

## **Entrepreneurial motivations, opportunities, and challenges: An international perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Much of current research on entrepreneurship has focused on external environmental factors that influence enterprise development in developed economies whilst studies from developing economies are lagging. Yet, evidence from World Bank and Global Entrepreneurship Index suggest that entrepreneurship practice in developing economies is at peak. Using semi-structured interview data of twenty entrepreneurs in The Gambia, we examine their motivations for entrepreneurship, opportunities in the market and challenges that hinder enterprise growth. We found individual and contextual motivation factors for entrepreneurship. Individuals are driven by necessity, poverty, job creation, personal knowledge, and experience. On the other hand, opportunity recognition, ethnic and religious norms influence entrepreneurship. Interestingly, three forms of opportunities were identified – entrepreneurial networks, competitive market, and discovery. Nonetheless, entrepreneurs face individual challenges – lack of finance and unskilled staff, and – contextual limitations such as political changes, lack of government reforms, high taxes, high business cost, and market uncertainty. We offer critical insights into individual and contextual motivations for entrepreneurship, which extends current discourse in literature. In addition, we expose specific dynamic market influences for enterprise development in a developing economy.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial opportunities, entrepreneurial challenges, The Gambia

## Introduction

It is often said that entrepreneurs are born or made. However, whether they are both or made, the biggest question remain – what motivates them to become entrepreneurs? Furthermore, in economies challenged by market uncertainty and currency volatility – why do entrepreneurs emerge? These questions are the underlining motivation for this study. Zahra, Wright & Abdelgawad (2014) argued that, much attention has been given to entrepreneurship in developed economies, and little attention is given to the drivers of entrepreneurial activity in developing economies (Sriram & Mersha, 2010). We aim to provide critical insights into the motivating factors for entrepreneurship in a developing economy and, the opportunities and challenges in the selected context. Entrepreneurship evolved from various perspectives and, it is studied under different academic disciplines. Although it is associated with innovation (e.g., Schumpeter, 1934); risk-taking (Knight, 1942); managerial competencies and exploitation of resources (Penrose, 1959), contextual differences exist.

In developing economies, entrepreneurship is perceived as a medium of stimulating economic development and addressing challenging socio-economic issues (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016). Developed economies, on the other hand, posit entrepreneurship as an innovative mechanism for economic development (Harper, 2003). As Mayhew et al. (2012, p. 856) claimed, “nothing matters more for the economic welfare of any nation than effective utilisation of innovations, arguing that innovative entrepreneurs play a vital role in economic growth”. Developed economies are characterised by stability, high growth service and industrial sectors (Iakovleva et al., 2014). Countries classified as middle-income economies with low stability are considered developing economies (World Bank, 2011). Not surprising, there are economic and entrepreneurial differences (Iakovleva et al., 2014) between developed and developing economies (Adekunle, 2011). Therefore, the first research question is:

*RQ1: What are the motivational factors for starting a business in a developing economy?*

Regardless of the context, entrepreneurship leads to substantial benefits such as innovation and employment generation (Praag & Versloot, 2007). An increase in entrepreneurial activity is robustly linked with an increase in economic growth (Hafer, 2013), across countries (Sternberg & Wennekers, 2005). The thought of entrepreneurship as ‘opportunity’ is noted in the perspectives of Schumpeter (1934); Penrose (1959) and Kirzner (1997). The overarching

notion of opportunity is that it is discovered and exploited by entrepreneurs. This viewpoint is consistent with different arguments in literature: opportunities are created by the actions of entrepreneurs (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Davidsson (2003) and Dimov (2007) argued that opportunity represents a stream of continuously developed and modified ideas. In some cases, opportunity is the imagination of the entrepreneur (Klein, 2008). Therefore, opportunity cannot be detached from the individual (Companys & McMullen, 2007). So, what type of opportunities exist in the market environment and, to what extent does it influence entrepreneurial practice? The answer to the preceding question will require a clear understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities and the economic context under which the opportunities are studied. Therefore, the second research question is:

*RQ2: What opportunities exist nationally, and how do they influence entrepreneurs in a developing economy?*

Despite extensive interest in entrepreneurial motivations and opportunities, there are challenges to entrepreneurship. Previous studies (Bates, 1995; Schindehutte et al., 2003) considered challenges to entrepreneurship as factors that hinder the development of new enterprises. However, Pittaway and Cope (2007) claimed that the motivations of entrepreneurs are shaped by their perception of barriers to start-up, cultural ethos, and the environment in which they operate. To this end, the challenges faced by entrepreneurs relate to both start-up and enterprise development. Although previous studies have identified barriers to start-ups, they have used a deductive approach with pre-existing list of perceived barriers to entrepreneurship (Iakovleva et al., 2014), which limits country specific barriers. To fill this void, the third research question is:

*RQ3: What are the challenges of entrepreneurship in a developing economy?*

Following the above discussion, this study sets out to offer analytical insights into the numerous factors that motivate entrepreneurs, the perceived opportunities, and challenges in a developing economy. In doing so, this paper contributes to current research on entrepreneurship and provides tangible recommendations for enterprise development in an emerging context. The rest of the paper is structured into four sections. The first section provides a literature review of entrepreneurial motivations, opportunities and challenges followed by the conceptual framework. The second section provides the research methodology

and method. Then, the third presents the findings. Followed by discussion of the findings in the fourth section and, conclusion and recommendations.

## Literature review

### Entrepreneurial motivation

Motivation – is a set of dynamic forces that emanate within and beyond individuals to initiate behaviour and determine its direction, intensity, and duration (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). Like entrepreneurship, theories of motivation have been investigated under various disciplines such as psychological science, organisational behaviour to name a few. One of the active domains of investigation focuses on understanding what motivates entrepreneurs to start, develop and exit their enterprises (Murnieks, Klotz & Shepherd, 2019). The preceding domain is critical because entrepreneurship occurs due to, but not limited to, the involvement of human agency.

