis is particularly useful because it interprets themes by combining both inductive and deductive approach to infer meaning from data (Gebhardt and Bachmann 2023). Since the amount of data is not too much, the thematic analysis was done by manually coding the transcripts to identify themes that are relevant to answering the research questions posed by this thesis.

4.5 Research ethics

At the initial stages of this thesis, the Laurea Guide to Thesis Data Management, Data Protection and Research Ethics platform (Laurea 2025) was examined to ensure that all important information regarding the ethical consideration of the thesis is considered. This master's thesis does not fall under the categorise of studies that require ethical review. However, there is the need for informed consent of the participants in the interviewees.

For the quantitative data collection, respondents were clearly informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and were asked to participate only if they consented to the use of their information for research purposes. They were also made aware of their right to withdraw their responses at any time. All personal data was anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

Prior to setting the meetings for the qualitative interviews, the interviewees were first informed of the aim of the interview and the kinds of information that will be collected during the interview and what it will be used for. Additionally, when the meeting dates are set, interviewees were asked to consent to the interview by accepting the invitation. Furthermore, since the interviews were visually recorded, interviewees were asked to

consent to the recording of the interviews. Finally, during the interviews, the interviewees were informed of their ability to withdraw their response. All the interviewees included in this study consented to being interviewed and agreed that the researcher can use the interview for research purposes. The video recordings are stored on the Laurea University Kaltura Media Space to ensure secure data management. To further ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, the results of the interviews are presented using the pseudonym assigned to each of the interviewees and ensuring that any information provided in this study cannot be traced to any of the interviewees.

There are several challenges faced in the data collection, which results in some limitations to this study. Firstly, there were only seven interviews collected. While this does not invalidate the findings of this study since the aim of the study is not to generalise the findings, however, it can be noted that the findings may have benefited from more samples. Secondly, the use of snowball sampling technique has its limitation, such as, possible bias that may arise because of the networks of the people included in the study. These limitations need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings in this study and the applicability to a broader context. In addition, future studies can be conducted, for instance, with larger sample sizes to enhance the generalisability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland.

Finally, to validate the findings of this study, particularly the findings from qualitative data, I used the researcher triangulation. The triangulation process follows the suggestion by Donkoh and Mensah (2023). Another researcher from a different institution and field was asked to analyse the qualitative data collected during the interview. The identified general themes were compared. While no major discrepancies were found, minor differences in interpretation were discussed and resolved through consensus, ensuring a shared understanding. Finally, the agreed-upon themes were re-examined against the original codes to confirm consistency and alignment with the data, reinforcing the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis.

5 Results

In this section, I present the results of the analysis of both the questionnaire and the interview. Firstly, the result of the analysis of the questionnaire responses is presented followed by the result of the thematic analysis of the interview data.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

From the data gathered from the quantitative aspect of this study, there are overall 7 responses to the questionnaire (six males and one female). Table 3 below shows the demographical data of the respondents. All the respondents are from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area of Finland. The ‘transportation and storage sector’ is the most represented among respondents, followed by courier services. These are industries that typically require lower startup capital and fewer formal Finnish credentials. All participants hold at least a bachelor’s degree, demonstrating a high level of formal education.

Table 3. Demographical data of the respondents

Regional location	When did you start your business in Finland?	What was your educational background at the time you started your business?	In which industry is your business?
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	PhD	Transportation and storage
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	PhD	Other service activities, e.g., Courier services
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	PhD	Education
Uusimaa	6 - 10 years	Master’s Degree	Transportation and storage
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	Bachelor’s Degree	Transportation and storage
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	Bachelor’s Degree	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply

Regional location	When did you start your business in Finland?	What was your educational background at the time you started your business?	In which industry is your business?
Uusimaa	1 - 5 years	Bachelor's Degree	Other service activities, e.g., Courier services

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the quantitative data. The table reports the range, mean, standard deviation, mode and Sample Variance. The results show that, on average, the surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs have a moderate intention to start a business (Mean = 3.03 on a 1-5 scale). However, responses vary widely, from very low to very high entrepreneurial intention (Min = 1.00, Max = 5.00). The most common response (Mode = 1.80) indicates that several participants strongly disagreed with statements about becoming entrepreneurs.

The results indicate that the surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs generally hold a positive personal attitude (PA) toward entrepreneurship, with an average score of 3.37 on a 1-5 scale. Although there is a wide range in responses, from very low (Min = 1) to very high (Max = 5), most respondents expressed a strong positive attitude, as reflected in the most frequent response (Mode = 5.00). Despite varying levels of entrepreneurial intention, many participants view entrepreneurship favourably and are personally inclined toward starting a business.

