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Challenges faced
by Immigrant
Entrepreneurs in
establishing and
maintaining their
businesses in
Dublin.

John Hickey

Abstract

There has been much discussion regarding the economic and social policy implications of the new multiracial Ireland as a result of the rapid transformation of the country's demographic composition over the past two decades due to record levels of immigration. In light of the ongoing immigration crisis and rising anti-immigration sentiments, the issue of immigrant entrepreneurship is gaining increasing political and social significance. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges immigrant entrepreneurs encountered while establishing and sustaining their enterprises in Dublin. This study employs an interpretive epistemological approach as the purpose of the research is to explore the personal experiences of the immigrant entrepreneur. The utilisation of a qualitative methodology is used as it enables the researcher to explore the sentiments and viewpoints of participants. The researcher conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with eight immigrant entrepreneurs of various nationalities. The findings of this research indicate that immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin operate primarily on the margins of the dominant economy and face greater obstacles than Irish enterprises. These obstacles include procuring financial support, criminal activities such as larceny, instances of racism, and limited access to local business networks. In spite of government rhetoric and policy support for immigrant entrepreneurship in Ireland, there are no effective measures in place to promote its growth. The public discourse on immigration may benefit from a nuanced comprehension of the positive contributions immigrants can make to the Irish economy as business proprietors. In the current globalised era characterised by a notable increase in immigration, it is essential to emphasise that even countries renowned for their longstanding multicultural values of welcoming immigrants are not immune to the effects of strict migration policies implemented by other Western nations or the consequences of negative narratives about immigrants spread via social media platforms. Therefore, it is imperative that professionals and academics in Western nations advocate for the welfare of immigrants.

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I would want to express my gratitude to all the immigrant entrepreneurs who have contributed to the economic landscape of Ireland. Despite enduring persistent discrimination and lacking the necessary protection required for a safe working environment, these individuals have consistently made significant contributions to Ireland's burgeoning economy, generating employment opportunities and demonstrating an unwavering resolve to thrive and make meaningful contributions to society.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

According to Kloosterman and Rath (2001), the phenomenon of globalisation and the adoption of an “open door” policy by multiple nations has contributed to an increase in immigrant entrepreneurial endeavours worldwide. According to the Partnership for a New American Economy (2011), the Fortune 500 list for 2010 included a substantial number of prominent American corporations. Specifically, 204 of the listed companies were established by immigrants. These immigrant founded corporations collectively generated sales amounting to 4.2 trillion USD and provided employment opportunities for over ten million individuals throughout the globe. Additionally, it is worth noting that among the lower echelons of the economic hierarchy, there exists a multitude of small-scale immigrant enterprises that not only fulfil their tax obligations but also provide money for the proprietors and their respective households.

Mestres (2010) presents research findings from multiple OECD nations indicating that immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely to launch new businesses than the native population. Approximately 12.7% of individuals within the migrant population who are of working age engage in self-employment, in contrast to 12.0% among individuals who are native-born. The observation that migrants, on average, have a higher propensity for risk-taking behaviour may somewhat illuminate this discovery. Additionally, these immigrant entrepreneurs may possess unique skills and knowledge that are not present among their native-born counterparts and cannot be easily replicated. However, it is noteworthy that businesses initiated and managed by immigrants tend to experience much lower rates of survival in contrast to enterprises established by their native-born peers (Breem, 2010). Furthermore, Immigrant Entrepreneurs in OCED countries tend to work in low-value-added industries. These characteristics are a result of tighter financial capital constraints, limited country-specific human and social capital, unfamiliarity with the functioning of local markets, and increased difficulty traversing regulatory frameworks (Desiderio, 2014). The longevity and nature of immigrant-run businesses may also be affected by their owners' immigration status. The challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs generally diminish when they establish longer-term residency in the host country (Desiderio, 2014). However, these

challenges are inherent in the whole lifespan of an entrepreneurial enterprise and can potentially restrict the ability of immigrants to expand beyond their ethnic-focused firms.

There is increased recognition that immigrant entrepreneurs' contributions to innovation and employment creation is growing (OCED, 2021). Immigrants are widely considered to have a high proclivity for entrepreneurship and to contribute positively to economic development. In order to survive financially in the host nation, many immigrants start businesses out of necessity (Chrysostome, 2010; Dana, 1997). As more immigrants have moved to Europe and the US over the past several decades, numerous authors have taken an interest in examining the difficulties they face. Numerous challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs bear resemblance to those faced by small firms in general. Nevertheless, immigrant entrepreneurs, due to their limited familiarity with the host nation, may encounter supplementary hurdles that require navigating.

There has been much discussion on the economic and social policy implications of the new multi-racial Ireland due to the fast transformation of the country's demographic makeup in the last two decades following record immigration levels. Historically, Ireland has experienced net migration, however, this changed significantly in the 1990s, when the period of economic growth known as the Celtic Tiger led to a significant increase in immigration flows. Rapid immigration during the economic boom has made Ireland's ethnic heterogeneity increasingly diverse. For many immigrants, immigration is not a temporary state, as many wish to make Ireland their permanent home.

Between 1996 and 2019, Ireland experienced net migration, causing the percentage of the population born outside of Ireland to increase from 7% in 1996 to 17.3% in 2016. By 2016, 31% of foreign-born individuals originated from EU13 nations, 7% from African nations, and 12% from Asian nations (CSO, 2017). This represents a substantial diversification of migration fluxes and origin countries over the past twenty years. According to the results of the 2022 census in Ireland, eighty percent of the resident population was born with Irish citizenship. This signifies a decline of 3% compared to the data from 2016. The proportion of individuals residing in Ireland who were born outside of the country amounted to 20% of the total population. The aforementioned figure denoted a population of 1,017,437 individuals, indicating a rise of 207,031 individuals compared to the data recorded six years prior. The most significant increments were observed in the population figures of individuals born in

India (with a rise of 35,673), Brazil (with an increase of 23,760), and Romania (with an increase of 13,758).

1.2 Gaps in the Literature

Although there exists a substantial body of research on entrepreneurship in general, there appears to be a dearth of research pertaining to immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the distinct obstacles encountered by individuals can enhance the existing body of knowledge within the discipline and establish a basis for subsequent investigations. Pinkowski (2008) performed a study that examined the difficulties encountered by immigrant businesses in Dublin, as outlined in his scholarly article titled 'Challenges and promise for Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Dublin'. Since 2008, Ireland has experienced significant changes in its economic conditions, transitioning from a period of economic recession in 2008 to the current cost-of-living crisis. This transformation has been accompanied by a substantial rise in net migration, as well as changes in legislation, societal views, and other elements that are peculiar to the location and time period. Furthermore, there is a dearth of study on the enduring effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrant business, specifically within the Dublin setting. The global pandemic has had a profound impact on the commercial environment, with potential implications for immigrant entrepreneurs that may have not been thoroughly examined. The available research does not sufficiently address the extent to which local support structures, such as business networks that are welcoming to immigrants, mentorship programmes, and inclusive financial services, play a role. Furthermore, a noticeable deficiency in the examination of the effectiveness of existing policies and efforts targeted at facilitating the success of immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin is evident.

The research on Immigrant Entrepreneurship encompasses a diverse range of methodologies and strategies, however, empirical research holds a dominating position with a particular emphasis on the quantitative method (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). Aliaga-Isla & Rialp (2013) argue for the utilisation of qualitative research and mixed methods in the study of immigrant entrepreneurship in order to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of this phenomena. Dabić et al. (2020) concur with this viewpoint and argue that in order to enhance theoretical comprehension and cultivate a more nuanced understanding of immigrant

entrepreneurship, it is essential to employ qualitative research methodologies that consider the contextual significance of this phenomenon.

1.3 Academic Justification

The issue of immigrant entrepreneurship is becoming highly politically and socially significant in light of the ongoing migration crisis, growing anti-immigration sentiments, and the increasingly contentious discourse on migration in the European Union (Dheer, 2018; Eberl et al., 2018). However, the present public discourse concerning immigration matters depicts immigrant entrepreneurship as a highly beneficial outcome of immigration for the receiving nation (Brzozowski & Cucculelli, 2020). According to Daniels et al. (2002), immigration serves as a dynamic catalyst for fostering connections between states on a global scale. The global refugee population has experienced a significant surge in recent years, resulting in contentious debates among governments on the allocation of responsibility for accommodating those who have been displaced due to armed conflicts or other catastrophic events (Taylor, 2016). Based on the findings of the World Migration Report, it is estimated that the global migrant population reached approximately 280 million people in 2020, constituting approximately 3.6% of the total global population. These figures, as reported by the International Organisation of Migration (2020), indicate a trend of ongoing rise in the migrant population, with more increases anticipated in the future. One possible explanation for this phenomenon might be attributed, at least partially, to the perception of immigration as a catalyst for economic growth by nations that receive migrants (Lane, 1972).

According to Whybrow (2005), the United States, being one of the prominent nations in terms of receiving immigrants in the previous century, possesses a national identity that is strongly influenced by its history of immigration. Additionally, De Vries (2007) contends that this historical advantage has contributed to the USA's current position as the unrivalled global economic leader. According to Lane (1972), the substantial influx of immigrants throughout the 19th Century was a crucial factor in facilitating the economic rise of the United States. The advantages of a well-regulated immigration policy, Lane (1972) contends, are twofold, stating that: *“the ‘ideal’ immigrant brings a skill which is in short supply in order that the desirable expansion can take place and he [or she] creates a demand for commodities in those sectors where labour and other productive factors are abundant”*.

In the current economic landscape, it is imperative to strategically align individuals with the requisite expertise with suitable positions needed in the Irish economy. Consequently, the inclusion of immigrants becomes crucial as they can contribute the necessary talents that Ireland requires (Deloitte, 2022). The present escalation in forced migration towards Europe is arguably the most extensive and intricate since the end of the Second World War (Backman et al., 2021). As the process of population ageing intensifies and fertility rates decline to levels below replacement, the concept of immigration can be perceived as a crucial element of human capital in order to mitigate labour and skill deficiencies. However, receiving countries exhibit hesitancy over the potential contribution that immigrants can make to the local economy. In conjunction with the escalating demands placed on social services, these factors are correlated with heightened levels of employment competition and criminal activity (Backman et al., 2021).

Despite the numerous opportunities provided by industrialised and emerging host nations for immigrants to establish their own businesses, it has been observed that the majority of immigrant-owned businesses are small, ethnic shops or restaurants catering to a specific cultural demographic (Murshed, 2023). This is primarily attributable to immigrants' struggles to launch more sophisticated enterprises in their host countries. The challenges that are encountered encompass a restricted availability of sufficient financial resources, linguistic barriers hindering the efficacy of communication and understanding of regulatory frameworks, instances of prejudice, and a lack of information of the legal requirements for establishing a business.

Immigration is currently one of Ireland's most fevered debates. Over the past few decades, Ireland has witnessed a surge in immigration due to various factors such as political stability, economic opportunities, and attractive living conditions. The central focus of the discourse is around the issue of cost, whereby refugees are commonly perceived as imposing an economic burden on the host countries (Taylor, 2016). Therefore, the debate often revolves around one faction contending that the expenses incurred are too high, while the opposing faction asserts that the imperative to address humanitarian concerns surpasses the financial burden (Taylor, 2016).

“During 2022 the number of people claiming international protection increased significantly, with 13,651 applications made with the IPO. This is a 186% increase on the same period in

2019, the last year in which application numbers were not impacted by COVID-19.” – Simon Harris, Minister for Justice.

In 2022, there was a significant surge of 186% in the volume of persons who sought international protection in Ireland. The number of applications rose from 4,781 in 2019 to 13,651 in 2022 (McCormack, 2023). This is an 186% increase compared to the same period in 2019, the last year in which Covid-19 had no effect on the number of applications. This research can contribute significantly to the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, migration studies, and economic development policy. The findings would be of interest to policymakers, researchers, community developers, and the entrepreneurs themselves.

1.4 Research Aim(s)

The primary aim of this study is to elucidate the primary challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs in establishing and maintaining their businesses in Dublin. This study endeavours to examine the first-hand experiences encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs in the process of establishing and operating their firms. The pursuit of entrepreneurship by immigrants entails significant contributions to the economic expansion of the host nation. However, this endeavour is not without its challenges, particularly in the context of Dublin. Furthermore, the aim of this study is to identify feasible ways of surmounting these obstacles and augmenting business performance. The challenges addressed in this study encompass language and cultural barriers, access to capital, legal and regulatory knowledge, business networks, workforce integration, bias and discrimination, and potential government interventions that can promote immigrant entrepreneurship.

1.5 Research Questions

Overarching Research Question: “Challenges faced by Immigrant Entrepreneurs in establishing and running their businesses”.

The research question arose from a combination of the author's keen interest in the topic of entrepreneurship and work as part of the Department of Social Protection's refugee response unit. The author undertook a comprehensive examination of existing literature, with a specific emphasis on the domain of immigrant entrepreneurship. This literature analysis provided the foundation for the research inquiries explored in this study. To obtain a comprehensive

understanding of the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin, the author has opted to investigate various obstacles including language and cultural barriers, limited capital accessibility, navigating the legal and regulatory framework of the host nation, establishing a business network, integrating into the workforce, and addressing discrimination or bias concerns. While this compilation of challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs is far from comprehensive, the limited timeframe of a cross-sectional study restricts the ability to conduct a thorough investigation of all extensive challenges experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs.

Main research questions

- To establish the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in respect of language and cultural barriers.
- What challenges immigrant entrepreneurs encountered when trying access capital from financial institutions?.
- The third objective was to capture the challenges immigrant entrepreneurs faced when navigating the legal and regulatory framework in Ireland when establishing their businesses.
- To identify the challenges the entrepreneur encountered in building business relationships and establishing networks in Dublin?
- To identify the challenges immigrant business owners did you face in hiring and retaining suitable employees?
- To establish whether the entrepreneur has experienced bias or discrimination.

1.6 Methods and Scope

This study employs qualitative research methods to investigate immigrant entrepreneurship in Dublin in an effort to comprehend the obstacles immigrants face when attempting to establish their own businesses. The study involved a sample of eight male immigrant entrepreneurs of diverse nationalities. This study's collected data include personal narratives (Dienstag, 1996): how individuals interpret their lives from the perspective of their entrepreneurial endeavours. Understanding and making sense of the diverse and complex experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs may be complicated by the use of a quantitative

method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). When utilising vast samples or surveys, such a methodology would not reveal the underlying problems. The utilisation of a qualitative methodology is deemed more advantageous since it enables the researcher to explore the sentiments and viewpoints of participants. It also enables the researcher to investigate the meanings of people's actions and how they interact with society. In addition, this methodology assists the researcher in documenting the subjective interpretations of the participants and gaining an in-depth understanding of their responses. In addition, it allows for the identification of recurring patterns, the analysis of data through thematic analysis, and the opportunity for the researcher to conduct interviews in an authentic setting.

Scope of this study

The researcher conducted a series of eight comprehensive interviews with immigrant entrepreneurs in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of the challenges that they encountered while establishing and operating their enterprises in Dublin. The limited number of participants in this study has for a thorough examination of the primary data gathered, resulting in insightful and thoughtful discussions in the current study.

Outside the parameters of Research

The study focuses exclusively on the challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, thereby excluding an examination of the obstacles confronted by entrepreneurs who are indigenous to Ireland. The focus of this research is limited to the issues encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, specifically in Dublin. Therefore, any difficulties experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs in different cities or countries are beyond the scope of this study. This research mostly emphasises obstacles faced by immigrant entrepreneurs rather than focusing on possibilities or success stories unless the latter are employed as contrasting examples to enhance comprehension of the challenges. The research conducted in this study focuses only on the intersection between immigration and entrepreneurship. Therefore, any broader social, political, or legal concerns associated to immigration that are not directly relevant to entrepreneurship fall beyond the purview of this research. This study does not encompass personal hardships encountered by immigrants in Dublin that are not directly associated with their entrepreneurial endeavours.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This dissertation endeavour commences with a concise introduction to the selected research subject, highlighting the existing gaps in the literature pertaining to immigrant entrepreneurship and the identification of qualitative research as a valid rationale for conducting this study. The study's primary objective and framework are also presented.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter encompasses a comprehensive analysis of scholarly literature pertaining to the research subject. The present study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs. To accomplish this objective, the literature review will incorporate and examine pertinent scholarly works on the topic of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The methodology section of this study provides an overview of the research objectives, as well as the selected methods and procedures employed for the collecting of primary data. This section delves into a comprehensive examination of the philosophies, methodologies, selection of the population sample, and an in-depth analysis of the systematic review pertaining to the data collection process.