Yet, current studies have not advanced our understanding of entrepreneur motivations (Murnieks, Klotz & Shepherd, 2019; Shane, Locke & Collins, 2012). Entrepreneurial motivations (EM) are factors that influence entrepreneurs to pursue entrepreneurship opportunities (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2012). Before proceeding with the examination of EM, we present typologies of entrepreneurs because the decision to start a business is intentional to the entrepreneur (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007) and it requires adequate planning and a dose of cognitive processing (Ozaralli and Rivenburgh, 2016). The entrepreneur makes the decision consciously or otherwise. Chaudhuri, Datta & Ghosh (2012) defined entrepreneurs as individuals guided by motives, which inspire opportunity identification. These individuals select the appropriate product or service, implement resources in the appropriate direction and earn profit for the necessity of the business in the long term. There are distinct types of entrepreneurs because not all individuals who seek to start a business have the same motivation. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM] (2012) identified six types of entrepreneurs, which we present in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Types of entrepreneurs

<i>Types of entrepreneurs</i>	<i>Perspectives</i>
Potential entrepreneurs	Those who identify opportunities in their context, have the competencies to start the business and are fearless.
Nascent entrepreneurs	They have taken the necessary steps to start a business, but are not paying wages or salaries for more than three months.

Intentional entrepreneurs	These entrepreneurs are those who intend to start soon.
New entrepreneurs	Running new businesses between three and forty-two months and are paying salaries.
Established entrepreneurs	Running a mature business and have been operating for more than forty-two months.
Discontinued entrepreneurs	Those who have exited from operating their businesses

Based on a systematic review, Stephan, Hart & Drews (2015) classified EM into three streams. The first of these streams is necessity versus opportunity motivation (also known as push vs pull motivation). Push-pull differentiation is the longest standing conceptualisation of EM (e.g., Stoner & Fry, 1982). This view posit that, entrepreneurship is an employment choice out of necessity. The second stream is multi-dimensional typologies of EM, which presents multiple elements for entrepreneurship. The most identified dimensions are independence and autonomy; achievement, challenge, and learning; income security and financial success; recognition and status. Whilst the third stream focuses on the motivation to grow, specifically the future size of the enterprise, i.e. number of employees.

In contrast, Shane, Locke & Collins (2012) discussed EM as motivational trait that influence various aspects of the entrepreneurial process – need for achievement and risk taking (McClelland, 1961), tolerance for ambiguity (Schere, 1982), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and goal setting (Tracey, Locke & Renard, 1998). McClelland (1961) argued that individuals who have high need for achievement are more likely to involve in activities that have prominent level of individual responsibility than those with low-level need for achievement. This was conclusive in Johnson (1990) review of 23 studies, which found a relationship between need for achievement and entrepreneurial activity. Similarly, McClelland (1961) claimed that individuals with high need for achievement have moderate risk-taking propensities. Antoncic et al. (2018) study on risk-taking propensity and entrepreneurship based with the role of power distance in six countries found that, in moderately low to high power distance countries, the propensity to take risk is positively associated with entrepreneurship. However, risk-propensity in low power distance countries cannot be associated with entrepreneurship. Another important trait is tolerance of ambiguity which Schere (1982) described as the proclivity to view situations without concise outcomes as enticing rather than alarming. On the other hand, locus of control is the extent to which individuals' belief their personal characteristics and actions influence outcomes (Rotter, 1966). In contrast to locus of control, self-efficacy in the view of Bandura (1997) is an individual's belief that their ability to gather and apply the required personal skills, competencies, and

resources to gain a specific level of achievement on a designated task. Tracey, Locke & Renard (1998) study on goal setting found aspect of performance – financial, innovation and growth to be associated with the entrepreneurs' ability to set desired goals. Recent investigation by Efsandiara et al. (2019) found desirability, feasibility, self-efficacy, opportunity identification, attitude and collective efficacy having direct and indirect influence on entrepreneurial goal intention.

Other EM are noted: socio-demographic, political, economic, environmental, cultural, psychological, training and infrastructure (Almeida, Haddad & Hewings, 2014). Koe et al. (2012) identified knowledge, attitude, and business experience as EM. Gelderen, Kautonen & Fink (2015) referred to emotions as a factor for EM. The GEM Portugal (2011) identified nine driving forces of entrepreneurship: financial support, governmental policies, governmental programs, education, and training, transfer of research and development, commercial and professional infrastructure, access to physical infrastructures and cultural and social norms. The above factors are distinctively macro factors with colossal implications for entrepreneurs.

Bayon, Vaillant & Lafuente (2015) study using observations of the adult population survey revealed that perceived entrepreneurial ability has a distinct positive influence on the decision to initiate entrepreneurial activities and its impact is greater than that of actual abilities. Furthermore, the authors found evidence of a positive interaction effect suggesting that perceived entrepreneurial ability is a key determinant of entrepreneurial initiatives among those with high actual ability. An empirical case study on self-employment rate as well as entrepreneurial intentions in a township in South Africa by Preisendoerfer, Bitz & Bezuidenhout (2014) found that, socio-demographic attributes (such as age and gender), social network resources (membership of organisations) are important predictors to start a business. Furthermore, Puni et al. (2018) examined the role of entrepreneurial education and intention in Ghana. The quantitative study found that entrepreneurship knowledge acquisition and opportunity recognition positively affect entrepreneurial intentions and self-efficacy.