The data shows that surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs had a moderate level of sensitivity to subjective norms (SNs), that is, the influence of people important to them, reflected by an average score of 3.57. While some respondents were less concerned about others' opinions (Min = 2.00), others were highly influenced by them (Max = 5.00). The most common response (Mode = 4.33) indicates that many participants were notably affected by the views and support of significant people in their lives. This finding is related to that of Georgescu and Herman (2020), which suggests that social approval plays a meaningful role in their entrepreneurial decisions.

The surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs showed moderate levels of perceived behavioural control (PBC), with an average score of 3.20, suggesting a mixed sense of confidence about their ability to succeed in entrepreneurship. The most common response (Mode = 2.60) indicates that many participants leaned toward doubt or uncertainty. While some respondents felt very unprepared or lacked confidence (Min = 1), others were highly confident in their entrepreneurial abilities (Max = 5). This variation highlights differing levels of self-efficacy

among the participants, which could influence their willingness to pursue or persist in entrepreneurial ventures.

Looking at the environmental factors, respondents rated government policies as having a below-average supportive influence on their entrepreneurial efforts. While some viewed the policies neutrally (mode = 3.00), others found them highly unsupportive (min = 1), indicating dissatisfaction. Similarly, economic conditions were viewed slightly negatively overall, with a mean (2.82) below the midpoint. The mode of 2.75 suggests that most respondents did not find the economic climate favourable for starting or growing a business.

The surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs expressed moderately positive views about Finland's technological infrastructure (Mean = 3.19; Mode = 3.33), suggesting that while access to technology is generally sufficient to support business activities, it is not considered a significant enabler. Similarly, perceptions of entrepreneurial education were slightly below average (Mean = 2.79; Mode = 3.00), with some respondents indicating that available training and resources were inadequate.

The quantitative findings show significant variation, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about how the identified factors influence entrepreneurial intention. This inconclusiveness is likely due to the limited sample size. As earlier mentioned, the data is based on only seven participants, which limits the generalisability of the above findings. While the responses provide valuable exploratory insights, they are more reflective of individual experiences than broader trends within the immigrant entrepreneurial landscape in Finland.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for each construct and the items that comprise it (n = 7; Five-point scales)

FACTORS	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Min	Max
I was ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur.	3,00	4	1	1,915	3,667	1	5
My professional goal was to become an entrepreneur.	3,00	4	1	1,915	3,667	1	5
I made every effort to start and run my own business.	3,14	4	5	2,035	4,143	1	5

FACTORS	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Min	Max
I seriously thought about starting a business.	3,00	4	1	1,915	3,667	1	5
I had the firm intention to start a business.	3,00	4	1	1,915	3,667	1	5
ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION	3,03	4,00	1,80	1,94	3,76	1	5
I believed that being an entrepreneur implied more advantages than disadvantages.	3,29	3	5	1,799	3,238	1	5
I found it desirable to become an entrepreneur.	3,29	4	5	1,704	2,905	1	5
I considered it attractive to become an entrepreneur.	3,43	4	5	1,813	3,286	1	5
I thought that being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction.	3,43	4	5	1,813	3,286	1	5
Among various options, I was ready to be an entrepreneur.	3,43	4	5	1,813	3,286	1	5
PERSONAL ATTITUDE	3,37	3,80	5,00	1,79	3,20	1	5
My close friends approved of my decision.	3,71	3	3	0,951	0,905	3	5
My close family approved of my decision.	3,29	4	5	1,704	2,905	1	5
My close colleagues approved of my decision.	3,71	4	5	1,113	1,238	2	5
SOCIAL NORMS	3,57	3,67	4,33	1,26	1,68	2	5

FACTORS	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Min	Max
I believed I could easily become an entrepreneur.	3,00	3	1	1,528	2,333	1	5
I believed that starting a business and keeping it viable would be easy for me.	3,29	3	3	1,254	1,571	1	5
I felt that I could control the process of creating a new business.	3,29	4	4	1,380	1,905	1	5
I thought I had a high chance of being a successful entrepreneur.	3,57	4	4	1,512	2,286	1	5
I knew most of the practical details needed to start a business.	2,86	3	1	1,864	3,476	1	5
PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL	3,20	3,40	2,60	1,51	2,31	1	5
Finland's regulatory framework (e.g., licensing, permits) was very supportive when I established my business?	3,00	3	3	1,528	2,333	1	5
Government policies at the time of starting my business encouraged me as an immigrant entrepreneur in Finland?	3,00	3	3	1,528	2,333	1	5
It was easy starting and operating a business in Finland, based on the policies in place when I started my business?	3,00	3	3	1,528	2,333	1	5