Chapter 4 – Findings & Discussion

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination and evaluation of the key study findings. The researchers employed the mixed embeddedness theory in this study to provide support for the study's objectives and sub-objectives, as well as to identify key themes related to the research question.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter on conclusions and suggestions provides a thorough and evaluative overview of the research gaps identified through the analysis of primary and secondary data in Chapter 2, culminating in a final summary of the research conducted, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneur is a word of French origin that translates literally to 'between-taker' or 'go-between' (Hisrich & Peters, 2002). Richard Cantillon (1755), an Irish economist residing in France, introduced the term "entrepreneur" as a risk-taker within the context of economic literature almost a quarter of a millennium ago. According to Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), the definition of entrepreneurship in the traditional sense is the novel combination of resources to produce something of value. Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004) describe entrepreneurship as a dynamic process that includes the generation and implementation of innovative ideas and strategies, driven by an individual's energy and passion for change and vision. Key components of entrepreneurship include the capacity to identify potential amidst disorder, inconsistency, and uncertainty (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004). Additionally, it involves the readiness to undertake measured risks in relation to time, equity, or professional trajectory. It also necessitates the aptitude to assemble an efficient team for the venture, as well as the creative ability to mobilise necessary resources. A fundamental skill in entrepreneurship lies in constructing a robust business plan (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004).

The definition of entrepreneurship put forth by Shane and Venkataraman (2000) is one of the most frequently cited definitions: *"how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited."* The primary emphasis of this notion was on the identification of opportunities. However, it is important to note that entrepreneurship can be characterised in other ways (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), such as a focus on unexplored markets or the advancement of innovative technologies (Phan et al., 2009). The importance of human capital and the market environment cannot be overstated in relation to entrepreneurial success, since the capacity to exploit opportunities ultimately hinges on the individuals involved (Meek et al., 2010). Research conducted by Gartner (1990) concluded that the nature of entrepreneurship may be characterised by eight themes: the individual, invention, organisation creation, producing value, profit or non-profit, growth, uniqueness, and owner-manager. In recent years, the definitions of entrepreneurship have shifted to place a greater emphasis on the process component, which provides an insightful lens through which to view the growth of innovation and creativity in businesses

(Nambisan, 2017). Elia et al. (2020) provide a contemporary definition of entrepreneurship as: *"the process of identifying potential business opportunities and exploiting them by recombining existing resources or creating new ones in order to develop and commercialise new products and services."*

Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004) posited that one approach to defining an entrepreneur is by acknowledging the legitimacy of several theories and integrating them into overarching frameworks, categorised under macro and micro perspectives. However, they acknowledged that this synthesis of theories might result in a complex and intricate landscape of theories (De Vries, 2007). Despite an extensive body of research, the precise conceptualization of entrepreneurship and the definition of what constitutes an entrepreneur remain subjects of ongoing scholarly discourse (Low, 2001). There are scholars who seek a comprehensive theory of entrepreneurship (Bull & Willard, 1993), while others contend that it is neither feasible nor necessary to develop a singular theory, but rather advocate for the accumulation of several theories (Gartner, 2001). There have been assertions made regarding the state of entrepreneurship research, suggesting that it is characterised by fragmentation (Ucbasaran et al., 2001), a lack of theoretical grounding in empirical studies (Davidsson et al., 2001), and a perceived absence of recognition and regard (Low, 2001). Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged by scholars that there is a pressing need for the advancement of theoretical frameworks in entrepreneurship research (Davidsson et al., 2001; Gartner, 2001; Low, 2001; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Additionally, it has been argued that the intellectual growth of the field of entrepreneurship heavily relies on drawing insights from other disciplines within the social sciences (Thornton, 1999). The shift in study attention from the individual entrepreneur to the process of entrepreneurship has brought to light the limitations of existing approaches and theories, which mostly rely on static conditions (Howorth, et al., 2005).

The topic of "risk-taking" is frequently examined in the academic discourse on immigrant entrepreneurship, as immigrants make a deliberate decision to pursue self-employment instead of opting for a traditional paid or salaried occupation. Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus among scholars regarding this perspective. According to Croitoru et al. (2012), Schumpeter posits that risk-taking is not an intrinsic attribute of entrepreneurship. Contrarily, he has asserted that the act of taking risks is linked to proprietorship rather than

entrepreneurship. According to Long (1983), Richard Cantillon, the prominent Irish economist, claimed that uncertainty serves as a distinguishing feature between an entrepreneur and an employee. In conclusion, the argument asserts that the process of initiating a novel enterprise entails elements of both risk and uncertainty, thereby conferring the label of entrepreneur on the individual undertaking such an endeavour (Gartner, 1985).

Numerous conceptualizations exist on the notion of an entrepreneur that extend beyond the attributes of risk-taking and uncertainty (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001). Entrepreneurs are defined as those who possess the ability to identify and recognise potential opportunities, after which they take the initiative to establish and develop a business venture (Geroski, 1995; Bygrave, 1993). An additional expansion of the conceptualization posits that entrepreneurs possess the ability to recuperate from financial setbacks within their commercial endeavours and enhance their profitability through their strategic activities and decision-making processes (Drucker, 2015; Liu, 2002). Previous scholarly investigations have revealed the existence of varying viewpoints about the conceptualization of an entrepreneur. Some scholars have posited that an entrepreneur can be characterised as a business owner who hires and manages a workforce (Kirkwood, 2007; Shane, Kolvereid & Westhead, 1991). Crockett (1962) posits that entrepreneurs possess distinct attributes. These individuals possess the qualities of being innovative and adept at strategic planning, enabling them to effectively manage and minimise the risks inherent in corporate operations. Moreover, they demonstrate the ability to generate novel ideas and accurately forecast their outcomes. According to Geroski (1995), several definitions regard boldness and intelligence as crucial assets, while Kirzner (1979) posits that these distinctive qualities are commonly found among entrepreneurs. In summary, an entrepreneur can be defined as an individual who possesses the intention to initiate a novel business venture or enhance an already established business (Veciana, 2007). In essence, an entrepreneur can be defined as an exceptional individual who initiates a commercial venture and diligently endeavours to maintain its operations and secure its longevity (Raposo, Do Paco & Ferreira, 2008).

2.2 Immigrant and Immigration

According to Faist (2000), the term immigrant encompasses those who relocate from one nation to another with the goal of establishing residence for a significant duration. Sasse &

Thielemann (2005) define immigrants as individuals who have lived outside their country of origin for at least a year. An international immigrant is defined by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as a non-national who enters a country for the purpose of settling. A person is considered an immigrant if they are living in a country that is not their country of origin (Pinkowski, 2009). Vinogradov (2008) contends that an immigrant is an individual who moves from one country to another in order to settle there permanently. In the context provided by Daniels et al. (2002), the term "international migrant" pertains to an individual who elects to create a lasting domicile or extend their stay in a foreign nation. Daniels et al. (2002) further note that this movement can transpire voluntarily or under duress.

Certain individuals choose to establish themselves in foreign nations for various purposes such as job, education, family reunification, personal development, and other subjective motivations. Forced migrants encompass those who are compelled to leave their homes due to various circumstances such as persecution, natural or human disasters, war, violence, repression, or other perilous conditions that jeopardise their well-being and personal liberties (De Vries, 2007). According to Lane (1972), economic incentives serve as the predominant catalyst for immigration. Whybrow (2005) conceptualises immigrants as individuals who possess a high level of energy and directed their restlessness towards self-improvement, the betterment of their families, their adopted community, and the enhancement of respect within those groups. Although migration and immigration have distinct meanings, they are frequently employed interchangeably. In this study, the word 'immigrant' is constantly employed to refer to individuals who reside permanently in Ireland but were born outside of the country.

2.3 Immigrant Entrepreneur

According to Ahmad and Seymour (2008), immigrant entrepreneurs may be defined as business owners who were born in a foreign country and want to create or expand economic activity by identifying new goods, processes, or markets in order to produce value. According to Chaganti and Greene (2002), the term "immigrant entrepreneur" refers to a person who, upon their recent arrival to a nation, establish a business with the primary objective of achieving economic sustainability. Immigrant entrepreneurs can be characterised as a

distinctive cohort, comprising of persons who relocate to a foreign nation with the explicit intention of promptly establishing a commercial venture in that new location (Butler et al., 2003). A simple definition is provided by Brzozowski et al. (2017), who assert that immigrant entrepreneurs are foreign-born individuals who establish a business in a host country. In the context of this study, the definition proposed by Brozoski (2017) will be adopted.

Zhou (2004) argues that immigrant entrepreneurship has several positive effects. First, it creates opportunities for those who may otherwise be excluded from the mainstream work market. As a second benefit, it reduces tensions between foreign-born and native workers. Moreover, immigrant entrepreneurs play a vital role in the development of entrepreneurial role models within immigrant communities. Government regulations and discriminatory practises in the host country's labour market can often serve as barriers to entering the labour market (Mata & Pendakur, 1999; Mora & Davila, 2005) thus forcing immigrants to frequently engage in self-employment to enhance their earning potential (Zhou, 2004).

Previous studies have demonstrated that the most suitable indicators of success for barrier-based immigrant entrepreneurship are primarily focused on survival rather than development and capitalization (Chrysostome, 2010). Immigrant entrepreneurs possess significant human resources that are pertinent to the advancement of international new ventures. These resources include international knowledge, experiences, and contacts, which contribute to enhanced success indicators in terms of growth and revenues (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013). According to Elali and Al-Yacoub (2016), the primary determinant influencing the establishment of businesses among young immigrants is the need for achievement. The immigrant entrepreneur has a greater sense of self-worth and recognises their contribution to their new community, which leads to a sense of achievement (Hack-Polay et al., 2020).

According to Chrysostome & Arcand (2009), for immigrant entrepreneurs, self-employment is a means of survival, and stress two factors that could affect the business's success (1) Cultural perspective – immigrants' success depends on their family and ethnic groups, their niche markets, their social and virtual embeddedness, and their entrepreneurial experience prior to immigration; (2) From a neoclassical viewpoint, the success of immigrants depends on their level of education, work experience, willingness to take risks, and general attitude towards uncertainty. However, immigrant entrepreneurs face a variety of obstacles, and their adaptive strategies vary (Thornhill & Amit, 2003; Waldinger, 1995).

2.4 Challenges faced by Immigrant Entrepreneurs

The establishment of a business is a complex undertaking that necessitates a comprehensive understanding of legal frameworks, environmental factors, market dynamics, and institutional structures. Immigrant entrepreneurs have numerous obstacles that are not often encountered by their native-born counterparts when embarking on the establishment of an enterprise. They often encounter more challenges in terms of securing start-up capital, establishing networks in the host nation, and overcoming barriers to engage with the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, as compared to their native-born counterparts. Furthermore, the presence of language barriers has the potential to exacerbate the scale of the aforementioned challenges. The challenges presented by language barriers will be discussed further in section 2.4.1.

Immigrant entrepreneurs heavily rely on their co-ethnic community for the resources and support necessary to launch a new business in the host nation. This is primarily due to the numerous obstacles they face, including limited financial resources, difficulty entering the job market, linguistic barriers, and a lack of recognised educational credentials (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Barrett et al., 1996). Aldrich et. al (1990) state that there are seven primary obstacles immigrant entrepreneurs must overcome when establishing an enterprise in the host-country. These include (1) how to obtain the information necessary to create and sustain a viable business in the host country; (2) strategy for raising necessary startup funds; (3) how to obtain the training and skills needed to operate a business; (4) how to build and manage a qualified, cost-effective labor force; (5) how to manage customer and supplier interactions, particularly for those with limited language proficiency and diverse business practices; (6) how to compete successfully in the new business environment; and (7) means by which they shield themselves from political threats. Overreliance on previous entrepreneurial experience in their home country may also be a barrier for immigrants (Hack-Polay et. al 2020).

Research indicates that the success rates of immigrant-owned enterprises are lower in comparison to businesses initiated by individuals who are native to the host country (OCED, 2010). Volery (2007) posits that markets in which immigrant entrepreneurs operate are commonly distinguished by comparatively low entry barriers in terms of capital and educational prerequisites, as well as by small-scale production, a heavy reliance on labour,

limited value addition, and intense competition within the marketplace. Desiderio (2014) contends that in the majority of OCED countries, enterprises owned by immigrants are commonly observed to be engaged in low-value-adding services. This observation aligns with the conclusions drawn by Edwards et al. (2016) and Ram et al. (2017), who argue that individuals who migrate from foreign countries are notably more inclined to engage in micro-business ownership, particularly within industries that yield lower profits. Moreover, these studies suggest that immigrant entrepreneurs are less likely to sustain their businesses beyond a five-year period compared to their native counterparts. The potential reasons for this phenomenon could be attributed to various challenges, including inadequate financial resources, restricted availability of financing, a deficiency in country-specific human and social capital, unfamiliarity with local market operations, and difficulties in navigating a convoluted regulatory structure (Desiderio, 2014).

Over two-thirds of immigrant-owned businesses in Ireland report yearly revenues of €50,000 or less, according to research by Cooney and Flynn (2008). According to a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Jones et al. (2015), it was discovered that new immigrant businesses working in areas characterised by market exclusion generate limited profits that fail to adequately reflect their significant contributions to the local community. The researchers discovered that new migrant enterprises fulfil multiple roles within under-serviced communities that have experienced a decline in local merchants (Jones et al., 2015). These enterprises not only offer retail outlets, but also act as safeguards against unemployment and social isolation in impoverished areas. Additionally, they facilitate the social integration of diverse migrant groups, fostering connections both within their own communities and with the broader British society. As employers, these entrepreneurs provide a secure haven for co-ethnics seeking employment on a labour market that is becoming increasingly competitive, and their interactions with their customers foster social cohesion (Jones et al., 2014).

The institutional framework refers to the legislative norms that a country establishes for immigrants' access to self-employment. Their legal status in the host-nation determines whether they have full access to self-employment. In contrast to their native-born counterparts, immigrant entrepreneurs face a range of challenges. These include a limited understanding of the customary practises of conducting business in the host country, a lack of knowledge regarding the regulatory framework and legal obligations of the host country,

limited exposure to conventional financial resources, and an absence of documented credit history (Pinkowski, 2009).

Immigrant entrepreneurs often identify opportunities to launch new businesses and capitalise on gaps in the market. There are opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs to supply products and services tailored to the tastes and preferences of ethnic clientele (Aldrich et al., 1990). Immigrant entrepreneurs have benefited from niches in the market that serve the needs of their community's ethnic population. However, there is some debate over the long-term viability of these markets. There is evidence to suggest that fast-growing enterprises are owned by entrepreneurs who rely less on their own ethnic group's members for both labour and customers (Basu 2010).