Regardless of the entrepreneurial typology, those who became enterprise owners out of necessity could become motivated by opportunities (Eijdenberg et al., 2019) because they grow from achieving basic needs to advanced needs (Maslow, 1943). Not surprising, they face challenges in pursuing those opportunities.

### **Entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges**

Entrepreneurship presents potential opportunities to alleviate poverty (World Bank 2011; Alvarez & Barney, 2013), create employment (Kuada, 2015), innovation for regional and national economies (Audretsch & Peña-Legazkue, 2012). This study draws on viewpoints of opportunities by Alvarez & Barney (2007). In their view, entrepreneurs can discover opportunities, which they refer to as subjective phenomena or create them. In a perfect competitive market, organisations or individuals do not have the potential to generate economic wealth (Kirzner, 1979; Barney, 1986). Put simply, opportunities exist when competitive infirmity exist in product markets. Since not all markets are the same, opportunities differ. Several types of opportunities are discussed in literature: discovery opportunities (Shane, 2003; Kirzner, 1997), self-employment opportunities (Kirzner, 1979), creation opportunities (Alvarez & Barney, 2007) and co-creation opportunities (Arthur, 1989). Entrepreneurs face many opportunities and challenges, particularly in developing economies, where resources are scarce (Adekunle, 2011). González-Pernía, Jung & Peña (2015) study revealed that, knowledge and innovation-driven entrepreneurship in developing countries is complex when compared to developed economies, particularly in markets with institutional failures.

There is insightful evidence of opportunities and challenges of doing business in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group (2018) reports. Opportunities include innovation due to substantial cost reductions from rapid technological improvements in home-scale solar power. In addition, economic growth is projected to rise to 3.5 percent in 2019 and 3.7 percent in 2020 (World Bank Group, 2018). Africa's visibility to the use of innovative technologies is an opportunity that has created interest from major media investors, i.e. Mark Zuckerberg visited Nigeria in 2016 to assess the country's tech hub.

Some studies have highlighted the importance of context in explaining entrepreneurial actions and outcomes (Bjørnskov & Foss, 2013; Cabral et al., 2013; Foss, Lyngsie & Zahra, 2013; Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011). Investigation into the challenges of entrepreneurship in Africa revealed that limited access to start-up capital (Kock, 2008; Halkias et al., 2011; Meyer & Landsberg, 2015), environmental issues, family-related issues (Halkias et al., 2011), lack of business knowledge and networks and lack of support during uncertainty in the business cycle (Van Vuuren & Groeneald, 2007) are barriers to starting and managing businesses. Other studies found lack of training and education, lack of role models, particularly female role models, and inequality when accessing finance and childcare responsibilities (Lebakeng, 2008) as barriers to entrepreneurship in the region. New evidence from a systematic review of challenges with doing business in Africa by Asongu & Odhiambo (2019) found corrupt

practices associated with starting a business, limited energy and electricity, lack of access to finance, high taxes, and little cross-border trade.

### **Conceptual framework**

EM models provide an approach to understand the direct precursors to enterprise start-ups and anticipate consequences of motivations in that they capture long-term propensities held by entrepreneurs. There are many models of EM – research model of EM (Naffziger, Hornsby & Kuratko, 1994), theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger, 2009) and Shapero & Sokol (1982). However, this study draw on the model of EM and the entrepreneurial process from Shane, Locke & Collins (2012) to investigate EM in a developing economy. The model supports this study for two main reasons. First, the most common EM are classified in the model under two distinct categories: general – need for achievement, locus of control, vision, desire for independence, passion, and drive, and – task specific, which consists of goal setting and self-efficacy. Second, the model encapsulate key research objectives – EM and opportunities. Although other models, i.e. Krueger (2009) include perceived opportunity, the adopted model below position environmental conditions as an influence of opportunity recognition. The model illustrates that opportunity recognition leads to idea development and execution of the idea. The inclusion of environmental condition is pivotal to this study because it enables context specific environmental factors to be identified thus providing an in-depth analysis of market forces that influence EM. Furthermore, it allows for concise identification of opportunities and challenges in the selected context.

### **Context of investigation - The Gambia**

The Gambia is a small country in West Africa with 1.9 million people (World Bank, 2018). There are many tribes in the country – Wolof, Mandika, Jola, Fula, Sere, Sarahoule, Maninkakan, Mandjaque and Aku (Access Gambia, 2018). Each tribe has its own tradition and culture that shapes their belief system and how they live (The Gambia Experience, 2018). The country relies on tourism, agriculture, and remittances (World Bank, 2018). In 2017, economic growth rebounded to 5.1 percent due to increase in agricultural activities and services. This exceeded the World Bank’s projection of 3.5 percent for 2017 economic outlook. Despite the positive economic performance, poverty is widespread at 48.6 percent in 2015, an increase from 48.1 percent in 2010. The Gambia seeks entrepreneurship to create job opportunities for its working-age population; however, it lacks radical reforms to create an enabling environment

for entrepreneurship. For instance, the country is ranked 146 out of 190 in Doing Business report, and only 1 reform was created to support entrepreneurship in 2017 (World Bank Group, 2018).

### **Research methodology and method**

This study adopted a qualitative methodology using a semi-structured interview technique. Qualitative research is uniquely suited to opening new insights through ‘how,’ ‘who and ‘why’ questions (Doz, 2011). In this study, qualitative research will provide rich and thick process descriptions (Doz, 2011) of EM, opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs. As pointed out by Cheng (2007) qualitative research is essential for surfacing contextual dimensions in international business, such as differences between countries. This view is extended to the context of this study when exploring cross-cultural differences among participants. As previously mentioned, studies of EM in developing economies is limited, which suggests a short of pre-existing contextual familiarity (Doz, 2011). Therefore, semi-structured interview is a useful method for the authors to learn about the world of entrepreneurs in this context (Qu & Dumay, 2011). We took an exploratory view of research connected to semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to reveal their authentic experiences. This was achieved by establishing trust, rapport, and commitment (Alvesson, 2003; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Interview is a ‘moral peak’ because it treats the participants and interviewers as equals, with each expressing their feelings, thus presenting a more realistic picture than can be uncovered using the neo-positivist approach (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 371).