FACTORS	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Min	Max
Available government tax incentives and financial breaks influenced my decision to launch my business?	2,29	3	3	1,254	1,571	1	5
I was confident that Finland's government policies would protect the intellectual property rights of my business when I started?	2,71	3	3	1,254	1,571	1	5
GOVERNMENT POLICIES	2,80	3,00	3,00	1,42	2,03	1	5
I believed that advancements in technology in Finland provided opportunities for my business.	3,29	4	4	1,380	1,905	1	5
I felt that access to technology resources influenced my decision to become an entrepreneur.	3,14	3	3	1,345	1,810	1	4
I believed that having access to modern technology would benefit my entrepreneurial efforts.	3,14	3	3	1,345	1,810	1	4
TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURES	3,19	3,33	3,33	1,36	1,84	1	4.6
I believed that access to capital (or funding) was a critical factor in my decision to start a business in Finland.	2,86	3	3	1,464	2,143	1	5
I felt that the economic stability in Finland positively impact my entrepreneurial efforts.	3,14	3	5	1,676	2,810	1	5

FACTORS	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Min	Max
I was aware of various financial support systems available for new businesses in Finland.	2,43	2	1	1,618	2,619	1	5
I perceived that market conditions in Finland would provide a conducive environment for my business.	2,86	3	1	1,574	2,476	1	5
ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	2,82	2,75	2,50	1,58	2,51	1	5
My educational background provided me with essential knowledge for starting a business.	3,00	3	5	1,732	3,000	1	5
I felt that entrepreneurial education programs in Finland helped prepare me for the challenges of entrepreneurship.	2,43	3	1	1,512	2,286	1	5
I believed that the skills I learned in my education were relevant to running my own business.	2,86	3	5	1,676	2,810	1	5
I was encouraged by my educational experiences to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable career path.	2,86	3	1	1,864	3,476	1	5
ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION	2,79	3,00	3,00	1,70	2,89	1	5

5.2 Thematic analysis of qualitative data

In this section, I present the findings from the qualitative analysis of interviews with seven immigrant entrepreneurs. The analysis focuses on three key areas: the factors influencing their entrepreneurial intentions, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employed to overcome the challenges.

5.2.1 Factors influencing entrepreneurial intention

- **Limited job opportunity**

A prominent factor influencing the decision to pursue entrepreneurship was the limited availability of employment opportunities, particularly after completing higher education. The participant described a frustrating job market that left them with few options, ultimately pushing them toward self-employment. One of the interviewees, Entrepreneur B explained that “My first business was created because I was looking for a job after I graduated from university.”

Similar sentiment was echoed across other parts of the narrative (by Entrepreneur F and G), where starting a business was framed less as a choice and more as a necessity due to barriers in the job market. For instance, Entrepreneur G also mentioned that “We all started with the company because it was so difficult to get jobs or something.” In some cases, the frustration went beyond unavailability of roles to include being deemed overqualified, creating a sense of being unwanted in both ends of the job spectrum, as pointed out by the experience of Entrepreneur A:

“I decided to look for new jobs... Everyone was saying [I am] too educated and I [...] only have the dual masters... So then I was like, it looks like I have hit the wall... So that’s why I felt like I was, in a way, forced to open my own company.”

These experiences illustrate how barriers in the labour market have steered highly educated immigrants toward entrepreneurship out of necessity. Similar findings have been reported in prior studies on immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland (e.g., Sambou, 2020), where self-employment becomes a strategic response to structural exclusion.

- **Personal motivation**

In contrast to those driven primarily by necessity, some participants described entrepreneurship as a natural extension of their personality, values, and mindset. These individuals saw themselves as inherently entrepreneurial, motivated by creativity, innovation, and a desire for autonomy. For them, the decision to become self-employed was not merely a

response to external conditions, but an internally driven choice. As one of the interviewees put it, “I have always been a person that is very entrepreneurial.” (Entrepreneur G). Another reflected on how entrepreneurship felt like a logical, almost intuitive path, rather than a daunting or risky decision:

“[F]or me [entrepreneurship] was not something special to think about. Somehow. It was like just one option. And OK, why not? So, you know, I didn’t even think that it would be difficult or anything. It was just one way to continue.” (Entrepreneur B).

For others, the motivation stemmed from a constant stream of ideas they believed were best expressed through self-employment. One entrepreneur explained, “I have so many ideas and I always want to improve and want to create like more efficient ways to do it and so on. Why don’t [I] do it [myself]?” (Entrepreneur C).