2.4.1 Language and Cultural Barriers

Hack-Polay et al. (2020) contend that language barriers are one of the greatest obstacles immigrant entrepreneurs face. Immigrant entrepreneurs that are not proficient in the host country's language and who were not educated in English may not have many other options aside from embarking the entrepreneurial path (Portes & Zhou, 1996). To establish a business in the host nation, entrepreneurs should ideally have a strong command of the local vernacular in order to implement and adapt to the local environment. According to Bowles and Colton (2007), the greatest barrier for many immigrants is a restricted capacity to communicate and comprehend the English language, thus immigrant entrepreneurs are less likely to access resources such as government and non-profit economic development organisations or to attempt to expand their business beyond their own ethnic communities. Martins (2004) argues that linguistic barriers can impede the integration of entrepreneurs and their businesses, most particularly small and micro businesses. Communication with other business owners and prospective customers, as well as the establishment of business networks, can be hampered by a lack of a common language due to language barriers (Parker, 2009; Fregetto, 2004). Unquestionably, a significant number of immigrants are able to operate flourishing businesses without a strong command of English, serving a clientele that consists primarily of co-ethnics who speak their native language. However, a lack of linguistic competence may hinder compliance with many local regulations. Information on how to start a business in a language that one cannot understand is practically equivalent to not having

the material created in the first place (Pinkowski, 2008). A significant reason why so many immigrants seek business advice from unqualified acquaintances and relatives is the language barrier (Martins, 2004). For a large number of immigrants, a lack of linguistic proficiency may be an early or recurrent barrier (Bowles & Colton 2007).

Despite language and cultural barriers, several authors have identified that an individual's capacity and drive to engage in entrepreneurial activities is an essential factor in building a successful enterprise (Chen et. al, 2019; Ruiz et. al, (2017). Research conducted by Hack-Polay et al. (2020) concluded that Chinese and Asian participants in Lincolnshire, Great Britain, exhibited more language difficulties than other communities, despite being relatively proficient in matters of business. However, the inability to penetrate the local community due to a lack of language skills hinders business expansion. This has an effect on how immigrant entrepreneurs interact with their consumers and individuals of other ethnicities, most notably native English speakers (Hack-Polay et al., 2020). This result may be attributed to a dearth of language skills and insufficient time and effort invested in their acquisition. Barnes & Cox (2007) found that linguistic difficulties puts immigrants at a relative disadvantage, thus hindering their marketability. According to Rwodzi (2011), however, cultural characteristics, ideas, and attitudes are anticipated to alter during migration. As a result, immigrant entrepreneurs strive to overcome these linguistic barriers because they see learning the language of the host country as an important part of assimilating into the local community (Kloosterman, 2010), demonstrating outstanding courage in starting or continuing a business despite this obstacle (Hack-Polay et al., 2020).

2.4.2 Access to Financial Resources

According to Parker (2004), the most prevalent response to the question "why do people not start a business or even consider it?" is that they lack financial resources. Accessing the capital required to pay salaries, rent charges, equipment, raw materials, and other essential expenditures has been one of the greatest challenges for would-be entrepreneurs for generations. Although nearly every entrepreneur has difficulty procuring sufficient funding to launch and grow their business, these challenges are significantly magnified for immigrants. Numerous scholars have reached the consensus that the availability of financial resources plays a pivotal role in shaping the prospects of immigrant entrepreneurs, as it significantly

impacts the expansion and enduring sustainability of their enterprises. (Fairlie & Robb 2010; Alden & Hammarstedt, 2016; McCarthy et al. 2017).

The success or failure of an immigrant entrepreneur relies heavily on the availability of sufficient start-up money. According to Bates (1994), the success of an immigrant entrepreneur's enterprise is correlated with the size of their start-up capital. Ethnic minority business owners may experience bias when applying for bank loans, hence Ram (1994) notes that they are more likely to informally borrow money from co-ethnics and informal channels. This is consistent with the views of Jones et al (2014) who argue that immigrants frequently experience difficulty obtaining financing from banks and other conventional financial institutions, causing them to turn to unofficial sources and operate their newly formed enterprises with inadequate resources.

Irrespective of the country of residence, the primary challenge faced by immigrants in the realm of entrepreneurship is securing adequate financial resources. These monetary challenges can manifest during the enterprise inception phase, while it operates, or when expansion is required (Omisakin, 2017). One potential variable contributing to the financial sector's hesitancy in offering funding to immigrant firms is the sector's doubt over the repayment ability of such enterprises (Omisakin, 2017). As a consequence of loan discrimination, immigrants face more severe financial constraints, which in turn leads to poorer business performance (Fairlie & Robb, 2010). Sepulveda et al. (2006), assert that a lack of capital forces many newly established migrant businesses into the clandestine economy, with its legislative evasions and ambiguous legality. According to Ram and Deakins (1996), there exists a notable bias among banks in Britain towards providing assistance to small firms owned by African-Caribbean immigrants, resulting in a lack of support for these enterprises when they encounter financial challenges. Several authors further contend that black African and Caribbean entrepreneurs in Britain face greater challenges in obtaining financing than their white counterparts and other minorities, such as the Chinese (Ram and Deakins, 1996; Deakins et al., 2007). Robb and Fairlie (2007) assert a similar perspective, contending that immigrant firms exhibit reduced likelihood of loan approval, hence diminishing their inclination to seek financial assistance owing to apprehensions surrounding potential rejection. Due to a lack of collateral and financial or business trade history in the UK, it is often impossible for new migrants to gain access to mainstream finance (Ram et al., 2008; Hagos,

2015). Sepulveda et al. (2011), assert that entrepreneurs who endeavour to use the banking system of the host nation often feel excluded and discriminated against after enduring a series of frustrating financing attempts. Ekanem and Wyr (2007) studied entrepreneurs with a history of failure and concluded that access to adequate capital was a significant constraint for many of the businesses. They observed that the majority of the entrepreneurs lacked collateral and did not have a banking, business, or profit history, so they were unable to meet the bank's requirements for obtaining credit (Ekanem & Wyr, 2007). On the other hand, Kollinger and Minniti (2006) observed that in cases when immigrant entrepreneurs own assets of significant value that may be used as collateral, the process of securing loans from financial institutions may not pose a significant challenge.

According to Hagos et al. (2019), the persistence of financial barriers was as much a question of the objective lack of access to resources as it was a behavioural attribute and a mindset of the new immigrant entrepreneur. Critically, their research concluded that financial restrictions were both experienced and implemented. The inability of new migrant entrepreneurs to effectively interact with the Britain's small business support environment and take advantage of support opportunities must be viewed in the context of their broader reluctance to integrate (Hagos et. al. 2019). The entrepreneurs were reticent to seek and receive support from outside sources as they were so immersed in their own co-ethnic communities that they were almost oblivious to what was happening outside of them (Hagos et. al 2019). Immigrant entrepreneurs, throughout the process of establishing a firm, lack awareness of the many public support programmes that are available to them, resulting in their failure to effectively exploit these resources. According to De Lange et al. (2019), the European Guarantee Fund, which aims to support marginalised groups, including immigrant entrepreneurs, in obtaining grants and financing, is not effectively employed by immigrants. This underutilization is attributed to the difficulties immigrants face in acquiring pertinent information.

2.4.2 Regulatory Barriers

For entrepreneurs to successfully launch and run an enterprise, they must be well-versed in the myriad of obligatory legal requirements of the host nation. A significant challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs is the complexity of the host nation's legislative structure, which

typically consist of numerous institutions, organisations, and procedures, thus requiring a knowledge of local regulations and laws. Starting a business involves interacting with these institutions, for example, registering the business with the Companies Registration Office (CRO), Revenue Commissioners, applying for necessary permits, and opening a business financial account.

The regulatory environment in which immigrant entrepreneurs operate has a major impact on their business endeavours. This accentuates the complexity and breadth of political and regulatory processes, which range from government legislation to the provision of financial incentives and can be both enabling and constraining (Ram & Jones, 2017). Immigrant entrepreneurs are particularly vulnerable to bureaucratic hurdles because they often lack the country specific human capital and networks necessary to successfully manage complex bureaucratic regulations and procedures (Eurobarometer, 2012). The regulatory environment also influences entrepreneurship through a wide range of state activities, from targeted enterprise aid to ethnic minorities to the unintended consequences of immigration laws, which may not affect entrepreneurial activities but may limit occupational choice, especially if they put immigrants and the legal status of their kin at risk (Ram & Jones, 2017). The process of establishing a business can be burdensome for immigrant entrepreneurs due to their limited knowledge of the economic and governance systems of the host country, as well as the legal and financial requirements that must be met, including sector-specific restrictions (Cooney & Flynn, 2008; Surangi 2022). Surangi (2022) contended that female immigrant entrepreneurs in Britain explicitly cited the legal and regulatory structure as a significant impediment during the creation phase of their enterprise. When compared to their native-born counterparts, immigrant business owners are at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding and complying with these cumbersome business regulations. The inability to fulfil these legal responsibilities has been seen as a hindrance for some immigrant entrepreneurs in transitioning their enterprises from the periphery of the economy, where regulations are less strict, to the more prominent sectors that are subject to more rigorous regulatory supervision (Van Delft et al., 2000). Ndoro et al. (2018) state that immigrant entrepreneurs need substantial support to learn how to operate a business successfully in such an environment.

2.4.3 Business Networking

According to Anderson et al. (1994), a business network consists of "*two or more interrelated business relationships.*" Blankenburg and Johanson (1992) asserted the concept of business networks, which is based on the idea that two business partners can coordinate their activities within the larger context of a connected network of relationships, where each firm has a number of business relationships and coordinates its activities with those of its partners. Business networks provide indirect access to the various types of resources required for the establishment and growth of a business, as well as the exchange of information, skills, and knowledge between the participants and external actors of a business ecosystem (Spigel, 2017; Roundy, 2017). In addition to access to start-up capital, Fletcher (2021) asserts that immigrant entrepreneurs have substantially more difficulty gaining access to local entrepreneur ecosystems and networks than their native counterparts. Facilitating the integration of immigrant entrepreneurs into local entrepreneurial ecosystems poses a considerable obstacle, primarily attributable to their limited awareness of the potential benefits such ecosystems offer for their commercial endeavours (Veljanovski et al., 2018).

One of the primary challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs is the establishment of networks and connections with entrepreneurs and business support entities beyond their own ethnic community (OCED, 2021). The construction of immigrant networks is often influenced by social and cultural elements, including family, community, education, religion, race, and socioeconomic status (Egbert, 2009). According to Bhagavatula et al. (2020), the availability of these resources enables immigrant entrepreneurs to enhance their interpersonal connections and expand their personal networks, so conferring a competitive edge to their enterprises and increasing the likelihood of achieving success. Research conducted by Pinkowski (2009) found that one-fourth of immigrant entrepreneurs surveyed relied on co-ethnic media for their information and that they had minimal personal engagement with traditional business networking organisations in Ireland as they were unaware of the existence of such groups or how to join them. The cultural inclinations originating from the immigrant's place of origin can play a significant role in facilitating immigrant entrepreneurship. However, these predispositions might also impede the capacity of immigrant entrepreneurs to expand their operations beyond their immediate enclave setting (Liu et al., 2020). This is congruent with the views of Barrett et al. (2002) who argue

that co-ethnic links play a crucial part in immigrant enterprise but relying too heavily on community ties can also be detrimental. Stephens (2013) posits that these relationships possess the capacity to facilitate immigrants' access to small business opportunities. However, they may concurrently impede the formation of multi-ethnic networks and reduce the probability of engaging with the professional networks of the host nation. Where there are knowledge gaps, entrepreneurs will often seek assistance with functional and technical parts of their prospective business. This is reinforced by Stephens (2013) research, which identified business consultants, bank officials, and senior public officials as major sources of useful information and guidance for immigrant entrepreneurs through a business network audit. All of the aforementioned positions are characterised by a dearth of immigrant representation in Ireland (Stephens, 2013).

Inability to conform to so-called societal norms may make it difficult for immigrant entrepreneurs to gain access to local business networks. According to Giazitzoglu et al. (2023), entrepreneurial actions and behaviours must be effectively linked with social and industry standards, as well as stakeholder expectations. Adeeko and Treanor (2022), contend that the connection between entrepreneurial actions and entrepreneurial identity is characterised by a mutually reinforcing dynamic. Therefore, a major part of contemporary business is engaging in identity-work in order to present an image that is trustworthy to one's target audience, which includes consumers, suppliers, and employees (Giazitzoglu et al., 2023). Several academics have made the recently emphasised that entrepreneurs greatly increase their chances of economic success by presenting an image that is consistent with societal norms (Boyd et al., 2021; Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014; Swail & Marlow, 2018; Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). In a study by Giazitzoglu et al. (2023), it was found that Black African immigrant male entrepreneurs in Britain emphasised the importance of reproducing the visuals of respectable "white masculinity" because doing so helps them *"appear like the right sort of Black businessman for Whites to work with"* and is a way for them to get access to and a level of respect from the local business networks that consist of predominantly white businessmen (Giazitzoglu et al., 2023).

2.5 Immigrant Entrepreneurship Literature in an Irish Context

Since its inception, Ireland has been a destination for immigrant entrepreneurs (Birdthistle, 2019). In 1938, a year after the Irish Constitution was ratified, two Austrians named Marcus Witztum and Emil Hirsch, in separate ventures, established a hat factory and a ribbon factory respectively (Muchitsch, 2006; Birdthistle, 2019). According to Pinkowski (2009), referring to new residents in Ireland as immigrants rather than migrants may contribute to a greater appreciation of their permanence and an acknowledgment that they can make significant contributions to the Irish economy if they are encouraged and supported. Pinkowski (2008) asserts that immigrant entrepreneurs have a higher potential for starting small businesses than native Irish entrepreneurs due to their greater numbers, age demographics, risk tolerance, higher tertiary education achievement, and over-qualification in current employment. According to the findings of a study that polled 1,108 foreign nationals living in Ireland, Cooney and Flynn (2008) found that 12.6% of respondents claimed ownership or part ownership of a business. Further research was conducted to map immigrant entrepreneurial activity, taking into account the characteristics of immigrant enterprises and their proprietors, the difficulties they faced in Ireland, and their interactions with the business environment. The findings revealed a characterization of immigrant businesses as being small-scale, relatively new, predominantly focused on locally oriented service industries, and situated on the outskirts of the dominant economic landscape (Cooney & Flynn, 2008). The researchers arrived at the conclusion that the extent and sector-specific concentration of immigrant entrepreneurship in Ireland aligns with the patterns observed in immigrant entrepreneurship on an international scale (Cooney & Flynn, 2008).

State-funded institutions in Ireland responsible for enterprise formation have found that lack of capital is a major barrier to entry for immigrants seeking to start a firm or grow an existing one (First Step Microfinance, 2006). Immigrant entrepreneurs may experience these challenges for a variety of reasons, such as an opaque credit history, a lack of collateral, a precarious business plan, insufficient formal business experience, and a general lack of trust in the applicant or the ethnic minority group to which they belong (Cooney & Flynn, 2008). Pinkowski (2009) cited the instance of a Nigerian entrepreneur in Dublin who encountered widespread mistrust from financial institutions when attempting to secure capital.

According to research conducted by Stephens (2013), immigrant business owners in Ireland utilised a trifecta of strategies in order to build their professional networks. Initially, some of the interviewed entrepreneurs were involved with a subcommunity of co-ethnics. Second, business owners interacted with other people in the business community in the absence of the first sub-community. Thirdly, entrepreneurs joined a network at a higher education institution or a local chamber of commerce largely for specialised guidance.. Stephens (2013) suggests that those seeking entry into formal business networks consider the use of testimonials from entrepreneurs who have already joined such networks.

The Irish Government published its first policy statement on entrepreneurship in 2014. Immigrants are mentioned fleetingly in the policy statement and are included in the "Culture, Human Capital and Education" strategic objective, which asserts that Ireland must –

"ensure that greater numbers of people, particularly underrepresented cohorts such as females, youths, migrants, and older people, start and run their own business" - Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation, 2014.