### **Interview protocol**

The interview protocol was designed to capture the focus of EM, and to address the research questions. The protocol consisted of 18 questions divided into four parts. The first part included demographic and general information. The three main sections are based on extensive literature review: 1) what are the motivations for starting a business? 2) what opportunities existing in The Gambia, and how do they influence entrepreneurs? 3) what are the challenges entrepreneurs face, and how do they hinder enterprise growth?

The protocol consists of open-ended questions with probing instruction. Although all questions were asked in the same manner for each interview, the probing questions differed based on the participant responses. According to Brace (2008), open-ended questions allows for greater

level of consistency and wider scope of responses, which can only be captured through interviews.

### **Research population, sample, and interview process**

This study targets entrepreneurs in The Gambia. The research population are entrepreneurs who have an established enterprise. We interviewed entrepreneurs from database by Start-up Incubator Gambia because they possess audited details of entrepreneurs in The Gambia. It is worth noting that Start-up Incubator captures entrepreneurs who undergo their trainings and those who simply use their enterprise hubs. Start-up Incubator Gambia is a certified business consultancy firm. An email invitation was sent to 34 entrepreneurs. Of this call, 20 entrepreneurs responded. Data saturation was reached at interview 15 because there was no new theme from the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, the authors continued with data collection to ensure that no new themes were missed. All 20 interviews are used in this study. Interviews were voice recorded and lasted on average 1hr.

### **Data analysis**

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Five stages were adopted in the data analysis process. They are transcription, coding, code grouping, labelling and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involved coding the interviews, categorising the codes into relevant themes, and then presenting the themes in a format that captures the experiences of the interviewees. To provide an in-depth understanding of the research objectives, the findings are presented in response to the research questions. The themes are identified, and then discussed in each section. The process enabled the authors support the provided arguments with quotes extracted from some of the interviewee's responses.

### **Research quality**

This study adopted Lincoln & Guba (1985) criteria for judging quality in qualitative research. The criteria applied in this study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Poortman and Schildkamp (2011) argued that explication is the main issue in qualitative research. Therefore, the set of criteria for judging the quality of research under qualitative approach should be respected. The quality of research begins with the authors understanding of what it is that the research is trying to answer or achieve.

### **Findings**

This study found interesting demographic and cultural dynamics among the entrepreneurs. The aim of collecting this information was to understand the background of each interviewee for similarities and differences concerning the research questions. The study found that, interviewees are male and female of working-age population. Majority are male (n=11) and female (n=9). There is no symbolic difference in the level of education and entrepreneurial years between the genders. However, female entrepreneurs have educational background in business and economics whilst male entrepreneurs have educational experiences in law, medicine, and some general high school subjects. Female entrepreneurs specialised in arts and fashion whilst male entrepreneurs were in agribusiness, health, travel, and education. Table 2 presents descriptive data of the interview participants.

**Table 2.** Descriptive data of interview participants

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial years</b>
1	25-34	F	Bachelor's degree	1 year 5 months
2	18-24	M	Higher national diploma	2 years 7 months
3	25-34	M	Bachelor's degree	3 years
4	25-34	F	Senior secondary certificate	1 year 11 months
5	35-44	M	Senior secondary certificate	2 years
6	25-34	M	Undisclosed	3 years
7	25-34	F	Higher national diploma	6 years
8	25-34	M	Higher teacher's certificate	8 years
9	18-24	M	Tertiary diploma	3 years
10	25-34	M	Higher education	2 years
11	18-24	F	Bachelor's degree in management	3 years
12	25-34	F	High school diploma	3 years
13	25-34	M	Bachelor's degree in engineering	3-4 years
14	25-34	F	Higher national diploma in business	4 years
15	25-34	F	Bachelor's degree in economics	2 years
16	25-34	F	High school diploma	3 years
17	18-24	F	Higher education	3 years
18	25-34	M	Higher education	1 year
19	18-24	M	Higher education	2 years
20	25-34	M	Medical student	1 year

Participants are from diverse ethnic groups – Wolof, Jola and Mandika. They perceive the Gambia as a hierarchical society because there is centralisation of roles, i.e. government enforce taxation and the Wolof's are inherently entrepreneurs. However, each tribe emphasis 'collectivism.' Their view of collectivism is loyalty to their country, high moral expectations and good relationships with family and friends who help in developing the enterprise. All entrepreneurs believe that the cultural norm for collectivism is a driver for 'Buy Made in

Gambia' campaign. The campaign is a common tagline used to encourage consumers to purchase locally made products. Below is an outline of the interviewees operating sectors and enterprises.

**Table 3.** Operating sector and enterprise of interviewees

Interviewee	Operating sector	Enterprise
1	Food and drink	SweetBite
2	Education	Khadim Consultancy and Study Abroad
3	Agriculture Medicine	Green Hectares Farm CarePlus Drugstore
4	Fashion	RozAfriq
5	Plumbing and services	Marena Plumbing Agency
6	Agriculture	Teeki
7	Fashion	Jak Couture
8	Fashion	LF Art Studio
9	Agribusiness	Visionary Enterprise
10	Logistics	Doorstep Express
11	Services	Mega-Key Marketing Firm
12	Agribusiness	Koringo Farms
13	Real estate	Kerr Finder
14	Fashion and design	HMT Design
15	Fashion	YESS Exclusive
16	Agribusiness	Bonneville Farm
17	Travel	Toukki Man
18	Services	Idea
19	Services	Orroy
20	Education	Teenage Counselling

*Note.* Operating sector is an area of the economy in which the interviewees operate. Enterprise is the type of business they operate.