These findings shows how factors such as self-perception, creative drive, and a need for autonomy can shape the entrepreneurial journey. Similar findings have been reported in earlier studies (e.g., Karimi & Makreer, 2020; Subedi, 2021), which emphasize the importance of personal motivation in influencing entrepreneurial intentions.

- **Personal background**

For some participants, the decision to become entrepreneurs was deeply rooted in their personal and familial background. Exposure to business activities from a young age, particularly through family-run enterprises, appeared to normalize entrepreneurship as a viable and even expected life path. These individuals often described growing up surrounded by entrepreneurial role models, which not only demystified self-employment but also equipped them with early informal training in business practices. As one participant recalled,

“I grew up in my parents’ factory and business... they always involved me and my sister in basically every part of the process. Even when we were kids, they would take us to business fairs, and when salespeople or agents came to have meetings with them.” (Entrepreneur B)

Others emphasized the influence of specific family members. Entrepreneur E shared, “It’s not my whole family. It’s actually my father. He’s an entrepreneur. He has always been an entrepreneur. He’s my number one fan.” Similarly, Entrepreneur G highlighted the generational transmission of entrepreneurial values among women in her family, “My mom is an entrepreneur. My grandmother is an entrepreneur. So I was born in a family where women were entrepreneurs.”

In several cases, this early exposure translated into hands-on entrepreneurial experimentation during childhood. As one participant described, “Since I was a kid, I sold something and I got extra money from it. And this just continued. I grew up with this idea of selling.” (Entrepreneur D). These reflections point to the role of personal history and early experiences in shaping entrepreneurial identity. The intergenerational transmission of entrepreneurial norms and skills shows patterns observed in other studies (Georgescu and Herman 2020), which emphasize the influence of family socialisation on entrepreneurial behaviour.

- **Others**

In addition to the above, other factors highlighted by the interviewees are job dissatisfaction and the pursuit of financial independence. One interviewee (Entrepreneur C) reflected on a growing disconnect with the corporate environment, noting, “I noticed that my ways of work or my ways of being was not just for...working in the corporate world. So, I decided to start to do something on my own.” This dissatisfaction with conventional employment prompted a shift toward self-employment (to find fulfilment). Another participant emphasized the appeal of autonomy and control over one’s financial future, stating simply, “It gives me that [Financial] independence and freedom.”

5.2.2 Challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship

- **Language and cultural barrier**

A dominant challenge identified by several participants was the difficulty navigating the Finnish language, which posed significant limitations both in day-to-day business operations and broader integration into the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Language was described not only as a practical obstacle but also as a deeper source of exclusion and difficulty in building networks or accessing key resources. As one participant succinctly stated, “The challenges I have been facing as an entrepreneur in Finland, number one, is the language barrier.” (Entrepreneur G)

Another interviewee echoed this struggle, emphasizing how linguistic and cultural distance combined to shape their entrepreneurial experience: “We have the language [issue], we have the cultural difference.” (Entrepreneur D). Similarly, Entrepreneur A plainly noted, “I know Finnish language is one of my barriers,” showing how language proficiency or the lack thereof can act as an hinderance to opportunities, services, and trust-building within the Finnish market.

These experiences are consistent with earlier studies highlighting how language barriers hinder immigrant entrepreneurs' ability to communicate with customers, navigate bureaucracy, and establish credibility in host societies (Rathod 2012).

- **Limited support from fellow immigrants:**

A notable challenge identified by several participants was the lack of encouragement and emotional support from fellow immigrants or members of their immediate social circles. Rather than serving as sources of motivation or assistance, some peers were described as discouraging or indifferent to the entrepreneurs' efforts. This lack of communal uplift was perceived not just as a social disappointment but also as a practical hindrance to entrepreneurial progress.

One entrepreneur reflected, "So I didn't get encouragement from friends." (Entrepreneur A). Further highlighting a persistent experience of negativity, Entrepreneur A shared, "They were discouraging. Nobody was interested to help me or [was] discouraging me... even now, where I have reached right now, I'm not ashamed to say that I'm still getting set back from people around me." Similarly, Entrepreneur C described a lack of even minimal symbolic support: "Not very supportive, to be honest... like a thumbs up, like you're doing great. There was not really much of that perhaps for the type of friends." These experiences, which were also subtly reflected in the narratives of Entrepreneurs B, F, and G, point to a deeper sense of emotional isolation that can hinder immigrant entrepreneurs. These narratives underline the emotional isolation that can accompany immigrant entrepreneurship, especially when peer networks are more critical than constructive.