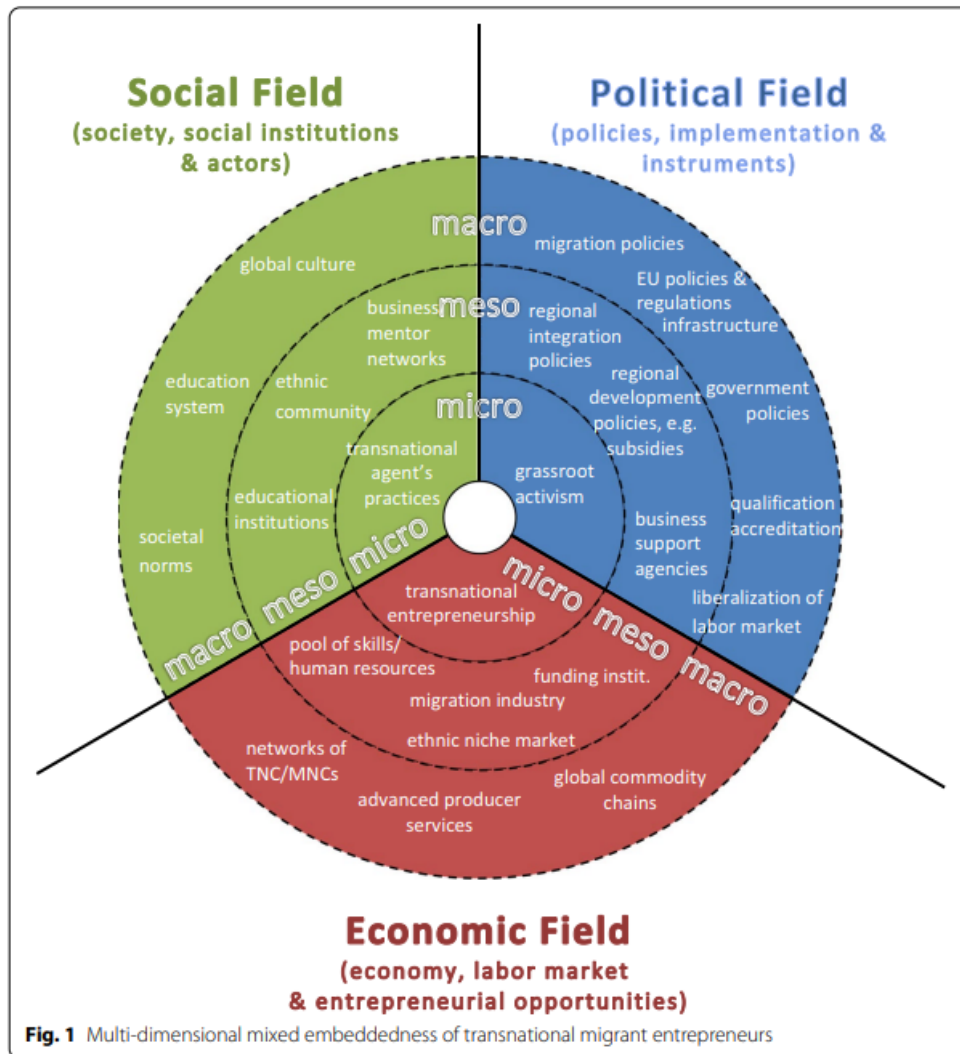
The policy also emphasises the significance of fully considering the entrepreneurial potential of immigrants when implementing strategies to foster entrepreneurship. Making Ireland a desirable place for international mobile start-ups is another strategy outlined in the policy statement aimed at attracting immigrant entrepreneurs. Birtdthistle (2019) notes that there is no mention of assistance or training for ethnic/migrant-owned businesses in the policy statement.

Irish popular culture continues to be very encouraging of entrepreneurial endeavours. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, more than 80% of the adult population in Ireland holds successful entrepreneurs in high regard (GEM, 2021). In 2021, there was a significant increase in support for an entrepreneurial career (67%) compared to 2018, when only 55% thought it was a viable career path. Using these indicators as a gauge of societal support for entrepreneurship, Ireland ranks well above the European average and just ahead of the United States (GEM, 2021). According to Cooney and Flynn (2008), immigrant entrepreneurs held a favourable perception of Ireland as an appealing destination for establishing new businesses. This perception was based on several factors, including Ireland's

robust consumer culture, low corporate tax rate, transparent legal system, and comparatively minimal bureaucracy and regulatory framework when compared to their countries of origin.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The subject of Immigrant Entrepreneurship has had a significant theoretical advancement towards the end of the previous century with the publishing of academic journals by Robert Kloosterman and the subsequent discussions by his colleagues on the concept known as "mixed embeddedness" (Kloosterman et al., 1999). In contrast to the prevailing notion that the increase in migrant-origin entrepreneurs could be primarily attributed to their integration within cohesive co-ethnic social networks, as convincingly argued by Light (1972) in his seminal work, Kloosterman and his colleagues assert the importance of acknowledging the entrepreneurs connection to an external business environment. The context discussed in this study encompasses two main aspects. Firstly, it involves markets where entrepreneurs face competition from well-established local firms, including large corporations. Secondly, it involves the presence of a regulatory regime imposed by the state, which all businesses are required to adhere to. In certain European countries, this regulatory regime even imposes direct restrictions on non-native individuals entering the business sector (Kloosterman & Rath, 2003). In this study, the examination of immigrant entrepreneurship will employ Kloosterman's mixed embeddedness approach. This strategy integrates the microlevel of the individual entrepreneur, including their resources, with the meso-level of the local opportunity structure. It also establishes a loose connection between the meso-level and the macrolevel institutional framework. By employing this technique, it is anticipated that the study will gain significant insights into the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs.



This concept acknowledges the vital importance of co-ethnic networks in the establishment and functioning of immigrant enterprises, but also necessitates the inclusion of the broader economic and institutional environment in any explanatory framework. This context pertains to the previously discussed notion of opportunity structures put forth by various scholars (Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990), but puts increased focus on the framework including regulations, institutions, and practises that shape the functioning of markets.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Hakim (2000) draws parallels between the process of planning a research project by a researcher and the process of designing a building by an architect. One widely accepted definition of research is "*creative work inquired or undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the knowledge of man, culture and society, and to use this stock of knowledge to devise new applications*" (Frascati Manual 2002). According to Wilson (2014), conducting research to answer a research question, requires a methodical and organised approach to gathering, processing, and interpreting data. Research methods provide a systematic account of how to address research issues (Saunders et al., 2015). According to Miner et al. (2012), research methods are a systematic guide to conducting research. The research process used in the present study was designed in a methodical fashion, beginning with the formulation of an appropriate research topic and proceeding through the use of a viable research strategy, analysis, and conclusion.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The concept of research philosophy encompasses various schools of thought that serve as the foundation for knowledge development and the nature of that knowledge within the research context (Saunders et. al, 2012). Assumptions are made at every step of the research process, whether or not the researcher is aware of them (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). These encompass, though are not exclusively confined to, the ontological assumptions held by the researcher regarding the fundamental nature of reality, the epistemological assumptions concerning the boundaries of human knowledge, and the axiological assumptions pertaining to the significance and influence of the researcher's personal values in the study. These presuppositions will colour the researcher's interpretation of the research questions, methodology, and results (Crotty 1998). Credible research philosophy is established upon a thoroughly deliberated and coherent set of assumptions that governs the choice of research methods, the formulation of a suitable research plan, and the execution of appropriate procedures for data collection, management, and analysis. As a result, the researcher will be able to craft a study project in which every component is well-integrated.

3.3 PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

This study's primary objective is to investigate the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin face using an empirical approach. The subsequent sections elucidates the rationale for the exclusion of some research procedures in favour of other approaches, as well as the process by which these determinations were reached.

3.3.1 Research Onion

Saunders et. al (2019) Research Onion was used by the author as a guide for the qualitative methodology adopted for this study. Methodology refers to a comprehensive research approach that delineates the appropriate conduct of research. It encompasses a collection of principles and philosophical assumptions that shape the comprehension of the research inquiry and inform the choice of research methodologies. Research methodology is an integral component of a thesis, serving to ensure coherence between the selected tools, techniques, and underpinning philosophy. The research onion is a tool that helps to organise research and develop a research design by systematically moving through each layer. It provides an exhaustive description of each phase that must be completed in order to develop an effective methodology. The research methodology commences with outlining the fundamental philosophy, afterwards followed by the identification of methodologies, methods, and strategies, along with the construction of time horizons. These factors collectively contribute to the development of the study design, which encompasses the essential techniques and processes for data collection and analysis (Melnikovas, 2018). The Research Onion serves as a visual representation of several methodological approaches, which need a sequence of decision-making steps in order to choose the most suitable technique for doing research and collecting data.

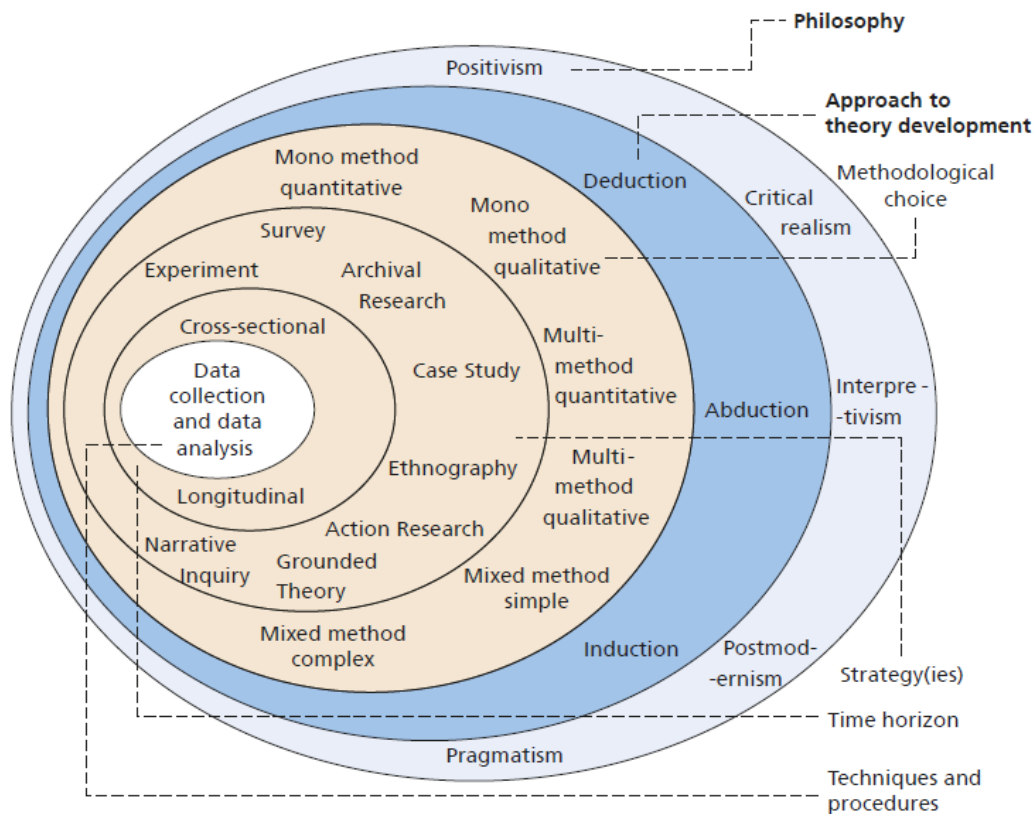


Figure 4.1 The 'research onion'

Source: ©2018 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill

The research onion has six layers, each of which must be peeled back in order, commencing with the outermost layer. According to Sahay (2016), the researcher's comprehension and evaluations pertaining to the outer layers of the onion provide the framework and limitations that guide the selection of data gathering methods, data processing, and analysis processes. Planning and design are the most important phases of a research endeavour. The concluding elements, which make up the core of the research onion, must be considered alongside the outer and middle layers. An onion's outermost layer is typically discarded after peeling. In the context of research however, it is important to note that the outer layers of the onion depict the fundamental aspects, whilst the middle layers serve as the essential components upon which the study is constructed. They are essential to the development of an appropriate research design that is consistent with the research objectives and queries. The research methodology should be able to be both justified and explained. Dudovskiy (2018) asserts that an individual's beliefs and points of view can have a significant impact on the philosophical method they choose for the proposed research. Wilson (2014), on the other hand, states that the researcher's ability to rule out other appropriate methodologies for the research should

also factor into their ability to make logical conclusions. These can be divided down into three broad categories that influence how a researcher approaches their study: ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Saunders et al., 2015).

3.3.2 Ontology

According to Saunders et al. (2007), ontology serves as a means to articulate and delineate one's fundamental ideas on the nature and composition of reality. According to Bryman (2004), ontology refers to the theoretical understanding of the fundamental nature of social things. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) state that ontology refers to the researcher's set of assumptions about the world. The concept of ontology refers to the study of "what exists" (Huff, 2009), as well as "the nature of being" (Crotty, 1998). According to Scotland (2012), ontology is a philosophical branch that focuses on the statements we formulate to establish the existence of something, as well as the fundamental nature or essence of the social reality under examination. The philosophical assumptions made about the nature of reality are critical for shaping research agendas and interpreting findings as these assumptions help comprehend the significance of the research problem and the development of a solution strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

An ontological approach to research tends to focus on the nature of reality and often assumes that there is a fixed, objective reality that can be found and quantified. As each individual's experience is unique and shaped by their personal history, cultural background, resources, and perceptions, the ontological approach may not be suitable for a qualitative study on the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, as critical to this particular study it rejects participant's interpretations of reality (Aliyu et al., 2015).. Moreover, ontological approaches have a tendency to reduce complex phenomena to basic, universally applicable elements, which may not adequately represent the complexities of immigrant entrepreneurship.

3.3.3 Axiology

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgements regarding one's values. It refers to the ethical considerations that must be taken into account when planning a research proposal and examines the philosophical approach to decision making (Finnis, 1980; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Saunders et al. (2019), researchers encounter a crucial axiological

decision regarding their perception of the advantageous role played by their own values and beliefs in their study. Therefore, the researcher is faced with the task of determining how to effectively reconcile their personal ideals with the values held by the participants involved in the study. Heron (1996) states that an individual's values are a guiding rationale for human behaviour, and that while the researcher will incorporate their beliefs into the research process, they must explicitly recognise and reflect on these while conducting and reporting on their research. The study of personal values and ethics is an integral part of axiology; hence this has the potential to introduce bias into the research process. The researcher may do this consciously or unconsciously, influencing the study's design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This may compromise the research's objectivity and rigour. Furthermore, since immigrant business owners come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, their ethics and beliefs may differ greatly from those of the researcher. The application of an axiological methodology may result in the imposition of the researcher's cultural values on the participants, potentially distorting the interpretation of the challenges encountered by entrepreneurs; thus the axiological approach will not be utilised to advance this research.

3.3.4 Epistemology

The term "epistemology" originates from the Greek word "episteme," which translates to "knowledge." In essence, epistemology is the scholarly examination of worldly knowledge (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). The main focus of this field of study pertains to the expansion, attainment, and distribution of knowledge, as it serves as a reflection of the characteristics and manifestations of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Cohen et al. (2007), it is argued that a comprehensive understanding of the social environment may be achieved by examining it through the lens of its participants. This approach is deemed essential for the present study on immigrant entrepreneurship. The objective path of the epistemological approach specifies a set of principles that a researcher employs to investigate and comprehend a phenomenon. Epistemology focuses on the human intellect and knowledge of existence (Huff, 2009) as well as the means by which we can know reality. When contemplating the epistemological approach to research, the question "*is knowledge acquired or must it be gained through experience?*", comes to the forefront (Duan, 2022). According to Crotty (1998), the subjective position of the epistemological method pertains to the personal beliefs of a researcher, which hold significant importance in the generation and

dissemination of information within a social context. The formation of knowledge is highlighted by the subjective point of view, which emerges via interactions between a researcher and the participants.

This study employs an interpretive epistemological approach as the purpose of the research is to explore the personal experiences of the immigrant entrepreneur. According to Scotland (2012), subjectivism looks at real-world phenomena where the same phenomena have been generated in diverse ways by multiple social actors. The interpretative method encompasses an epistemological stance that involves the acquisition of information from participants through their social constructs. The adoption of a subjective perspective enhances an individual's understanding of the phenomena. In addition, an interpretive approach allows the researcher to see things from the participants' points of view. The consequences of a given situation can differ among individuals, suggesting that the experiences of one participant may not necessarily be applicable to another (Saunders & Thornhill, 2003). The phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurship cannot be explained by a single theory because immigrant entrepreneurs are unique and have diverse motivations for beginning their own business and face different sets of challenges. Empirical knowledge emphasises that the greatest sources of knowledge are experiences and existential facts. The data gathered in this study from the participants regarding their first-hand experiences with the challenges they encountered will be essential to answering the research question. As a result, the epistemology method will be utilised to advance the study.