Majority are self-taught entrepreneurs – they have no formal training in developing an enterprise. However, once established, all interviewees received entrepreneurship trainings from Empretec and Start-up Incubator Gambia. Empretec is a United Nations programme created to promote sustainable, innovative, and internationally competitive small and medium enterprises. Start-up Incubator Gambia is the first co-working space for entrepreneurs in The Gambia. From the data, the typology of entrepreneurs is identified in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Typology of entrepreneurs

Interviewee	Entrepreneurial years	Type of entrepreneur
1	1 year 5 months	NEp

2	2 years 7 months	NEp
4	1 year 11 months	NEp
5	2 years	NEp
10	2 years	NEp
15	2 years	NEp
18	1 year	NEp
19	2 years	NEp
20	1 year	NEp
3	3 years	EdE
6	3 years	EdE
7	6 years	EdE
8	8 years	EdE
9	3 years	EdE
11	3 years	EdE
12	3 years	EdE
13	3-4 years	EdE
14	4 years	EdE
16	3 years	EdE
17	3 years	EdE

*Note.* Potential entrepreneurs (PE), nascent entrepreneurs (NE), intentional entrepreneurs (IE), new entrepreneurs (NEp), established entrepreneurs (EdE) and discontinued entrepreneurs (DE).

### **Motivations for entrepreneurship**

This study found that the entrepreneurs were motivated by multiple factors: necessity (n=14), poverty (n=10), opportunity recognition (n=11), personal knowledge and experience (n=9), passion for the idea (n=9), job creation (n=8) and ethnic and religious norms (n=4). Given the challenging economic performance in The Gambia, the interviewees believed that entrepreneurship could transform people’s lives through job creation. They emphasised increasing levels of poverty due to bad economic conditions, which influence the decision to start a business for survival. The need to survive is associated with the necessity for entrepreneurship. As one interviewee said:

*“The reason I started with the agriculture business is because I was in a rural area with 19 siblings and we depend on agriculture. But my parents could not produce enough farm yields to feed us. There is lack of seeds and market linkage to produce the food.”*

[Interviewee 3, Green Hectares Farm & CarePlus Drugstore]

All interviewees claimed that idea development for the enterprise was easy because there are many issues in the country that require innovative solutions. Enterprises are developed based on the issues in the country, which are outlined in Table 3. Since their ideas address issues in the country, there was instant demand for the products and services, and they had individual experiences and skills to meet those demand. One said:

*“The business started because I would recycle some of my old things like shoes and bags with African prints and wear them in public places.” People would always ask where I got them.*

*And when I say I made them, they would ask if I could make it for them. That's how it all started."*

[Interviewee 4, RozAfriq]

The above interviewee did not establish the business. It was an established business by her mother, which makes it a family business. Her passion for fashion and independence to make decisions led to her involvement with the business.

Passion for the entrepreneurial idea was described as 'strong interest' for the idea. This was specific to individuals offering services in food and drink, agriculture, and education sector. Although these entrepreneurs had other motivating factors such as job creation and ethnic and religious norms, they believed that their strong interest for the idea and enthusiasm to change the country for the better is a driving force. Passion was also linked to their ability to support young people in their aspirations. Interviewees believed that leading by example can transform young people's mind-set from the traditional labour route to taking the risk to set-up their enterprises for economic benefit. Flexibility was a common thread for passion to set-up a business because running a business meant that the entrepreneur made all decisions.

Ethnic and religious norms also influenced some interviewees to start a business. All interviewees have different religious beliefs. Four identified religious beliefs as a key influence on their decision to start a business. Others identified ethnic values and norms as their influence. For these entrepreneurs, serving their communities is a fundamental part of their citizenship. Here is an extract from one interviewee.

*"One basic fundamental of our practice in the Mouride culture is working and serving selflessly. That was embedded in me from a young age and it has influenced my decision to start a business. We always had training from our Cheikh's who tell us that if we want to be successful, we must strive for ourselves and others."*

[Interviewee 2, Khadim Consultancy & Study Abroad]

### **Opportunities for entrepreneurship**

All interviewees argued that there are many opportunities in The Gambia. The themes identified with opportunities are – entrepreneurship training (n=17), market expansion (n=15), low operational cost (n=9), flexible business environment (n=14), government failure (n=1) and business networks (n=9).

Entrepreneurship training is an opportunity for these entrepreneurs because the skills gained through the trainings enable them to take risks and innovate the products and services they offer. Entrepreneurs identified Empretec Gambia, Start-up Incubator Gambia, and Mandela Washington Fellowship as institutions that provided entrepreneurship training. The training equips interviewees with several skills. For example, they help shape business ideas, assist with drafting a business plan, encourage risk-taking and influence critical thinking towards their enterprises. Critical thinking fosters new ways of doing things as illustrated by one interviewee:

*“When I first started my business, it was all about what I was selling and what I wanted. However, after the trainings, I realised it was not just about me. It was about the people I was serving and I had to learn to think about my customers. I added value to my business since shifting my focus on the brand identity and how the customers perceive the brand.”*

[Interviewee 1, SweetBite]

*“I did the Empretec training. The trainings give me many opportunities because they train us on the basic entrepreneur competence, bookkeeping, market analysis and opportunities. It is the same training as Start-up Incubator Gambia and Global Innovation Network. GIN train us on how to use social media to market the product.”*

[Interviewee 6, Teeki]

Two areas of market expansion were discovered: a) development of new products and services, b) exporting to Europe and Asia. Majority of the interviewees said they can create new products based on market demand.