- **Other Challenges**

In addition to the more prominent barriers, participants also noted a range of other challenges that subtly impact their entrepreneurial journey. One such issue was the perception of authenticity regarding products created by immigrants. Entrepreneur C raised concerns about how products created by immigrants are sometimes excluded from the cultural identity of "Finnish design," despite being both designed and produced in Finland. As one entrepreneur explained, "It's designed in Finland, and it's produced in Finland. Therefore, it's Finnish. Then I'm like OK, but then other places say, yes, it's designed in Finland, made in Finland, but the designer is not Finnish." This highlights the tension some immigrant entrepreneurs face in gaining full acceptance within Finnish commercial identity. Another participant pointed to limited funding as an obstacle, especially during the early stages of business, stating, "The financial situation is definitely a challenge." (Entrepreneur B) Furthermore, the complexity of the Finnish tax system was noted as a serious concern: "The tax system is very, very critical. And as an immigrant, if you don't know the tax, you can also get into a lot of problems." (Entrepreneur F) Together, these challenges underscore

the layered and often subtle barriers that can hinder immigrant entrepreneurship beyond the more common issues.

5.2.3 Strategies for overcoming challenges

- **Networking**

The most emphasised strategy for overcoming challenges as an immigrant entrepreneur was the importance of building networks as a means to navigate and succeed in the Finnish entrepreneurial landscape. For many, networking was not simply about making contacts, but about building trust, credibility, and visibility within the local community. As Entrepreneur G advised, “You have to be very active with the local community in terms of networking.” Entrepreneur F also emphasised the long-term value of networking, that “Network is the best thing that you can do for your professional and your career life... Speak to people. Be friendly, be nice to them.” Immigrant entrepreneurs were seen as needing to invest even more in relationship-building to overcome scepticism and gain acceptance. As Entrepreneur A put it, “You need to prove to them that you are yourself and you are different.” Collectively, these accounts highlight networking not just as a tactic, but as a fundamental survival tool in the Finnish business environment.

- **Self-Motivation and Self-Awareness**

Beyond external strategies like networking, several entrepreneurs emphasized the critical role of internal strength, particularly self-motivation and self-awareness, in navigating the entrepreneurial journey. Entrepreneurship was described as demanding and emotionally taxing, requiring a clear sense of purpose and resilience. As one interviewee noted,

“You need to be very honest in what are your motivations for going into entrepreneurship... because the thing they don’t tell you in school or any incubator is that entrepreneurship is freaking hard.” (Entrepreneur E)

Others highlighted the importance of authenticity and mental discipline in an age of curated success narratives: “Be yourself and don’t let the social media page pressure you. Cause 90% [of what] you see on social media, it’s just for social media.” (Entrepreneur A) Awareness of one’s strengths, limitations, and fallback strategies was also seen as essential. As one interviewee reflected, “Try to draw up all your skills so you can measure [them] and improve... Think about, if I don’t get support, what am I gonna do? Is it still gonna work without the support?” (Entrepreneur D) These insights underline the psychological preparedness needed to sustain entrepreneurial efforts, especially in a challenging and unfamiliar environment.

- **Language Learning**

While language barriers were a significant challenge for many immigrant entrepreneurs. Several participants highlighted the importance of learning Finnish as a vital strategy to overcome entrepreneurial challenges. Beyond being a communication tool, mastering the language was seen as essential for navigating daily life and business environments in Finland. One entrepreneur noted,

“Try to understand the language, because Finland here what I have noticed for the past years is that you cannot survive in this country without the language, no matter which angle you go to, you cannot escape. There is no shortcut for the language here.” (Entrepreneur G)

This perspective was echoed by others, underscoring language proficiency as a foundational step towards integration, building trust, and ultimately succeeding as an immigrant entrepreneur in Finland.

6 Discussion

This study explores the entrepreneurial journey of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland by examining the factors that influence their decisions to start businesses, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to overcome those challenges. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data provide a nuanced understanding of the immigrant entrepreneurial landscape in Finland, shaped by a combination of personal, social, and structural dynamics.

6.1 Factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions

The first research question aimed to explore the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of immigrants in Finland. The findings reveal a complex interplay between personal, social, and structural influences. While many immigrants demonstrate a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, the results from the quantitative data suggest that it does not always translate into strong entrepreneurial intentions. This gap between favourable disposition and actual intent may be attributed to factors such as uncertainty, lack of self-efficacy, or perceived external barriers.

A key insight is the critical role of personal attitude in shaping entrepreneurial inclination. Many participants seem internally motivated and value autonomy, innovation, and self-fulfilment, traits commonly associated with entrepreneurial mindsets. These findings support the findings from previous studies that argue that individuals with high entrepreneurial orientation (such as innovativeness, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness) are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Saha et al. 2021; Bernoster et al. 2022). However, the results also suggests that these internal drivers may be hindered by limited confidence in their ability to navigate the Finnish entrepreneurial environment. The hesitation expressed by some participants may reflect doubts about their practical capacity to succeed within the existing economic, bureaucratic, and social landscape.