3.4 Theoretical Perspective

In business research, there are several possible stances, including positivism, direct realism, critical realism, and interpretivism. Adopting a positivist viewpoint, the researcher must conduct research in a value-free manner, which means they must be completely independent in almost every way and cannot influence or be influenced by the subject being studied (Remenyi et al., 1998). This perspective is thus deemed inappropriate for the present study due to the limited applicability and lack of global consensus surrounding the challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs. The outcome is highly dependent on circumstance, the researcher, time, and cannot be generalised. According to Saunders et al. (2009), positivism is recommended predominantly for natural science research and is uncommon in

social science research. The interpretivist position presents a contrasting viewpoint to positivism, asserting that reality is not as straightforward and universally applicable as positivists contend. Instead, interpretivists contend that reality is constructed and comprehended through the lens of human beings as social agents, taking into account their unique characteristics and divergent interpretations.

According to Crotty (1998), the theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that informs and determines the study process. The research process is commonly categorised into four distinct research philosophies, namely positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism, as perceived by researchers. Regarding the methodology employed in studies of immigrant entrepreneurship, supplementary debates have emerged (Duan, 2023). Since some academics believe that business owners' decision-making is highly subjective, they advocate for the use of constructivist/interpretivist qualitative research methods. Case studies, phenomenology, and grounded theory are cited as viable methodologies for conducting empirical investigations to explain the phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurship where the subject matter is inherently unquantifiable. However, other academics argue that quantitative studies of immigrant entrepreneurs are the most effective approach to generalise the skills necessary for launching new businesses. In light of the "what works better" concept, mixed approaches have recently gained acceptance for investigating immigrant entrepreneurship and related problems (Duan, 2023).

3.4.1 Positivism

Saunders and Tosey (2013) argue that a researcher who adopts a positivist perspective is primarily focused on the observation and prediction of outcomes. This perspective might be likened to that of a laboratory scientist who is primarily concerned with identifying and understanding law-like generalisations, particularly in relation to cause and effect. Researchers that subscribe to the positivist paradigm employ a methodology usually referred to as the "scientific method" to formulate and evaluate ideas. This approach relies on the utilisation of highly organised and preferably quantitative data, while ensuring that the researcher's personal views remain impartial and do not influence the research process.

Typically, the process involves doing statistical hypothesis testing on substantial samples of quantitative data. Granted, positivism is the predominant research paradigm with which most scholars of entrepreneurship, business, and management are familiar (Anderson & Starnawska, 2008). Positivists examine entrepreneurial phenomena from an outside perspective using a predetermined hypotheses (Davidson, 2008; Katz & Gartner, 1988). However, as a positivist approach emphasises the significance of conducting quantitative research, such as large-scale surveys, to gain an overall understanding of society and to identify social trends, it will not be utilised for this study.

3.4.2 Realism

Saunders and Tosey (2013) propose that realism, akin to positivism, represents a philosophical perspective that is closely linked to the pursuit of scientific inquiry. Realism posits that reality exists objectively, regardless of an individual's subjective perception (Saunders & Tosey, 2013). It asserts that the truth is determined by the evidence provided by a researcher's senses, irrespective of their own beliefs or experiences. Philosophers have identified two distinct forms of realism, namely direct realism and critical realism. A researcher who subscribes to the direct realism viewpoint argues that the data acquired through sensory experience provides a true depiction of reality. In contrast, a scholar who adopts a critical realism standpoint asserts that the data first encountered through sensory experiences undergoes subsequent subjective cognitive processing. For the critical realist researcher, this necessitates the investigation of both the immediate experience and the underlying complexity. Similar to positivism, realist epistemology takes a scientific perspective on the growth of knowledge. Given that the fundamental basis of data collection and analysis hinges upon this concept, this approach will not be employed in order to advance the current research.

3.4.3 Pragmatism

As a theoretical framework, pragmatism seeks to unite the openness and naturalism of contemporary thought with the rigour and structure of traditional methods (Creswell 2013; Creswell & Clark 2011). It is a conceptual framework for doing research that draws from the traditions of pragmatic philosophy (Maxcy, 2003) and is open to a wide range of research

methods. According to the pragmatist tenets, researchers should choose whichever philosophical and/or methodological framework is most appropriate for the study at hand (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Many scholars contend that pragmatism is frequently associated with mixed-methods or multiple-methods research, where the emphasis is on the outcomes of study and the research questions rather than the methods (Biesta 2010; Creswell & Clark 2011). The researcher in this study has made the decision to utilise a singular qualitative methodology rather than adopting a mixed-method approach, consequently precluding the utilisation of the pragmatism approach.

3.4.4 Interpretivism

The school of thought known as interpretivism emerged as a response to the limitations of positivism, primarily due to its subjective orientation (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The interpretivist approach places significant emphasis on considering all relevant factors and circumstances. By recognising that humans can create nuanced meaning, it sets them apart from inanimate objects. This viewpoint posits that the study of human people cannot be approached in a way similar to that of physical phenomena, necessitating a clear differentiation between research in the social sciences and research in the natural sciences (Saunders et al., 2019; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In the context of this particular study, it is pertinent to note that Interpretivism places significant emphasis on the examination of variations, such as cultural disparities, contextual factors, and temporal dynamics, which contribute to the emergence of distinct social realities. Since diverse individuals from various cultural origins, under different circumstances, and at different periods produce and experience distinct social realities, interpretivists are sceptical of positivist attempts to uncover definitive, universal principles that apply to everyone. The objective of interpretivist research is to generate new, more nuanced interpretations of social contexts and environments. This requires researchers to examine businesses from the perspectives of various groups of individuals. Those from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds may encounter workplaces, services, and events differently. Interpretivist scholars endeavour to acknowledge the intricacy of the phenomenon under investigation by gathering data that holds significance for the participants involved in the study. In the context of this particular research, the focus lies on comprehending the challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs. Unlike positivism, which seeks to construct universally applicable rules that

ignore significant variables and aspects, interpretivism seeks to incorporate the whole breadth and complexity of all insights gained (Myers, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012; Bhattacharjee, 2012).

3.5 Research Approach

There are two distinct research methodologies that may be identified: the deductive method and the inductive method. Johnson (2014) states that there is a fundamental connection between theory and research that affects how a researcher approaches their quest for new knowledge. According to Al-Ababneh (2020), when conducting research that aims to build theory and hypotheses and develop a research technique to evaluate these hypotheses, it is appropriate to employ the deductive approach. Gathering data and creating a hypothesis based on that data analysis calls for an inductive method (Saunders et al., 2003). It is essential to match research philosophies and research methodologies; the deductive strategy is more closely associated with the positivist philosophy, whereas the inductive approach is more closely associated with the interpretivist philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.5.1 Deductive Versus Inductive Research

Several scholars have explored the decision-making process between deductive and inductive research paradigms in the field of research (Cavaye, 1996; Hussey & Hussey, 1997). The process of deductive inquiry involves employing empirical observation as a means of evaluating a hypothesis, which according to Hussey and Hussey (1997), is

"a study in which a conceptual and theoretical structure is developed, which is then tested by empirical observation; thus, particular instances are deduced from general influences."

In contrast, inductive research is defined as -

"the development of theory from empirical reality; thus general inferences are induced from particular instances; this is the inverse of the deductive method because it involves moving from individual observation to statements of general patterns or laws" (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

Cavaye (1996) asserts that both inductive and deductive techniques can be used simultaneously in the same study. Perry and Jensen (2001) also examine the potential

integration of inductive and deductive methodologies within a singular case study, delineating a spectrum that spans from the development of theoretical frameworks through the empirical testing of these theories. In addition, Perry and Jensen (2001) advocate for establishing a balance between the two positions, which they refer to as a "*theory confirming/disconfirming*" approach.

According to Neuman (2000), deductive reasoning encompasses the formulation or construction of a theoretical framework, the identification of underlying assumptions associated with this framework, and the evaluation of these assumptions in relation to empirical evidence. The previous assertion is the basis of the positivist/quantitative research technique. To ascertain the validity or invalidity of a theory, the underlying assumptions are derived from the theory and subjected to scrutiny. On the other hand, Neuman (2000) provided evidence to support the notion that inductive reasoning starts with the act of observing or examining occurrences or particular processes, with the ultimate goal of formulating more comprehensive and general conclusions derived from these observed events or processes. The results of the study are extrapolated to form the basis of a theory. According to Aliyu et al. (2015), this is the cornerstone of qualitative research. The interpretivism philosophy is more likely to be realised through individual interpretations and subjectivity, which are essential parts of the research process (Saunders et al.,2019,). The inductive method was applied during this research from the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with immigrant entrepreneurs. assert that a small sample of individuals is more effective when using the inductive method as opposed to a large cohort of participants when using a deductive method (Saunders et. al, 2019).

3.5.2 Research Design – Descriptive vs Exploratory

The frequently used tripartite classification for elucidating the objectives of research underscores the significance of exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory objectives (Robson, 2002). Robson (2022) states that

'a particular study may be concerned with more than one purpose, possibly all three, but one will predominate. The purpose may also change as the study proceeds (Robson 2002).'

Saunders et al. (2019) state that the formulation of research questions serves the purpose of fulfilling specific objectives, which may include exploration, description, explanation, evaluation, or a combination thereof. The formulation of each research topic provides guidance to the researcher in determining the most appropriate technique for carrying out research.

The primary objective of a researcher engaging in descriptive study is to obtain a precise depiction of events, individuals, or circumstances. According to Wilson (2014), descriptive research is done to provide an account of current phenomena through observation. Questions that a researcher asks during data collection to gain a description of events, persons or situations will be likely to start with, or include, 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'When' or 'How'. Saunders et al. (2019) contend that descriptive studies may arise out of exploratory ones or serve as a steppingstone to more theoretically grounded studies. Typically, surveys are used to collect data that can subsequently be analysed using a variety of descriptive statistics (Wilson, 2014). Critically, Wilson (2014) contends that descriptive studies cannot determine cause-and-effect relationships.

Researchers primarily utilise this approach to elucidate issues and determine the viability of pursuing a specific research endeavour. Literature research, interviewing subject-matter experts, individual interviews, and focus groups are all examples of approaches to this research method. The technique exhibits several advantages, notably its inherent flexibility and adaptability, which enable it to effectively respond to changes arising from the emergence of new data and insights.

Researchers carrying out an exploratory study tend to ask "what" or "how" questions during data collection to gain insight into the phenomenon of interest (Saunders et al., 2016). It is common for researchers to conduct exploratory studies when they lack a comprehensive understanding of a particular issue, problem, or occurrence. There are a variety of approaches to exploratory investigation, including a search of the pertinent literature, interviews with subject matter experts, in-depth individual interviews, and focus group interviews. As these interviews are meant to be exploratory in nature, they are likely to be relatively unstructured and will use the quality of the participants' contributions to direct the next phase of study (Saunders et. al, 2019). Exploratory research has the advantages of adaptability and flexibility; however, researchers must be adaptable and willing to refocus their efforts in light of new

information and ideas when conducting their research. The exploratory method also enables researchers to commence their study with a comprehensive scope and refine it progressively afterwards. Wilson (2014) asserts that if a researcher is conducting an interpretivist study, they are likely to be conducting exploratory research that is predominately qualitative and typically employs focus groups, in-depth interviews, historical analysis, and observation. As a result, exploratory research rarely yields conclusive solutions to research questions, but it does contribute to the development of future research directions.

Based on Robson's (2002) research design framework, the present study finds exploratory research to be the most appropriate approach, as opposed to explanatory or descriptive research, due to its focus on investigating novel topics of inquiry. The primary focus of this nascent research pertains to the various constraints encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, specifically within the context of Dublin as the city of business. According to Creswell (1994), the goal of exploratory research is to provide an explanation for a phenomenon in terms of causation. According to Robson (2002), exploratory research serve as a helpful approach to ascertain ongoing occurrences, get fresh insights, raise novel inquiries, and evaluate phenomena from a novel standpoint. The rationale for incorporating exploratory-based research in this study stems from several factors. Firstly, the primary objective of this research is to delve into and examine phenomena, rather than establishing causal relationships. Secondly, the data collected for this study is qualitative in nature, obtained from a small sample size. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration and in-depth understanding of the subject matter, as opposed to the quantitative analysis and comparison of data from larger, multiple samples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kumar 2011; Balnaves & Caputi 2001).

3.6 Research Strategy

This layer of the research onion emphasises a fundamental yet crucial decision that all researchers must make when designing their research: whether to employ quantitative methods, qualitative methods, or mixed methods.

3.6.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research

In business and management research, the terms quantitative and qualitative are frequently used to distinguish between various data collection and analysis techniques. The term "quantitative" is often used interchangeably with any data collection or analysis method that generates or manipulates numerical data, such as the use of questionnaires or graphs or statistical measures (Saunders et al, 2019). On the other hand, qualitative is widely used as a synonym for any technique of data collecting or data analysis that creates or utilises information that is not numerical.

A quantitative research approach is grounded in the philosophical framework of positivism, which posits the existence of an objective and logically structured world that is separate from the perspectives of researchers and research participants (Needleman & Needleman, 1996; Slevitch, 2011). Moroi (2021) contends that quantitative research adopts an etic perspective within the realm of epistemology, positioning researchers as external observers of the subject under investigation. In essence, it can be stated that the entities under consideration lack the capacity to exert influence on, or be influenced by, the subject matter being examined in order to ascertain an objectively quantifiable truth. In contrast, qualitative research adopts an emic perspective within the realm of epistemology, in which the significance of interactions between researchers and participants, as well as the subject under investigation, is viewed as essential for attaining a comprehensive understanding (Moroi, 2021), which is necessary to achieve the objectives of this particular research study. According to Slevitch (2011), qualitative research posits that reality is contingent upon the mind and is shaped by social constructs, thus individuals can only comprehend reality through their own subjective views and interpretations.

In the realm of research, the exploration of a phenomena can be conducted via the use of qualitative, quantitative, or a hybrid approach that combines elements of both methodologies. The selection of a research technique by the researcher is contingent upon the characteristics of the research question and its underlying philosophical stance. Saunders et al. (2019) assert that positivism is frequently associated with quantitative research designs, particularly when those designs are combined with highly structured and planned methods of data gathering. It is essential to differentiate between factual information and subjective

judgements when gathering data. Some forms of quantitative survey studies may be partially compatible with an interpretivist stance in this manner. Quantitative research designs can also be employed in accordance with the realist or pragmatism philosophical schools of thought. Quantitative research is typically associated with a deductive approach, where data are collected and analysed to test a hypotheses (Saunders et. al, 2019). Given its focus on objectiveness, research grounded in realism frequently employs quantitative approaches. The relativist position, however, supports a more subjective stance and is often aligned with qualitative methods.

Qualitative research refers to a broad range of research methods that generate findings through means other than statistical procedures or quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Instead, this type of research focuses on producing findings derived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest naturally unfolds (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers aim to gain insight, understanding, and the ability to apply findings to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). The fundamental purpose of qualitative research is to comprehend the genuine meaning of the research being undertaken (Hannibuss 1996). This method, as espoused by Burrell and Morgan (1979), places premium on understanding how people's individual perspectives shape their communities and societies through in-depth case studies and interviews. Hence, the primary focus of this approach lies not in the accumulation of data, but rather in the acquisition of contextually rich qualitative information, which serves as the foundation for constructing recommendations rather than subjecting them to empirical testing. As such, this study employs qualitative research methodologies to examine challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs.