*“I see many opportunities in Gambia. As a tourist nation, we can organise for travel. So this gives plenty of opportunities to escort foreigners and locals for tourism.”*

[Interviewee 17, Toukki Man]

Interviewees believed that the market presents many opportunities in areas of product and service development. Growing market for education and healthy food choices has led to this demand. Some interviewees claimed that, the current interest for ‘Made in Gambia’ products has been a key driving force for this opportunity. The aim is to serve markets beyond the country as majority of the interviewees have interest in exporting to Europe and Asia. Although they have not considered specific regions in Europe and Asia, they are convinced that exporting will create positive enterprise performance.

Some interviewees believed that low operating cost is an opportunity for them. Low operating cost in this study means reduce costs of expenditure relating to running a business. This finding is specific to interviewees in the following sectors - plumbing, logistics and medicine. Cost of running a business in the sectors are low because they require little fixed equipment, which

usually is the highest expenditure for a start-up. These interviewees argued that they started the business with little capital, and that was possible because of the low operating costs. The flexible business environment also increases opportunities for the interviewees because it is less bureaucratic i.e., one stage process for registering a business with the government. Flexibility was associated with consumer behaviour. Consumers are flexible in their purchasing behaviour. The interviewees and consumers have a direct and open communication through word of mouth and, in some cases, online engagement strategies. Furthermore, they can access markets easily due to the small population of the country. The population size and direct consumer-to-business relationship makes running a business flexible.

Interestingly, it was found that government failure to improve the education system is an opportunity for one interviewee. The Gambia has one University and some colleges. The University offers popular courses such as business, medicine, and law. However, there is limited focus on others i.e., Architecture. Therefore, he has sort to capitalise on this constraint to assist Gambians who wish to study abroad. Despite these opportunities, majority of the interviewees said that opportunities are difficult to execute, which limits growth and overall performance of the enterprise.

### **Challenges entrepreneurs face, and how they affect enterprise growth**

This study found that political changes (n=7), lack of government reforms (n=20), high taxes (n=20), high business cost (n=11), and lack of finance (n=18), unskilled staff (n=15) and market uncertainty (n=12) are the main challenges facing entrepreneurs in The Gambia.

The Gambia experienced a short political impasse in December 2016 until January 2017. The political change affected the tourism sector, which is one of the major sources of revenue in the country. Tourism brings business, and the weakness brought by political power exchange affected demand for their products and services. Interviewees said they must consider the political climate because the government influence enterprise through policies and regulations. Interestingly, previous and current government have failed to introduce reforms to support entrepreneurs. They emphasised that the government understands the importance of SMEs on the economy, in particular start-ups. For example, they have made business registration straightforward i.e., dedicated support officers to help entrepreneurs register their business, however, there is limited support on enterprise development i.e., policies for enterprise growth.

Whilst some interviewees declared low operating cost as an opportunity, others revealed that high taxes are a challenge for their businesses. Business taxes are paid quarterly and annually, and interviewees pay income tax from their wages or salaries. They also must pay tax to the municipal council. In The Gambia, municipal councils act on behalf of the government for tax collection purposes from all households including businesses in all localities. So, interviewees pay the following taxes – business tax, income tax and municipal tax. Sadly, there is no refund for overpaid tax, which some argued, to be a systematic failure for a modern enterprise. Here is a participant’s view on high tax:

*“Depending on the business, one can pay a minimum of 10000-15000 dalasi on taxes. Considering we have other expenditures – utilities, wages, materials etc. In Gambia, we have the custom of providing lunch for staff. All these must be considered so the cost of clothing is not over people spending power. I have had to do a breakdown of cost for customers so they understand the prices of the products.”*

[Interviewee 7: Jak Couture]

High business cost is a challenge for interviewees because it affects their pricing strategies and business growth. Although interviewees 2 and 3 said that starting a business required little capital, majority claimed that business cost is high. The cost of starting and running a business is high because of their expenditures. The consequence is challenging since high business costs means soaring prices for consumers. Especially in a complex economic climate, low consumer spending power and soaring prices. As one interviewee said:

*“I have challenges with land acquisition due to excessive cost of lands. I cannot access grant support despite some recommendations, it is difficult to keep with the commitment.”*

[Interviewee 9: Visionary Enterprise]

Lack of finance was cited as a challenge by all interviewees. This challenge hinders investment in research and development of new products and services. It also makes planning for the future difficult because of uncertainty. Furthermore, it affects the opportunity cost of lending higher. Interviewees claimed that banks require collateral in form of asset(s), which defeats the purpose of borrowing.

In addition, unskilled staff is exposed as a challenge, and a threat to enterprise growth. Unskilled staff is a threat because if they offer poor service to customers, it will affect customer rate of return. Word of mouth is one of the most effective marketing strategies for enterprises in The Gambia. Customers consult other users of a product or service to ascertain whether to use a product or service. Poor service or product reviews would be detrimental for business. For one interviewee, unskilled staff hinders plans for expansion to international markets. There

are ambitious standards for fashion items in international markets according to interviewees 7. The current state of design is good, but lacks the techniques required for other types of customers. Her vision for the enterprise is to focus on employees' skills to ensure successful entrant to the international market.

Market uncertainty in this study focus on consumer behaviour and externalities such as the economic crisis. Majority of the interviewees said that consumers are unpredictable due to poor fluctuations in buying behaviour and the inability to forecast sales figures. Customers lack the confidence to purchase products and services because they plan and only focus on necessity purchases. Due to these uncertainties, they are unable to plan or take risks in fear of failure. Market uncertainty, therefore, hinders enterprise growth.

