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The Mapositori Minority Sect Entrepreneurs and the National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) of Botswana: Insights and Implications

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Abstract

The scholarship literature presents numerous systemic challenges and obstacles experienced by minority entrepreneurs and has often focused mainly on gender or women and entrepreneurship. Very limited research has been conducted on the challenges faced by poor-discriminated *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs of Zimbabwean origin. The objective of this study was to interrogate the intersection of national entrepreneurship policy and other government pro-entrepreneurship initiatives and *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana. A

qualitative research approach was employed using four focus group discussions consisting of 36 members of the *Mapositori* sect minority entrepreneurs to gain an in-depth understanding of their ethnicity barriers and the ways by which they circumvent them in one. This study indicated that access to venture capital, discrimination based on ethnicity, a lack of a pro-*Mapositori* policy framework, a lack of networks, and an international market have profound impacts on *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana. The findings imply that the formulation of the NEP and the establishment of LEA did not create equal opportunities that were exploited by *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana but were still exposed to internal and external forces from pro-entrepreneurship institutions. This study recommended policy inventions to promote an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem, emphasising the value of venture capital, training, infrastructure and other support to all regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation.

Keywords: *Baŋezuru, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, Mapositori, Minority, NEP, Zimbabwe origin.*

Introduction

In recent years, the world has witnessed the proliferation of new and innovative small ventures driven by the desire to contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty reduction, employment creation, and ultimately self-sufficiency (Pathak et al., 2022; El Abboubi et al., 2022). However, equal opportunity and government policy are critical success factors for indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystems (Haryono & Hartanto, 2023; Chakuzira et al., 2024). Similarly, racial disparities in lending based on ethnicity are a key determinant of entrepreneurial success and activity in the contemporary societies (Morris & Kuratko, 2020; Dzomonda, 2020). However, in terms of access to government programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, ethnicity is perceived as a barrier to minority participation, enterprise development, poverty eradication, and job creation in a number of both knowledge-based and innovation-driven economies (Fisher et al., 2020; Islam, 2020). In the face of the perceived lacuna between entrepreneurship policy and practice, academia, human rights activists, and NGOs have called for the provision of all-inclusive financing for women to promote and enhance entrepreneurial activities and development.

Despite their growth potential and contribution to more inclusive socioeconomic growth and development for all (Dana & Morris, 2021; Kuada, 2022), racial or ethnic minority entrepreneurs are characterised by many obstacles in accessing the much-needed resources to carry out their entrepreneurship endeavours and grow their existing ventures (Lee & Huang, 2018) due to the “inferior legitimacy acuties” that the community holds about them due to minority features (Fairlie, 2018; Simba et al., 2024). This ethnicity-based assessment ultimately impacts minority groups (Adam, 2023; Cieslik et al., 2022), as if certain services or programmes are reserved for dominant ethnic groups (Neville et al., 2018; Aparicio et al., 2019). Notwithstanding the significance of entrepreneurship as an instrument of social integration and as a source of livelihoods for vulnerable groups of entrepreneurs (Simmons et al., 2019), it is surprising that, in the contemporary literature, the contributions of minority entrepreneurs are poorly documented or unknown (April & Itenge, 2020; Berguiga & Adair, 2021). Furthermore, racial-minority entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship policy remain underdeveloped with regard to the unique barriers or challenges faced by racial-minority entrepreneurs and the strategies or policy initiatives implemented to address them (Morris & Tucker, 2020; Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020).

Furthermore, there is no specific study in the context of Botswana examining how racial-minority entrepreneurship (non-Tswana speaking or *Mapositori sect.*) overcomes challenges in accessing key resources and is considered a critical success factor in entrepreneurship development. This study aims to fill this gap. Therefore, this study aims to interrogate the intersection of national entrepreneurship policy and other government pro-entrepreneurship initiatives and *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana. This study also tries to unpack how *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs gained entry into the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the face of policy and ethnicity barriers and how *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs respond to the racial disparities they experience within the context of Botswana. Therefore, central research questions to be addressed are as follows:

What are the main systemic obstacles faced by *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs due to their lower legitimacy and ethnicity?

What are the adaptive strategies adopted by *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in response to prohibiting and discriminatory practices or limited access to financial resources in Botswana’s entrepreneurial landscape?

What role do government policies and support programmes play in either promoting or impeding the entrepreneurial endeavours of Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana?

How do Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs perceive the inclusivity and efficacy of Botswana's NEP in addressing their peculiar needs and challenges?

To what extent do Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs engage with other support networks to enhance their entrepreneurial opportunities in Botswana?