Institutional and environmental conditions appear to be a critical dampening factor. The perception of inadequate government support, limited access to training, and economic uncertainty indicates that some immigrants do not view Finland as a fully enabling environment for business creation. Even where digital infrastructure is reasonably accessible, broader institutional constraints may erode confidence and limit perceived behavioural control. These structural limitations can overshadow internal motivations, creating a sense of friction between the desire to start a business and the perceived ability to do so successfully.

The qualitative insights underscore the dynamic tension hinted by the significant variation in the quantitative results. For some immigrants, entrepreneurship arises less from proactive ambition and more from structural exclusion in the labour market. When highly educated

individuals are unable to find employment that matches their qualifications, self-employment becomes a survival strategy rather than a planned career choice. This entrepreneurship that arises because of necessity has been noted by earlier studies of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland (Sambou 2020) and Canada (Okeke-Ihejirika et al. 2023).

Nevertheless, the study also reveals that entrepreneurial intentions are not solely reactive. For others, entrepreneurship is a continuation of lifelong interests, family traditions, or personal aspirations. Similar to earlier studies by Georgescu and Herman (2020) and Patuelli et al. (2020), the findings in this study suggests that these individuals perceive business creation as a vehicle for personal fulfilment, creativity, and self-expression. Their intentions are proactive, rooted in identity and long-term vision rather than immediate economic pressure.

Together, these findings suggest that immigrant entrepreneurial intention in Finland is shaped by both push and pull factors. This point has been emphasised by Clark and Drinkwater (2000) that Immigrants tend to exhibit higher rates of entrepreneurship because of several factors in the host country that push or/and pull them towards entrepreneurship. Push factors are those external factors with negative associations that drive an individual to entrepreneurship (e.g. unemployment), while pull factors are internal factors that drives an individual to entrepreneurship (e.g. personal motivation).

6.2 Challenges of immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland

The second research question addressed the challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face in Finland. A range of structural, social, and cultural barriers were identified in the qualitative data.

Language barrier is the most cited issues by immigrant entrepreneurs in this study. Participants described Finnish language proficiency as a fundamental challenge that limits access to networks, customers, and ability to navigate the bureaucratic systems. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies (e.g. Kaluarachchige 2024). Rathod (2012) also note that in many cases, the lack of language fluency excludes entrepreneurs from being able to access key resources and opportunities and it often served as a constant reminder of immigrant status.

Another critical issue was the lack of emotional or social support from peer immigrant communities. Rather than encouragement, some entrepreneurs faced scepticism or even discouragement from friends or acquaintances, leading to feelings of isolation. This emotional barrier is particularly concerning because it limits the informal support networks which has been referred to by earlier studies as very crucial for early-stage entrepreneurs. For instance,

Troise et al. (2022) note that during the startup phase, entrepreneurs often rely on their social networks for support and resources.

Additional challenges included limited access to financing, discriminatory perceptions around authenticity (e.g., exclusion from "Finnish design" despite local production), and complex tax regulations. These structural challenges reveal that beyond language and finance, immigrant entrepreneurs often operate in an environment that questions their legitimacy and imposes bureaucratic burdens. The quantitative data support these insights. Low scores on perceived government support, economic conditions, and entrepreneurial education reflect a lack of enabling institutional structures, confirming that many challenges are not just personal but systemic.

6.3 Strategies for overcoming challenges

The third research question investigated the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by immigrant entrepreneurs to navigate their challenges. Across interviews, three core strategies were consistently emphasized: networking, self-motivation and self-awareness, and language learning.

Networking was seen as a foundational tool, not merely for business promotion, but for building trust and legitimacy within Finnish society. The findings show the need for immigrant entrepreneurs to be highly visible, proactive, and involved in local communities. Through sustained relationship-building, the findings suggest that immigrant entrepreneurs can aim to overcome the initial scepticism and establish credibility in the host country and find potential investors. This finding aligns with earlier studies highlighting social network as critical to both enhancing entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial success through provision of access to valuable information and resources (Georgescu and Herman 2020; Sundararajan 2020).

Self-motivation and self-awareness were equally important. This study result stressed the emotional and psychological demands of immigrant entrepreneurship and highlighted the importance of having a clear internal purpose and realistic expectations. Being an immigrant entrepreneur was described as tough, therefore developing resilience and a deep understanding of one's own goals and limitations is a critical asset. This finding aligns with the earlier studies by Bernoster, Mukerjee and Thurik (2022) that emphasise the importance of having solid drive to compete and outperform rivals, as crucial for entrepreneurial success.