This study's collected data includes personal narratives (Dienstag, 1996) from eight participants regarding how they interpret their lives from the perspective of their entrepreneurial endeavours. Understanding and making sense of the diverse and complex experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs may be complicated by the use of a quantitative method. When utilising vast samples or surveys, such a methodology would not uncover the underlying problems. A qualitative approach is preferable because it permits the researcher to investigate the sentiments and perspectives of the participants. The researcher can delve into the significance of people's activities and their social interactions with the usage of qualitative research. Moreover, this methodology facilitates the researcher in documenting

the participants' subjective interpretations or acquiring an in-depth comprehension of their reactions. It also permits the identification of recurring patterns, the analysis of data through thematic analysis, and the opportunity for the researcher to conduct interviews in an authentic environment, such as a commercial establishment (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.6.2 Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interviews

The paramount significance lies in upholding the integrity of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2007), thereby guaranteeing the reliability and veracity of the gathered data, which should accurately reflect all statements made (Yin, 2016). The primary objective of the qualitative data collection approach was to extrapolate the thoughts and emotions of participants effectively and dependably regarding the problems encountered as an immigrant entrepreneur. Typically, a qualitative approach to research is used when an interpretivist method is employed (Hiller, 2010). Qualitative research frequently use techniques such as interviews to gather comprehensive data from a subjective perspective (Lin, 1998; Bryman, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015). The interview approach offers a multitude of advantages. According to Hiller (2010), empirical evidence indicates that qualitative interviews have the potential to yield more genuine and accurate narratives of participants' experiences compared to alternative techniques of data collection. This is attributed to their ability to mitigate the influence of social desirability bias. Qualitative interviews can be classified into two distinct groups, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interviews provide the advantage of allowing for a flexible exploration of a wide range of topics and themes, with the opportunity to go further into certain areas as the interview unfolds. In contrast, unstructured interviews adopt a conversational style, encompassing various subjects prompted by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To acquire substantial understanding of a certain subject matter, it is advisable to formulate pertinent inquiries and contemplate prospective avenues for further exploration throughout the interview process. Consequently, the researcher has chosen semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection in order to align with the research objectives. This approach offers a balance between maintaining consistency in data collection across participants and allowing flexibility in the interview process. The aim is to generate a dataset that can be readily compared and analysed across the interviews (Saunders et al, 2009).

3.6.3 Enabling the semi-structured interviews

The interviews were conducted using a pre-established set of questions that were intentionally designed to be open-ended and encourage debate. This approach allowed the interviewer to veer away from the predetermined questions in order to explore unforeseen topics in a comfortable and conversational manner. According to Fisher (2010), this approach allows the interviewee to answer questions based on their personal experiences and perspectives, with the goal of establishing a secure and pleasant atmosphere to facilitate the gathering of comprehensive and detailed information. According to Kvale (1996), this particular type of comprehensive interview is considered beneficial for investigating informant-determined or emic views and perspectives. The interviews demonstrated consistency, which was facilitated by the utilisation of an interview topic list. This list was carefully constructed to provide comprehensive coverage of pertinent themes. The interview format was structured into eight distinct sections. Section one encompassed a discussion on the challenges encountered by participants in relation to language and cultural barriers. Section two centred around the challenges faced by participants in accessing capital. Section three delved into the challenges arising from legal and regulatory aspects. Section four explored the challenges encountered in establishing a business network. Section five addressed matters pertaining to workforce integration. Section six examined whether participants experienced any form of bias or discrimination. Section seven inquired about the entrepreneur's primary challenge. Lastly, section eight sought the participant's perspective on potential government legal measures to promote immigrant entrepreneurship. The participants were approached and provided with a detailed explanation of the interview topic guide and the underlying purpose of the study. The ethical responsibility to maintain the anonymity of participants was also acknowledged, with the aim of eliciting truthful and authentic responses. The interviews were conducted in person, following a one-on-one style, in order to align with the interpretative approach of the study (King, 2004). This format enabled the interviewer to delve further into relevant areas and gain more meaningful insights compared to quantitative methods like surveys. All of the interviews were conducted at the premises of the business owners, with the exception of one interview which was performed through telephone. The duration of the interview ranged from 45 to 115 minutes. Consent was obtained from the participants for audio recording in five of the interviews. In

light of the fact that three participants expressed their preference not to be recorded, alternative methods were employed to collect data from their interviews. Specifically, field notes were diligently collected during the interviews, and subsequently transcribed to ensure accurate preservation of the information.

3.7 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is well recognised as a comprehensive methodological approach for evaluating qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a research methodology that involves the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns or themes within collected data. The main objective of this approach is to discern common traits among diverse data sources, such as interview transcripts, field notes, papers, or website content (Saunders et al., 2019). Thematic Analysis is a methodical process used by researchers to assign codes to qualitative data, with the aim of identifying recurrent themes or patterns that have significance in relation to the research topic. This approach serves to facilitate subsequent analysis and investigation (Saunders et al., 2019), hence it is both a systematic and flexible method for analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Large qualitative data sets can be analysed using Thematic Analysis in the same manner that smaller ones can, leading to detailed descriptions, explanations, and theoretical constructions.

Thematic Analysis exhibits flexibility as it does not adhere to a specific research viewpoint and can be employed by researchers regardless of their adoption of an objectivist or subjectivist stance. However, the researcher's chosen stance will influence the manner in which they employ this method to analyse data. This underscores the need of researchers clearly articulating their philosophical beliefs and maintaining reflexivity throughout the duration of the research endeavour. A researcher who adopts an interpretivist perspective may utilise this method to investigate diverse interpretations of a given phenomenon. Thematic Analysis can be employed regardless of whether a researcher uses a deductive, inductive, or abductive approach, due to the same underlying rationale (Saunders et al, 2019). For the purpose of this research, the data will be used to derive themes in an inductive manner. The researcher may adjust their research topic based on the themes they choose to explore using an inductive approach. Reading and rereading the material thoroughly in order to identify recurring

themes is essential to this process (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Themes elicit a similar response from readers as songs do from passionate radio listeners (Lochmiller, 2021).

Thematic analysis is one of the most ambiguously defined qualitative research analytic techniques when compared to other analytic strategies employed by qualitative researchers (Lochmiller, 2021). There exists a lack of consensus among scholars regarding the appropriate methodology for undertaking thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that a notable constraint of theme analysis is the prevailing perception that it lacks well-defined parameters and is not widely acknowledged within the realm of qualitative research. Lochmiller (2021) contends that a thorough examination of the methodology sections of published research articles or qualitative dissertations reveals a notable lack of clarity regarding the process of identifying themes from qualitative data.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations pertain to the treatment of individuals during the execution of research. Further deliberation should be allocated to the determination of whether particular actions ought to be undertaken within the framework of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Bryman & Bell (2007) further contented that the Code of Ethical Conduct emphasises the researcher's responsibility to thoroughly evaluate the overall consequences for all participants. Furthermore, Yin (2016) emphasises that this assessment is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the research. According to Blumberg et al. (2011), it is important to recognise that possible concerns might arise in every research endeavour, and as such, it is crucial to adhere to the necessary considerations. Before commencing the research in this study, the author conducted a comprehensive ethical evaluation, delineating the planned procedures with the primary objective of guaranteeing that participants in the study receive appropriate care and are handled in an ethical manner. To uphold ethical standards in the treatment of all study participants, the author has completed and submitted an Ethical Review Application Form to the National College of Ireland. This form serves to outline and ensure the ethical treatment of participants throughout the study.

3.9 Limitations

The restriction of the study solely to the city of Dublin represents a limitation on the scope of the research. Dublin was chosen as the designated location due to its status as the most populous city in Ireland, boasting a population of 1,415,550 individuals, an estimated 28% of the entire population. The observed sample size of 8 looks to be somewhat modest in comparison to the initially targeted sample size of 12 participants. It is justifiable to posit that the outcomes lack complete conclusiveness, given the presence of inherent bias and subjectivity. An additional constraint of the study is underscored by the exclusive participation of male participants within the age range of early to mid-forties, hence resulting in a dearth of data pertaining to the obstacles encountered by female immigrant entrepreneurs. Bryman and Bell (2007) argue that the identification of connecting themes may present obstacles due to the subjective nature of human opinions. Furthermore, anomalies within the data gathering process can be influenced by the diverse challenges encountered by entrepreneurs. Due to time limitations, it has not been feasible to conduct more interviews to enhance the sample size and include a broader audience, as well as to perform additional analysis. However, it is important to note that the researcher faced certain obstacles in the recruitment process, which will be discussed further in the subsequent section. The study's sample comprised individuals hailing from Brazil, Nigeria, Hungary, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Pakistan. Consequently, it is plausible to argue that this sample may not adequately reflect the broader multi-ethnic composition of Dublin.

“Minorities who feel discriminated against will be less sanguine about their prospects for sharing in society’s bounty.” - Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005.

The researcher significant faced challenges in recruiting participants for this study. The participants were contacted via cold calling at their respective business premises in the Dublin City Centre and North Dublin suburbs. They were informed about the study and requested to provide their perspectives on the subject matter. The author observed that a significant majority of those contacted displayed a reluctance to participate in any type of conversation or be questioned regarding the topic. This reaction was considered by the author as an indication of initial scepticism. In order to gain insight into the factors contributing to the reluctance of immigrant entrepreneurs to participate in the study, the author sought the

perspective of a Turkish entrepreneur who initially expressed interest in participating in the study, but subsequently retracted his intention. The participant expressed concern regarding the researcher's Irish nationality and the practise of cold calling at unfamiliar premises, suggesting that this could potentially lead to the perception that the researcher is affiliated with social welfare, immigration or revenue agencies, and may have undisclosed motives. While there may be certain instances that deviate from this trend, it is generally observed that a significant number of immigrants, as well as individuals belonging to ethnic and/or minority groups, exhibit lower levels of trust towards individuals in the broader society (Smith, 2010; Ziller, 2017). This lack of surprise is hardly unexpected, considering the prevalent discrimination that minority groups frequently face. The phenomenon of a lack of trust is a prominent concern observed within both immigrant and non-immigrant communities throughout many European countries that serve as destinations for immigrants (Kotzian, 2011; Mewes, 2014).

In contrast, Uslaner (2017) posits that there exists a disparity in the level of particularised social trust among immigrants, specifically in the context of trust placed in family, acquaintances, and relatives. According to Uslaner's assertion, immigrants are inclined to exhibit a higher degree of trust towards those within their in-group as opposed to those belonging to the out-group. Discrimination is a significant factor in predicting trust, as it is not an inherent trait that can be accepted or altered to some degree. Instead, it is a collection of external occurrences and encounters that influence an individual's capacity to effectively navigate societal interactions (Da Silva Rebelo et al, 2018). Furthermore, due to instances of discrimination and the inherent unpredictability of daily life, individuals are unable to predict the precise time or location of future occurrences of similar experiences. Wilkes & Wu (2019) assert that individuals who have encountered instances of discrimination are compelled to be vigilant and consequently, are unable to place faith in others.

According to Kumlin & Rothstein (2007), the occurrence of discrimination in a particular domain, such as the political realm, can have a spill-over effect, influencing other dimensions of trust, including interpersonal trust. Concerningly, the emergence of right-wing parties in European countries has been accompanied by the dissemination of a hostile rhetoric towards immigrants (Wilkes & Wu, 2019). This rhetoric reflects a deep-seated inclination to prioritise national identities and interests, even at the expense of disregarding the needs of individuals

seeking refuge and protection (O'Connell, 2005). Several scholarly writers have asserted that experiences of discrimination and racism are significantly associated with the development of heightened emotions such as anger, hostility, fear, and distrust in those who have been victimised (Borders & Liang, 2011; Williams et al., 2012). It has also been argued that the general public's antipathy towards immigrants fuels discrimination, and that direct exposure to bigotry has a detrimental impact on the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of people who have experienced it (Cavazos-Rehg, 2007; Hammond, 2010). This element might perhaps be recognised as a determinant of the author's difficulties in enlisting participants for the study endeavour focused on the subject matter of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Chapter 4

The following table provides an overview of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study, encompassing their age, duration of residence in Ireland, tenure in their present venture, ethnicity, number of employees, and the nature of their business.

Entrepreneur	Ethnicity	Age	Years In Ireland	Years in current business venture	Number of Employees	Nature of Business
A	Hungarian	45	18	14	6	Sports Nutrition
B	Nigerian	47	15	5	6	Shipping
C	Brazilian	47	8	2.5	22	Takeaway /Café Bakery
D	Brazilian	44	5	6 months	2	Food Truck
E	Ukrainian	42		9	2	Antique Store
F	Pakistani	43	22	7	3	Discount Store
G	Lithuanian	52	22	6	2	Vintage Retail
H	Nigerian	45	23	9 months	Outsourced (India)	Software Development & Training

4.1 Research Findings and Discussion

The existing body of literature thoroughly examines the notable obstacles encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, as previously elucidated in chapter 2. The utilisation of the inductive method enabled the author to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurs included in this research. The primary aim of the objectives was to elicit viewpoints from the respondents regarding the research topic, "The challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in establishing and running their businesses in Dublin." The objective of this section is to elucidate any similarities between the data gathering methods employed in this study and the existing body of literature. The study of the data obtained from the sample provides valuable insights into the challenges encountered by participants in the process of establishing their businesses.

4.1.1 OBJECTIVE 1 – To establish the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in respect of language and cultural barriers.

One prominent theme identified in the study was the high level of English language ability exhibited by all of the participants. Out of the eight entrepreneurs who were interviewed, it was observed that only two of them spoke Nigerian English as their native language. The native languages of the other entrepreneurs were Portuguese, Hungarian, Urdu, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian, respectively. All of the participants exhibited a proficient mastery of the English language. No communication challenges were encountered during the interviews. All participants expressed confidence in their English language proficiency for doing business purposes. Although recognising the need for development, the individuals expressed that language did not pose an obstacle during the establishment or operation of their particular enterprises. One of the entrepreneurs from Brazil expressed a desire to provide additional time for language studies but cited the infeasibility of doing so due to his demanding work schedule. According to the Ukrainian and Lithuanian entrepreneurs, they stated that they consistently possessed a high level of confidence in their English language skills. They noted that a slight adjustment was required to comprehend the Dublin accent and frequently employed colloquial expressions. According to Kloosterman (2010), immigrant entrepreneurs endeavour to surmount linguistic barriers because they view proficiency in the host country's language as a crucial aspect of assimilating into the local community. The duration of residency for the participants in Ireland ranges from five to twenty-three years. According to Desiderio (2014), the difficulties faced by immigrant entrepreneurs tend to decrease as they establish a more permanent presence in the country of settlement. The study participants have exhibited their ability to not only surmount any potential language barrier but also to triumph over it. The results of this study challenge the prevailing corpus of scholarly literature that argues language problems provide a substantial obstacle for immigrant entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the limitations of this study with respect to this particular conclusion.

One prevalent issue among the participants pertained to the challenges encountered in assimilating to the cultural milieu of the city centre. Businesses have encountered significant challenges in adapting to the continual occurrence of crime, open drug use, and anti-social conduct. **Entrepreneur E (Ukraine)** stated that he is now accustomed to it and that it is simply

a part of doing business in the city on a daily basis. **Entrepreneur F (Pakistan)**, who operates a store on the same street as Entrepreneur E, described crime and antisocial behaviour as a constant cause of stress for him. The entrepreneur reported that earlier that day, he had apprehended two individuals engaging in shoplifting activities. In some instances, he added, shoplifters have become violent within the store. The narrative provided by this participant exhibits similarities with the findings of Njoku's (2020) research, wherein a participant, also Pakistani, claimed experiencing persistent harassment and incidents of intrusion by young Irish locals. The participant further noted the ineffectiveness of law enforcement in preventing the recurrence of such incidents. As a consequence, there had been a prevalence of theft and significant harm inflicted against the individual's commercial establishment. According to Njoku (2020), there are several instances in which immigrant businesses experience losses due to interactions with Irish natives, and these incidents are not adequately addressed by the necessary authorities.