## **Discussion**

This study confirms two typologies of entrepreneurs based on GEM (2012) types of entrepreneurs – new and established entrepreneurs. New entrepreneurs are at the preliminary stages of their enterprises, whilst established entrepreneurs are those with three or more years in the enterprise.

The first objective of this study was to identify and understand the motivations for entrepreneurship in a developing economy. The research found that entrepreneurs are motivated by a combination of factors, which we classified as individual and contextual. Individual motivation are those innate drivers personal to the entrepreneur – necessity, poverty, personal knowledge and experience, passion, and job creation. On the other hand, contextual motivation is those external to the individual, i.e., macro factors – ethnic and religious norms and opportunity recognition. Individual motivation support self-determination theory of Deci & Ryan (1985), which proposed that individuals have the perceived self-believe in their ability to act on specific goals. Interestingly, it also supports the postmodern development of the model (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which position self-determination as a continuum to include intrinsic (individual) and extrinsic (contextual) motivation.

This finding supports Kuada (2015) who found that absolute necessity-driven and opportunity identifiers are drivers of entrepreneurship in Africa. Similarly connected to Stephan, Hart & Drews (2015) push vs pull motivation. Puni et al. (2018) also found that knowledge acquisition and opportunity recognition influence EM. However, this study extends current research through the identification of ethnic and religious norms and job creation as antecedents of EM.

Ethnic and religious norms embody principles of collectivism and social responsibility. The emphasis on collectivism is that of the greater benefits to many rather than a few. In view of entrepreneurship, it is a moral obligation to establish an enterprise that considers the moral of the goods and services created and the benefits of such creations to the society its serves. A conscientious duty rather than a legal obligation, which means that entrepreneurs in the investigated context combine social and commercial principles as a prerequisite for entrepreneurship.

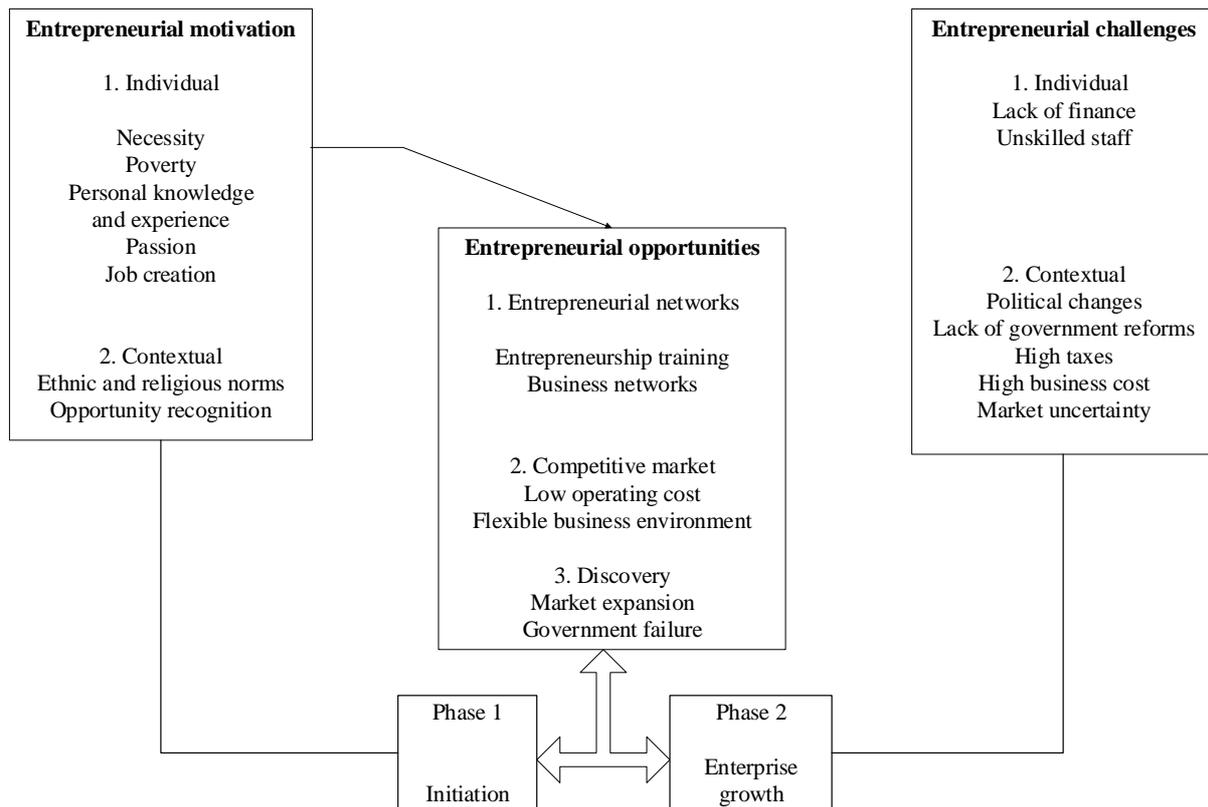
The second objective examined the opportunities available to entrepreneurs. Internal and external market opportunities were identified. However, we classify the opportunities as entrepreneurial networks, competitive market, and discovery (see figure 2). This is consistent with studies from developed economies (Almeida, Haddad & Hewings, 2014). Entrepreneurial networks are social institutions that assist entrepreneurs to enhance ideas. In this study, we found two forms of networks – entrepreneurship training and business networks. Entrepreneurship trainings are opportunities for business growth rather than drivers of entrepreneurship. This study argues that due to the contextual focus and structure of the trainings, entrepreneurs were able to build their ideas. The trainings focused on business development, monetary management, risk-taking, branding, marketing, and confidence building. Although business networks are opportunities in this case, Preisendoerfer et al. (2014) study revealed social networks as driver for EM. Therefore, this study extends current research on opportunities, specifically, opportunities for enterprise growth. Institutions such as Start-Up Incubator and Global Innovation Network provide entrepreneurship trainings.