Language acquisition was emphasized not only as a means of communication but as a survival strategy for immigrant entrepreneur. Knowledge and ability to communicate in Finnish language was portrayed as essential for navigating legal systems, building networks, and earning the trust of both customers and institutions. This finding supports the previous study

by Rathod (2012) that suggested that understanding the language in a host country is critical for immigrant entrepreneur to navigate the business environment.

6.4 Implications of this study

The findings from this study offer valuable insights for three key stakeholder groups: policymakers, immigrant entrepreneurs, and organizations supporting entrepreneurship. Firstly, the findings from this study highlight the need for more inclusive and targeted government policies to support immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland. Language barriers, complex regulations, and limited access to funding continue to hinder entrepreneurial efforts. Policymakers should consider designing integration-focused programs that offer language training, simplified bureaucratic procedures, and culturally aware mentorship opportunities. By addressing these structural challenges, policy interventions can empower immigrant entrepreneurs and help unlock their full economic potential.

Secondly, for immigrant entrepreneurs themselves, this study emphasises the importance of self-initiative and adaptability for immigrant entrepreneurs. Success often depends on the ability to navigate cultural differences, build strong networks, and remain resilient in the face of adversity. Language acquisition, strategic networking, and self-awareness were identified as key tools for overcoming challenges. Immigrant entrepreneurs should actively seek opportunities for learning, mentorship, and collaboration in order to enhance both their business success and social integration.

Finally, for organisations aiming to foster entrepreneurship, the study findings suggest the need to develop tailored support systems that recognize the specific needs of immigrant entrepreneurs. These may include offering multilingual training, culturally sensitive business resources, and inclusive networking platforms. Rather than relying on one-size-fits-all programs, these organizations should promote initiatives that bridge the gap between immigrant and native entrepreneurs, facilitating collaboration, mutual learning, and community trust. Supporting immigrant entrepreneurship in this way contributes not only to individual success but also to broader societal innovation and cohesion.

7 Conclusion

This study examines factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, alongside the challenges they face and potential strategies to overcome them. With Finland's growing immigrant population and the significant economic contributions of immigrant-founded businesses, the research provides insights into the intentions, barriers, and adaptive strategies of the immigrant entrepreneurs. To achieve its aim, this study employed a mixed-methods approach to gain in depth of understanding. The combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews allowed for a nuanced exploration of not only the measurable patterns influencing entrepreneurial intention but also the personal narratives and lived experiences behind them.

The quantitative and qualitative findings reveal a picture of immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland. The quantitative data suggests that, on average, the surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs demonstrate moderate entrepreneurial intention, with notable variation in responses. While many hold strong personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship and are influenced by significant others, their perceived behavioural control is more mixed, which indicate varying levels of confidence in their ability to succeed. Environmental factors, such as government policies, economic conditions, and access to entrepreneurial education, were rated as less supportive, highlighting external constraints that may dampen entrepreneurial motivation. The qualitative data further enriches these insights by illustrating how limited employment opportunities, particularly among highly educated immigrants, act as a strong push factor toward entrepreneurship. Yet, for others, personal motivation, familial background, and a desire for autonomy serve as primary drivers. Participants' narratives also exposed key challenges, such as language barriers, lack of community support, and difficulty accessing funding or being recognized as authentic contributors to Finnish business culture. Strategies to overcome these challenges, such as networking, self-awareness, and language acquisition, were seen as crucial for entrepreneurial survival and success. These findings align with existing literature that highlights both structural barriers and personal agency as central to immigrant entrepreneurship. Both the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that while immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland exhibit resilience and adaptability, their success is shaped by a complex interplay of individual intent and systemic opportunity, or the lack thereof.

The findings from this study provide important insights for policymakers, immigrant entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurship support organizations. For policymakers, the study underscores the need for inclusive, integration-focused policies that address language barriers, complex regulations, and limited access to funding. Immigrant entrepreneurs are encouraged to embrace adaptability, build strong networks, and pursue language learning and mentorship to overcome challenges. Support organizations should design culturally sensitive,

multilingual programs and inclusive platforms that reflect the unique needs of immigrant entrepreneurs, fostering collaboration, mutual learning, and broader social integration. While the small sample size limits the generalisability of these findings, the study offers important exploratory insights into the lived experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland. Future research with larger samples is needed to deepen and broaden our understanding, especially around how institutional actors can better support immigrant entrepreneurship through inclusive policies, targeted training, and culturally sensitive resources.