The research findings of previous scholars contend that immigrant entrepreneurs encounter more significant obstacles in the market due to their tendency to operate in inner city regions that exhibit low effective demand, inadequate infrastructure, and higher-than-average crime rates (Aldrich et al., 1984; Barrett et al., 2001). The findings of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Blennerhasset et al. (2022), which posited that immigrant businesses in Dublin City Centre face significant challenges related to anti-social behaviour. The primary issue that deeply troubled the shopkeepers on Moore Street specifically, pertained to the potential threat posed to their livelihoods as a result of anti-social behaviour, coupled with the local law enforcement's failure to address this matter adequately (Blennerhasset et al. 2022). According to all participants in the 2022 study, they consistently encountered instances of verbal abuse, intimidation, or theft. The Irish media has brought attention to the pervasive issue of anti-social behaviour and the perceived lack of intervention by the appropriate authorities. Traditional street traders have voiced their concerns regarding the challenges they face when operating in an environment characterised by persistent criminal activity and ongoing disregard for their well-being (Kelly, 2019).

According to Mervyn and Ashton (2023), culture extends beyond an individual's national or racial identity. Cultures are organised and shaped by the concepts of "masculinity" and "organised crime," which function as conceptual frameworks for understanding social

dynamics and setting norms of conduct (Staub, 1988; Westen, 1985). The concept of crime is a product of social construction and is subject to the impact of collective perspectives, many of which are derived from cultural standards. According to Mervyn and Ashton (2023), subcultures possess the ability to construct alternative norms that directly contradict the dominant society standards, thus enabling the continuation of complex and enduring criminal activities through several generations.

4.1.2 Objective 2 – What challenges immigrant entrepreneurs encountered when trying access capital from financial institutions?.

A noteworthy finding that emerged from the research was the absence of any participants who sought financial assistance from financial institutions during the establishment phase of their businesses. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Robb and Fairlie (2007), which contends that immigrant entrepreneurs have a lower probability of having their loan applications approved by financial institutions. As a result, they are less inclined to seek financial aid due to their apprehension of being denied (Robb & Fairlie, 2007). All of the entrepreneurs financed their businesses with personal savings and/or informal loans from family and/or acquaintances. This finding is congruent with the study conducted by Basu (2010) in which three-quarters of immigrant entrepreneurs utilised their own funds to launch their businesses. In contrast, only a small fraction of slightly more than one-third of individuals used family funds during the inception phase of their business. Ram (1994) asserts that immigrant business owners may encounter bias during the process of seeking bank loans, leading them to resort to informal borrowing methods from individuals within their own ethnic group and informal channels.

In relation to the expansion plans of his business, the Nigerian **Entrepreneur B (Nigeria)** expressed that he had sought financial support from various financial institutions. However, he encountered rejection on the grounds of insufficient credit history and absence of collateral. He also believed that his ethnicity played a role in the rejection. This finding aligns with the research undertaken by Pinkowski (2009), whereby the author references an instance of a Nigerian entrepreneur in Dublin that encountered significant levels of distrust towards Nigerians while seeking financial support from several financial institutions (Pinkowski, 2009). Immigrant entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom also face more significant financial obstacles compared to small domestic enterprises in their pursuit of loan

accessibility during the first stages of business establishment (Bank of England, 1999). This may be a result of hostility, suspicion, and prejudice within the host community (Ram & Jones, 1998).

The findings pertaining to **Entrepreneur C (Brazil)** exhibit variation in the experiences of the immigrant entrepreneurs involved in the study. Shortly after the commencement of commercial operations by **Entrepreneur C**, Ireland implemented a lockdown in response to the Covid pandemic. Fortunately, the business was able to sustain limited operations by operating solely as a takeaway establishment. After one year of engaging in trade, the entrepreneur sought financial assistance from a financial institution to secure a loan for the purpose of expanding their firm. This expansion entailed acquiring and leasing the neighbouring premises, as well as equipping it accordingly. The financing application was successfully granted, and the firm has exhibited remarkable growth and resilience despite its challenging inception among the global epidemic. According to Kollinger and Minniti (2006), the acquisition of loans from financial institutions may not pose a significant challenge for immigrant business operators who possess substantial assets that may be used as collateral. According to Desiderio and Salt (2010), there is a positive correlation between the duration of an immigrant's stay in a nation and their acquisition of social capital particular to the host country, as well as their ability to get financial resources for the establishment or expansion of a business.

4.1.3 Objective 3 – The third objective was to capture the challenges immigrant entrepreneurs faced when navigating the legal and regulatory framework in Ireland when establishing their businesses.

“not big issues. It's quite simple” – **Entrepreneur G (Lithuania)**

All entrepreneurs unanimously agreed that the process of starting a business in Ireland was significantly more convenient in comparison to establishing a firm in their individual countries of origin. Based on the accounts provided by a Brazilian and a Ukrainian participant, it was noted that although the Irish regulatory agencies may experience delays in their responsiveness, the incidence of corruption faced by entrepreneurs during the establishment of businesses in their respective home countries is not widespread in Ireland. As per the assertions made by the Hungarian entrepreneur, the legislative framework in Eastern Europe

presents considerable challenges in terms of commercial operations and does not foster a favourable environment for entrepreneurial pursuits.

Ireland has been consistently recognised for its favourable business environment, as evidenced by its high rankings in studies assessing the global landscape of business-friendly nations (Mc Namara & Quinn, 2020). According to a report published by the World Bank Group (2019), Ireland has been ranked as the eighth most favourable country within the European Union and the twenty-third globally in terms of the overall ease of conducting business activities. According to the World Bank's 2019 report, Ireland attained the highest ranking among European Union member states in terms of the ease of commencing a business, safeguarding minority investors, and facilitating tax payments. Ireland consistently outperforms the European Union average in key metrics pertaining to the facilitation of business operations, as indicated by the European Commission's European Innovation Scoreboard 2018. The ease of starting a business was evaluated and assigned a score of 79.3 out of 100, in comparison to the European Union's average score of 76.9. According to the European Commission (2018), the total entrepreneurial activity score for the subject in question was 9.7, while the average score for the European Union stood at 6.6.

While it is the duty of business proprietors to fulfil their tax obligations from the inception of their commercial activities, they are not required to submit tax returns and settle their tax liabilities with the Revenue Commissioners until the month of October in the subsequent year. This allows the entrepreneur additional time to adapt to the regulatory framework of the host country, as well as providing relief in terms of immediate financial expenditures. Four entrepreneurs said that they have engaged the services of an accountant who assumes responsibility for managing their financial affairs as well as providing guidance on regulatory issues relevant to their respective businesses. Three of the entrepreneurs reported that their accountant possessed Irish nationality, while one entrepreneur indicated that their accountant hailed from Brazil. The Hungarian entrepreneur operates a sports supplement store in a prominent location within a retail centre in Dublin, Ireland. He indicated that his interactions with the mall's management company, who serves as the lessee, have been marked by a high degree of intensity. As a result, he relies significantly on his accountant throughout his interactions with this company.

According to a study performed by Blennerhassett et al. (2022), several immigrant business owners in Dublin have acknowledged the role of professional accountants in facilitating their achievements. These entrepreneurs asserted that their accountants provided valuable guidance on essential business procedures and ensured compliance with Irish legal requirements (Blennerhassett et al. 2022).

Despite the participants expressing confidence in their ability to initiate trading, they unanimously reported a lack of assistance from regulatory entities such as Enterprise Ireland or the Local Employment Services. Furthermore, they were unaware of the existence of any available guidance on the matter. A prevalent pattern observed in the acquisition of legal and regulatory information by entrepreneurs for their respective ventures involved the utilisation of the Google search engine.

4.1.4 Objective 4 - What challenges did you encounter in building business relationships and establishing networks in Dublin?

One recurring trend seen in the research was the participants' expressed displeasure over the challenges they had in developing business contacts and creating networks within the city of Dublin.

Entrepreneur B (Nigeria) had considerable challenges when it came to developing an entrepreneurial network in Dublin. As the enterprise saw growth, his business network increased incrementally by word-of-mouth within the Nigerian Community in Dublin. During the interview the entrepreneur articulated his intention to broaden the scope of his enterprise on a national scale, therefore offering an export service to the Nigerian community residing throughout Ireland. The development of immigrant entrepreneurial ventures is significantly influenced by ethnic connections, as these connections enable the sharing of cultural norms that facilitate the functioning and coordination of these ventures (Njoku, 2020). This is exemplified by the utilisation of the Man-Know-Man network concept, which is particularly prevalent among Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurs (Njoku & Cooney, 2020).

As suggested by Ram & Jones (1998) the act of entering a new market does not always require abandoning existing ethnic client markets. This is particularly true if the entrepreneur is able

to effectively engage with co-ethnic customers across several geographical locations (Basu, 2010). According to the comprehensive analysis conducted by Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), it was determined that the essential knowledge required for initiating a prosperous business is commonly acquired through the personal networks of immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as through diverse indirect connections that are specifically associated within their ethnic communities. There exists a mutual association between ethnicity and entrepreneurship, wherein entrepreneurs persistently advance and expand their entrepreneurial endeavours within a shared network (Njoku & Cooney, 2020).

Nevertheless, the establishment of a nationwide network has been a significant obstacle to the realisation of **Entrepreneur B's** development strategies. The participant expressed the view that in order to advance the expansion efforts and move beyond the confines of the co-ethnic network, it would be necessary to establish a courier network that spans across the country and develop a specialised mobile application. The entrepreneur's present network is limited to the Nigerian community in Dublin, which has left him uncertain about how to proceed with his development goals. According to Allen and Rahman (1985), entrepreneurs frequently possess substantial expertise in market niches; however, they often exhibit a deficiency in comprehensive business skills. Granovetter (1983) posits that individuals who possess a limited number of weak ties may experience a lack of access to information originating from remote segments of the business system. Consequently, they may be restricted to receiving local news and perspectives predominantly shared by their immediate social circle. The lack of exposure to current ideas and trends resulting from this deprivation may not only isolate immigrant entrepreneurs, but also place them at a disadvantage within the business environment (Stephens, 2013).

Entrepreneur H, also hailing from Nigeria, actively engaged in monthly business networking sessions as a means to establish connections with fellow entrepreneurs, engage in meaningful discussions pertaining to business matters, and cultivate professional networks. Although he initially participated in these meetings during the initial months following the establishment of his business he has since ceased attending. Regarding their effectiveness in terms of their inclusiveness, the entrepreneur was apathetic. Furthermore, the entrepreneur noted that the highly competitive nature of his specific business has presented difficulties in establishing a robust professional network. Maintaining connections with a wide range of persons within

the business sector has significant importance for entrepreneurs, as it grants them valuable access to a plethora of information and additional resources, however, the structure and formality of the business network can have an impact on the effectiveness of information and resources (Stephens, 2013).

Entrepreneur C held the perspective that the local business network exhibited a lack of receptiveness towards his firm. Consequently, he found it necessary to establish connections with the business network in his home country of Brazil and engage in the importation of a significant portion of the necessary baking equipment. The individual expressed their inability to rely on Irish firms for support due to their lack of familiarity with the production of their products. Moreover, these businesses exhibited a lack of receptiveness towards the individual's desire for instruction or help. To further his commercial operations, he was compelled to establish connections with Brazilian enterprises and subsequently procured kitchen equipment, notably a sizable oven, through importation.

“If I go to any non-Brazilian place, they just don't know our products. So it's really hard to find any kind of relatable conversation with these people but we find somewhere the information that we need, but without the (help of) Irish the local business network, they don't share very much. I would say mentally closed, you know, they don't like absorbing your ideas. They don't like changing products..... I had to rely on people from Brazil to help me out and try to find options.” – **Entrepreneur C**. Immigrant entrepreneurs may find it difficult to gain access to local business networks if they are unable to conform to so-called societal norms (Giazitzoglu et al. 2023). Den Butter et al. (2007) posit that the principal impediment to the assimilation of minority groups appears to be the segregation between native and ethnic minority business networks. The aforementioned division results in the economic marginalisation of ethnic minority groups and subsequently gives rise to the formation of enclave economies.

Entrepreneur D, also from Brazil, concurred that it was challenging to establish a business network in Dublin. *“I think the hardest part to create a strong network and of course, we have like a lot of Brazilians, the Brazilian community here is huge. But yes, we create a business not just for the Brazilian community. We want to sell for Irish people forever”*. – Entrepreneur D.

Burt's (1997) research has elucidated the functioning of networks inside business settings, thus highlighting the significance of information transmission inside corporate networks

through social connections, as well as the influence of personal recommendations rooted in trust. Networking processes have been found to yield positive outcomes and bring about entrepreneurial benefits. These factors encompass the enlargement of an entrepreneur's untapped pool of resources, the offering of resources under advantageous conditions, the acquisition of expertise related to the business, the facilitation of entrepreneurial education and knowledge exchange, and the building of reputation and legitimacy (Burt, 1997). Disadvantaged entrepreneurs may face limited access to positive networking results due to their limited financial, social, and human capital resources (Dodd & Keles, 2014). According to Stephens (2013), a recurring observation in the scholarly literature regarding immigrant entrepreneurs is their limited inclination to utilise conventional business support agencies and formal business networks.

4.1.5 Objective 5 - Challenges did you face in hiring and retaining suitable employees?

In relation to the recruitment of appropriate personnel, two distinct patterns were identified: the preference for recruiting individuals from the same ethnic background, and the inclination towards assembling a diverse workforce comprising individuals of different nationalities. The Hungarian **Entrepreneur (A)** had a workforce of six individuals, comprising individuals of diverse nationalities. On the day of the interview, two of his employees from South America were present in store. The entrepreneur expressed that his rationale for recruiting personnel from varied backgrounds was rooted in his conviction that such a practise yields enhanced outcomes, particularly given the multicultural nature of Dublin City, stating that *"a mix works better"*. The core mission of the entrepreneur's business, sports nutrition, is not specific to any distinct ethnic group; therefore, it serves the entire community. Entrepreneurs that place less emphasis on using co-ethnic workers and targeting co-ethnic clients, and instead focus on serving bigger markets, tend to own enterprises that exhibit a more accelerated pace of growth (Basu & Goswami, 1999). Numerous scholarly sources contend that diversity in work structures confers performance advantages when compared to homogenous work structures (Cox, Lobel, & MacLeod, 1991; Cox & Blake, 1991). According to Saxena (2014), organisations that engage in proactive evaluation of their management of workplace diversity matters, as well as the formulation and execution of diversity plans, have been found to experience a range of advantages. These include the promotion of innovation and productivity through the presence of diverse perspectives, as well as the establishment of a superior organisational

culture that surpasses that of competing entities. According to Saxena (2014), a multicultural organisation is more aptly equipped to cater to a heterogeneous external clientele within an ever-expanding global market. According to Adler (1991), these organisations possess a more comprehensive comprehension of the legal, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts of foreign countries. Employees with diverse backgrounds possess unique talents and experiences that enable them to propose ideas that are adaptable to dynamic market conditions and evolving customer needs. The possession of a wide range of skills and experiences, such as proficiency in multiple languages and a deep understanding of various cultures, enables a company to effectively cater to the needs of customers on a global scale. According to Morgan (1989), diversity plays a crucial role in fostering creativity.

Entrepreneur B also had six employees, 4 from Nigerian, and 2 from Ireland, however, he emphasised that this was solely based on the requirements of the business and the employees' capacity to carry out their responsibilities effectively, not their nationality.

In contrast, a Brazilian **Entrepreneur C** opted to recruit people exclusively from the Brazilian community. The phenomenon of ethnic solidarity emerges as a significant motivating factor that exerts impact on the economic endeavours of several immigrant communities (Brzozowski, 2017). According to Kushnirovich (2015), immigrant entrepreneurship is commonly regarded as a means by which immigrants may make valuable contributions not just to the economic progress of the receiving nation but to the welfare of their ethnic community. The entrepreneur indicated that his motivation for hiring co-ethnics stemmed from the fact that the products he was marketing were specifically aimed at the Brazilian community residing in Dublin. The business had two distinct components: a takeout establishment catering to multiple demographics and a café/bakery specifically targeting the Brazilian population. However, it was the bakery's assortment of baked products that served as the primary distinguishing factor of the enterprise. The bread that is cooked on-site is exclusive to Dublin and cannot be found for sale elsewhere Ireland.