Competitive market in The Gambia is emphasised by low operating cost and a flexible business environment. This is a significant finding, which extends existing studies on entrepreneurial opportunities. The current argument in literature is that opportunities exist when competitive infirmity exist (Alvarez & Barney, 2007), which is valid to this study. However, low operating cost and a flexible business environment are associated with perspectives of competitive markets. Businesses that require fewer infrastructures have low start-up and operational cost, i.e., logistics and fashion. However, those operating in agriculture have high start-up and operational cost due to high usage of fixed assets.

Since the investigated context is associated with a centralised economic system (World Bank, 2011), this study provides compelling insights into the influence of macro-economic structure on opportunity determination for enterprise initiation (phase 1) and growth (phase 2). It is

worth emphasising that the small population size provides a less bureaucratic environment for business due to simplified business mechanisms, i.e., registering start-up. Therefore, we argue that a nuance antecedent - population size contributes to a flexible business environment for entrepreneurs. Interestingly, market expansion and government failure are opportunities discovered by entrepreneurs operating in the fashion and education sector. Fashion enterprise owners seek international customers through digitisation in Europe and Asia. However, there is no market research carried out to determine specific market entry or modes of entry. In contrast, failure of government to improve education policy and funding for higher education results in limited courses that does not meet the demand of students interested in science courses such as Architecture. Therefore, both market expansion and government failure are discovery opportunities, which supports the views of Shane (2003) and Kirzner (1997).

The third objective explored the challenges entrepreneurs face, and how it hinders enterprise growth. As illustrated in Figure 2, entrepreneurs face many challenges. Like findings of EM, we have classified the challenges into individual and contextual. In this view, individuals' challenges are those experienced because of the entrepreneur shortcomings, but can be changed or managed by the entrepreneur, whilst contextual are macro issues that are out of the entrepreneur control. Individual challenges are lack of finance and unskilled staff. Contextual factors include political changes, lack of government reforms, high taxes, high business cost and market uncertainty. While previous studies (e.g., Hilkius et al. 2011; World Bank Group, 2018) identified financing among other factors as challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Africa, this study presents a unique finding concerning the nature of financing. There are twelve commercial banks and four micro-finance institutions. The requirement for collateral for loans is partly cash and asset, which defeats the purpose of loan for entrepreneurs who have little to no capital for start-up and have no access to the assets required. The figure below presents drivers of entrepreneurship, opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in The Gambia.



**Figure 1.** Entrepreneurial motivations, opportunities, and challenges

## Conclusion and recommendations

Recent studies on EM have focused on developed economies, whilst the context of developing economies is lagging. This study adopted Shane, Locke & Collins (2012) model of EM to provide context specific knowledge on EM, opportunities and challenges that hinders enterprise growth. This has enhanced our understanding of EM; dynamics of market opportunities and the complex environment entrepreneurs operate in a developing economy. We classified findings of EM and challenges as individual and contextual to determine which factors are innate to the entrepreneurs, thus they can control, and those external to them and have no control. The overall findings of the objectives are in two phases. Phase 1 is the initiation and phase 2 is enterprise growth. It is noted that entrepreneurial opportunities are discovered prior to enterprise establishment or during enterprising management for growth. Therefore, opportunities occur at separate phases of the enterprise lifecycle and are discovered by the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs believed that they have the requisite passion, knowledge, and determination for change to start and manage their enterprise. However, they are constrained by lack of government reforms, inadequate start-up capital, unskilled staff, and

high business cost (for some businesses), lack of finance and market uncertainty. This investigation contributes to knowledge in three parts a) individual and contextual factors influence EM and entrepreneurial challenges; b) ethnic and religious norms and opportunity recognition are key drivers of EM and c) context specific environmental conditions are identified to extend Shane, Locke & Collins (2012) model of EM.

This paper provides two areas of recommendations. First, government reform to aid entrepreneurship is necessary and second, systematic changes to the financial sector to facilitate access to start-up capital and borrowing.

Without a strategic focus on public policy on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs will continue to face contextual challenges. Therefore, the government should consider developing entrepreneurship policy that has potential to stimulate growth, alleviate poverty and support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that are engines of the economy. This policy should promote efficient and innovative entrepreneurial ideas that can create commercially viable knowledge and outputs.

The government should consider reducing municipal council tax for businesses, as individuals in those localities appear to be paying double taxes as well as income tax. This level of over-taxation deters individuals from engaging in entrepreneurship, and affect cash flow of established enterprises. The entrepreneurship policy should include a spectrum on business tax. Taxes should be paid once a year with a potential refund policy for overpaid tax. These policies are business-based solutions to foster growth, tackle youth unemployment, reduce extreme poverty and improve economic performance. Furthermore, financial institutions should reconsider their lending criteria, especially to MSMEs. The criteria should align with the country's vision 2030 for socio-economic development. To ensure that appropriate policies are developed for financial institutions, a financial market analysis of current institutions and businesses should understand the current framework for investment, particularly in MSMEs.

### **Limitation and future research**

This study contributes to a critical understanding of EM in developing economies, based on evidence from The Gambia. However, it has limitation in the fact that the sample size is small. Following this critical insight, future research should consider a mixed methodological approach from a larger sample size.

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