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ChatGPT has been used to edit the language of this text and make it smoother.

Figures

Figure 1. Immigration to Finland (Statistics Finland, 2025)	11
Figure 2. Population of Foreign-born entrepreneurs in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2025)	12

Pictures

No table of figures entries found.

Tables

Table 1. Factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions.....	19
Table 2 Profile of interviewees	31
Table 3. Demographical data of the respondents	34
Table 4. Descriptive statistics for each construct and the items that comprise it (n = 7; Five-point scales)	36

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire	64
Appendix 2: Interview Questions	68

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Factors that influence the entrepreneurial intentions of entrepreneurs with migrant backgrounds in Finland

Dear Respondent,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study focused on factors influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of entrepreneurs with migrant backgrounds in Finland. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather insights and perspectives from individuals like yourself regarding this study.

Your participation involves completing this questionnaire that includes a series of questions aimed at understanding your views and experiences related to entrepreneurship. By answering these questions, you are giving me the permission to use the collected data for research purposes only. Please rest assured that your responses will be kept confidential and will solely be used to enhance the understanding of entrepreneurial intentions.

It is important to also note that your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your answers at any time without any consequences.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. Your insights are invaluable, and your contribution will greatly assist in the advancement of knowledge in this field. Should you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to reach out to me at 2203592@laurea.fi.

Best regards,

Oluwafemi Adekola

Demographical information

Q1: What is your current age?

Q2: What is your gender? (Male / Female / Other)

Q3: How long have you lived in Finland? (Years in Finland)

Q4: When did you start your business in Finland? Less than or 1 year; 2 - 5 years; 6 - 10 years; 11 - 15 years; 16+ years

Q5: What was your educational background at the time you started your business? (High school / Bachelor's degree / Master's degree / Other)

Q6: In which industry is your business? (To list industries)

Q7: How many employees did you have at the time of starting? (Open-ended)

Entrepreneurial Intention

Looking back before you started your business, how would you rate the following statements:

1. I was ready to do anything to become an entrepreneur.
2. My professional goal was to become an entrepreneur.
3. I made every effort to start and run my own firm.
4. I seriously thought about starting a firm.
5. I had the firm intention to start a firm.

Personal attitude

1. I believed that being an entrepreneur implied more advantages than disadvantages.
2. I found it desirable to become an entrepreneur.
3. I considered it attractive to become an entrepreneur.
4. I thought that being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction.
5. Among various options, I was ready to be an entrepreneur.

Social Norms

When you decided to create a firm, did people in your close environment approve of that decision?

1. Close Family
2. Close Friends
3. Close Colleagues

Perceived Behavioural Control

Looking back before you started your business, to what extent would you agree with the following statements regarding your entrepreneurial capacity?

1. I believed I could easily become an entrepreneur.
2. I believed that starting a business and keeping it viable would be easy for me.
3. I felt that I could control the process of creating a new business.
4. I thought I had a high chance of being (a) successful entrepreneur.
5. I knew most of the practical details needed to start a business.

Environmental factors:

Looking back before you started your business, how would you rate the following statements:

Government policies

1. How supportive did you find Finland's regulatory framework (e.g., licensing, permits) when you first established your business?
2. To what extent did government policies at the time of starting your business encourage you as an immigrant entrepreneur in Finland?
3. How would you describe the ease of starting and operating a business in Finland, based on the policies in place when you began?
4. How influential were government tax incentives or financial breaks available when you started in your decision to launch or expand your business?
5. How confident were you that Finland's government policies would protect the intellectual property rights of your business when you first started?

Technological Infrastructure

1. I believed that advancements in technology in Finland provided opportunities for my business
2. I felt that access to technology resources influenced my decision to become an entrepreneur.

3. I believed that having access to modern technology would benefit my entrepreneurial efforts.

Economic condition

1. I believed that access to capital was a critical factor in my decision to start a business.
2. I felt that the economic stability in my area would positively impact my entrepreneurial efforts.
3. I was aware of various financial support systems available for new businesses.
4. I perceived that market conditions would provide a conducive environment for my business.

Entrepreneurial Education

1. My educational background provided me with essential knowledge for starting a business.
2. I felt that entrepreneurial education programs helped prepare me for the challenges of entrepreneurship.
3. I believed that the skills I learned in my education were relevant to running my own business.
4. I was encouraged by my educational experiences to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions.

The interview is intended to explore

- (1) Why do you become an entrepreneur?
- (2) What barriers and challenges have you faced in your entrepreneurship journey?
- (3) What advice do you have for upcoming immigrant entrepreneurs/how can entrepreneurship be encouraged in immigrant.