“My main my main problem is because I need employees that speak Portuguese because of the Brazilian community.” - Entrepreneur C

Entrepreneur C had a workforce of 22 individuals, with 12 of them being engaged on a full-time basis. The entrepreneur expressed dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed on those

holding student visas, since they are solely authorised to engage in employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year. Research conducted by Nicodemo and Nicolini (2012) reveals a significant correlation between the presence of an immigrant manager and the hiring of low-skilled immigrant labourers.

“It's really hard for me because I need to have more employees than I really need. Just because they can only work half the time to 20 hours a week, or something like that. Yes. So it's really hard for me to do that because when we got to pay taxes (employer PRSI), I ended up paying more.” – Entrepreneur C

As a result of this visa stipulation, the entrepreneur felt obligated to employ a slightly larger workforce than necessary, in order to accommodate fluctuations in demand, such as those arising from concerts or sports held at Croke Park. In addition, having so many employees requires him to pay a substantial amount of employer PRSI. In accordance with legal regulations, it is mandatory for non-European Economic Area (EEA) individuals residing in Ireland to possess a residence permit. This requirement applies to various categories of individuals, including refugees, asylum seekers, non-EEA nationals with work permits, and students enrolled under the student visa scheme (Dundon et al., 2007).

Entrepreneur G (Lithuania) contended that he had a propensity to hire co-ethnics based on their cultural values and work ethic. According to Levie (2007), the presence of a shared language and culture between immigrant entrepreneurs and their managers may contribute to a higher degree of comfort. Immigrant businesses have historically relied on labour from their own ethnic group (Waldinger et al., 1990). However, this practise may impede expansion in situations when a greater number of competent personnel are required to fulfil market demand (Drori & Lerner, 2002).

Entrepreneurs C and G displayed a higher propensity compared to the other participants to utilise co-ethnic networks for various purposes, including access to resources and information, labour opportunities, and establishing a client base. While the author did not specifically inquire about the level of trust present in these networks, it seems that this aspect had a significant role in the establishment and sustainability of their economic ventures, as seen by Fong et al. (2007) in their examination of ethnic entrepreneurs in Toronto. The process was further assisted by the co-location of individuals with co-ethnics, which allowed

entrepreneurs to effectively utilise the ethnic networks within which they were positioned (Spoonley & Meares, 2011).

4.1.6 Objective 6 – To establish whether the entrepreneur has experienced bias or discrimination.

“The Garda station right there. Yeah, they should be ashamed of that. It's on there. It's on their doorstep.” – Entrepreneur

Regrettably, incidents of prejudice emerged as a theme from the study. Frequent racism was experienced by three of the participants. Notably, two of the store proprietors are subjected to a barrage of insults from the locals if they are discovered shoplifting. When operating in Dublin, one entrepreneur emphasised the need for immigrants to *“develop a thick skin.”* The participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited ability of An Garda Síochána to provide protection for themselves and their enterprises. **Entrepreneur F (Pakistan)** stated during an interview that he discovered two shoplifters that morning. He asserted that he has consistently been subjected to racist harassment. Instances of individuals being subjected to derogatory remarks such as *“go back to your own country”* and other forms of verbal abuse have grown increasingly prevalent. One of the business owners appeared reluctant to discuss his experiences, but he felt that having the name of the business in English was crucial because it gives the impression that the business is locally owned as opposed to foreign owned.

The Ukrainian Entrepreneur was of the view that the business network in Dublin predominantly serves the needs and preferences of domestically owned Irish enterprises. At a certain juncture, the entrepreneur was the running establishments, both situated in the urban core, albeit under different landlords. The lessor of one of the commercial establishments informed the entrepreneur that he had no intention of renewing the lease once the current term expired, despite the fact that the entrepreneur had paid full rent to the landlord during the Covid pandemic lockdown, during which the entrepreneurs only source of income was the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP). The entrepreneur expressed to the landlord his willingness to pay any potential increase in rent in order to sustain business operations. The business was experiencing positive performance, prompting the entrepreneur to express a desire to continue operating at the current site. Nevertheless, the

landlord expressed unwavering determination in refusing to extend the lease agreement. The neighbouring business with which the entrepreneur had a congenial rapport, expressed empathy for him by acknowledging the unjust treatment received by his landlord. The entrepreneur demonstrated exemplary tenancy by consistently paying rent on time and complying with the landlord's stipulation of refraining from displaying a vivid neon sign on the storefront.

"I don't want to be playing this racist card or like foreigner card, but this could be as well you know.....because both of them are Irish. The owner is Irish, and those two guys were Irish so it's easy for them to find a common (ground) language maybe to do some..... I don't know. There was a COVID lock down and our shop was closed for nine months. We were paying full rent to him. And but I was thinking okay, we're gonna pay him for rent now. But in one year time our lease expires so he will probably renew with us. He will think we're good tenants." –

Entrepreneur E.

Nevertheless, to the chagrin of the entrepreneur, upon the termination of his leasing agreement, the adjacent business assumed control of the lease and proceeded to enlarge its operations within the premises. Additionally, the neighbouring business prominently showcased a sizable neon sign on its storefront. The entrepreneur perceived this event as an act of treachery perpetrated by a neighbouring businessman, whom he had previously regarded as a confidant and engaged in mutually beneficial trade activities within separate markets. He felt that his nationality was a factor in this instance, and it was a case of Irishman facilitating Irishman.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that immigrant entrepreneurs in Ireland mostly operate on the periphery of the dominant economy and encounter hurdles that are more pronounced compared to Irish businesses (Cooney & Flynn, 2008). These challenges include obstacles in obtaining financial support, instances of criminal activities such as theft, instances of racism, and limited access to local business networks. Despite the presence of government rhetoric and policy support for immigrant entrepreneurship in Ireland, there is a lack of actual measures to effectively facilitate its development (Blennerhasset et al, 2022). In order to facilitate policymakers' comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship and enable the implementation of optimal policies to foster the prosperity of immigrant enterprises and their consequential impact on economic growth, it is imperative to augment their awareness of immigrant entrepreneurship.

It is crucial to underscore that in the current globalised era marked by a notable increase in immigration, even countries known for their longstanding multicultural values of welcoming immigrants are not immune to the effects of strict migration policies implemented by other Western nations or the consequences of negative narratives about immigrants disseminated through social media platforms (Wilkes & WU, 2019). Hence, it is imperative for professionals and scholars in Western countries to actively engage in advocating for the welfare of immigrants (Wilkes & WU, 2019). The public discourse on immigration could possibly benefit from a more nuanced understanding of the beneficial contributions immigrants can make as business owners to the Irish economy. This study highlights the need to build comprehensive initiatives aimed at facilitating the connection and mentorship of immigrant entrepreneurs, with a specific focus on providing guidance and expertise in the process of creating a business (Lo & Teixeira, 2015). These programmes should encompass several aspects, including navigating immigration bureaucracy, understanding and complying with regulatory requirements such as licencing and taxation, as well as acquiring the necessary start-up capital (Lo & Teixeira, 2015). The individuals who voluntarily choose the challenging road of emigrating have already exhibited significant characteristics commonly associated with entrepreneurs, including resilience, willingness to take risks, proactivity, self-assurance, and the ability to introduce novel social ideas (Dodd & Keles, 2014). The presence of immigrant entrepreneurs in Dublin not only contributes to the local economy, but also has a

positive impact on the broader Irish economy. The magnitude of their contribution is of such significance that it cannot be accurately measured in terms of its monetary worth.

Recommendations for future research

There exists a necessity to improve the quality of data sources in the field of study on immigrant entrepreneurship, specifically by incorporating longitudinal studies (Desiderio & Salt, 2010) within the Irish setting. These studies would enable the comprehensive monitoring of the life cycles of individual immigrant firms. The primary benefit of conducting such research would be to examine the many possibilities and limitations that immigrant enterprises encounter during their operational duration (Desiderio & Salt, 2010). The relatively recent development of the study on immigrant entrepreneurship in Ireland suggests that the level of information held by academics regarding the topic within the Irish setting may be characterised as limited (Njoku, 2020). In light of this, there is a need for additional research to develop ethically sound methodologies for carrying out immigrant entrepreneurship research in Ireland (Njoku, 2020). Adopting a narrow perspective that portrays immigrant entrepreneurs as predominantly clustering in ethnic enclaves and primarily establishing local micro-businesses may indicate a limited understanding from the host nation's standpoint, neglecting the international human resources and potential of immigrants (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013).

The phenomenon of female immigrant entrepreneurship has attracted growing interest among academics. Modern women all around the world are actively engaging in the establishment of micro-enterprises (Morris et al., 2006). Scholars argue that although there has been a significant increase in research on female entrepreneurship and immigrant entrepreneurship as separate topics, there is a need for dedicated attention to the intersection of gender and ethnicity in studies of entrepreneurship (De Vita et al, 2014; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Gonzalez-Gonzalez et al, 2011; Kwong et al, 2009). Furthermore, the presence of women entrepreneurs is crucial for the advancement of entrepreneurial growth due to their ability to enhance variety and complexity within the process (Venkatraman, 1997; Delmar, 2003; Verheul et al., 2004). According to Webster and Haandrikman (2017), there is a tendency for women to be employed in occupations that offer lower wages and have limited growth prospects. Consequently, immigrant women experience a dual kind of discrimination,

as they face prejudice both for their gender and their immigrant status. Anti-immigrant sentiment can be likened to a text which has been read, absorbed and internalised by both victim and perpetrator. It has become the master narrative that disables moderation. The master narrative of racism is based on a pejorative othering of émigrés who seek to establish new beginnings, businesses and lives abroad. Within the master narrative is a meta narrative applied to women; they are doubly diminished on the basis of gender.

There may exist variations in social and commercial experiences between females belonging to specific ethnic groups and their male counterparts. In certain cultural contexts, the inclusion of women in the public sphere may not be seen socially acceptable, leading women to employ distinct techniques that diverge from those employed by (Chreim et al 2018) men . In contrast to female entrepreneurs from the host nation, female immigrant entrepreneurs face unique opportunities, such as familiarity with the co-ethnic market, and obstacles, such as discrimination based on skin colour and accent type, originating from the majority population. The aforementioned concerns highlight the need of giving due attention to the subject of female immigrant entrepreneurship as a study topic that merits independent investigation (Chreim et al 2018).

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Research Question – ‘Challenges faced by Immigrant Entrepreneurs when establishing and running their businesses. The Dublin City Edition’.

Language Barriers and Cultural Differences

- a. Can you describe any challenges you've faced due to language barriers when starting or maintaining your business?
- b. How has language impacted your ability to network, negotiate, or otherwise interact with others in the business ecosystem?
- c. What were the main cultural challenges you faced in adapting your enterprise to the local business environment? i.e. cultural norms or business practices specific to Dublin that you had to adapt to or learn?
- d. Do cultural expectations affect the operation of your business? i.e. policies, procedures, ethics, values, employee behaviours and attitudes, goals and code of conduct.

Access to Capital

- a. What difficulties, if any, did you encounter when seeking initial funding for your business and also when trying to expand the business?
- b. How has your status as an immigrant impacted your ability to secure necessary financial resources?
- c. Could you tell me about any strategies you've used to overcome these financial challenges? i.e. informal loans from friends and family.

Legal and Regulatory Knowledge

- a. What challenges did you face when navigating the legal and regulatory framework in Ireland when establishing your business?

- b. How have you managed to keep up with changes in business regulations? i.e. Minister Calleary encourages businesses to engage on new sustainability reporting standards – 4th of July 2023
- c. Was there adequate support systems or resources available to help understand and comply with local regulations?
- d. Did you avail of support from government agencies when starting your business? If not, were you aware of its existence? i.e. Dept. of Justice STEP program, Dept. of Social Protection Enterprise Allowance, Local Enterprise Office
<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/>

Business Networks

- a. What challenges did you encounter in building business relationships and establishing networks in Dublin?
- b. Has the business environment in Dublin fostered integration into these networks?
- c. Did you receive access to any training or support services from local or governmental agencies when starting your business or were you aware that any existed? i.e. Enterprise Ireland, New Frontiers, Mentorship programs or Business incubators?

Workforce Integration

- a. What challenges did you face in hiring and retaining suitable employees?
- b. Have you faced any difficulties related to employee immigration status when hiring or retaining staff? i.e. permission to work, visa due to expire
- c. Do you have a tendency to hire co-ethnics or local employees, and can you elaborate of the reasoning for doing so?

Bias or Discrimination

- a. Have you experienced any bias or discrimination as an immigrant entrepreneur?

The Entrepreneur’s own biggest challenge

- a. Personally speaking, what has been the single biggest challenge you have faced in establishing or running your enterprise?

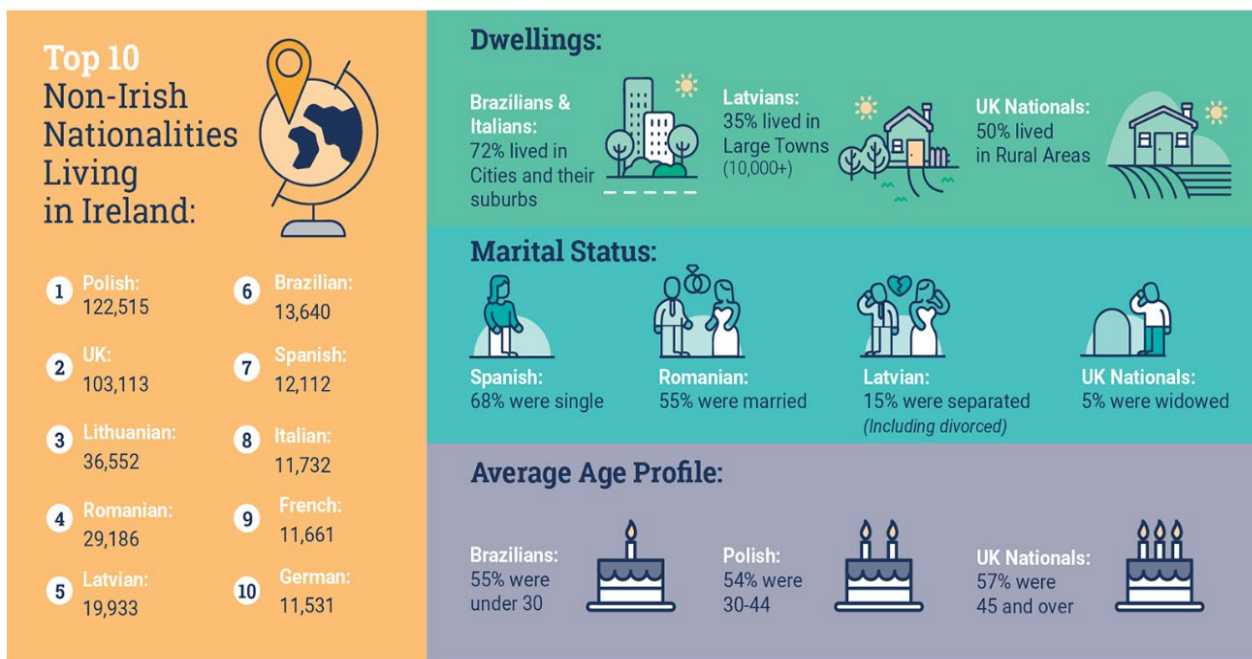
And Finally

- a. What do you believe can be done at local and government level to encourage and support immigrant entrepreneurs when establishing their businesses?



Central Statistics Office

Census 2016 - Non-Irish Nationals in Ireland



CSO statistical publication, 18 September 2018, 11am