How do perceptions of social identity and belonging influence the business decisions and aspirations of Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana, particularly in relation to the mainstream economic framework and cultural norms?

Literature Review

The Theory of Entrepreneurship

Although the subject of entrepreneurship existed for several decades, it has become more pronounced and more popular in recent years because of its ability to reduce overdependence on government, create employment, eradicate poverty, create wealth, and contribute to sustainable economic growth and development (Dupree et al., 2021). The scholarship literature on entrepreneurship shows that this can be explained vividly from different viewpoints of “varying ontological paradigms” (Sharma et al., 2022) or using a multidisciplinary approach (Audretsch & Moog, 2021). Ratten (2023) sees entrepreneurship as a multifaceted or dimensional concept with different explanations or descriptions. Thus, the definition of entrepreneurship is situational and socially constructed (Ratten, 2023). Based on a review of the literature, they all point to (i) business formation, (ii) profit optimisation, (iii) risk, (iv) opportunity [seeking] pursuit, and (v) innovation (Kuratko, Neubert, & Marvel, 2021; Kuratko, 2020; Jones, Ratten & Hayduk, 2020; Mishra & Pandey, 2023). A more precise definition of entrepreneurship is given by Ratten (2023) who defines it as “the identification of business-related opportunities through a process of using existing new or a recombination of resources in an innovative and creative way”. Entrepreneurship is anchored or premised on the pillars of “innovation, creativity, risk taking as well as commercialisation of products and services” (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019: 24).

A more contemporary definition of entrepreneurship is provided by Elia et al. (2020:3), who define it as the “process of identifying

opportunities and exploiting them through the recombination of existing resources or the creation of new ones to develop and commercialise new products and services”. This study adopts the definition of entrepreneurship by Elia et al. (2023) because this definition focuses on innovation as a pivot of entrepreneurship and vice versa (Mishra & Pandey, 2023). The extant literature presents different types of entrepreneurships, including artisan entrepreneurship, creative entrepreneurship, pandemic entrepreneurship, digital entrepreneurship, educational entrepreneurship, and ethnic entrepreneurship (Robinson, 2023). However, entrepreneurs must overcome challenges of different magnitudes, such as access to venture capital, access to markets, competition, business knowledge, gender, and cultural issues (Oo et al., 2024).

Numerous theories have been proposed to elucidate the origins and drivers of entrepreneurship, including the theory of economic development (Schumpeter, 1934), the nature of the firm (Coase, 1937), the entrepreneurial discovery theory (Kirzner, 1973), Human Action (Mises, 1949), and the theory of effectuation (Saravathy, 2001), among others. This study adopts the theory of effectuation, which posits that entrepreneurship is driven by available means rather than predetermined goals, contrasting with causation processes that focus on achieving specific outcomes. Effectuation emphasises decision-making based on affordable losses, leveraging strategic alliances, adapting to unforeseen circumstances, and managing an unpredictable future. This framework is particularly suitable for unconventional entrepreneurs, including minority and women entrepreneurs, who face significant obstacles and often operate with limited resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005). By embracing effectuation, these entrepreneurs can creatively navigate opportunities, address unique challenges, form collaborative synergies, and innovate, transforming systemic challenges into viable opportunities (Mishra & Zachary, 2014). This adaptability fosters resilience and empowers unconventional entrepreneurs to leverage their contexts, enhancing their potential for success in the marketplace.

Mapositori Minority Sect Entrepreneurship

Minority entrepreneurs are loosely defined as members or classes of “distinct cultural ethnic or racial groups who have a different status in society...” (Fairlie & Robb, 2010). Some researchers see minority entrepreneurs as “disparate communities”, “most vulnerable groups”,

“isolated groups”, ex-convicts, diverse indigenous people, women, and people living with disabilities (Bates, Bradford, & Seamans, 2018), and they are often exposed to environments that are not conducive (Dana & Vorobeve, 2021), which threatens their entrepreneurship viability (Bates et al., 2022). There is a consensus that minority women are isolated and prevented from accessing help and financial services from the institutions established by the government to promote start-ups and existing SMMEs (Maalaoui, 2019). Minority entrepreneurs are excluded from government programmes aimed at fostering entrepreneurial culture (Dana & Vorobeve, 2021) and often face more challenges than “nonminority” entrepreneurs in securing and sourcing both financial and nonfinancial resources to start and finance their businesses. These numerous systemic challenges emanate the way that nonminority individuals perceive their legitimacy due to their minority characteristics (Freeland & Keister, 2016) and disproportionately affect minority entrepreneurs (Okolie, 2024). Research has established that minority entrepreneurs have limited access to start-ups and venture capital, networks, and other market (local & international) opportunities (Dana, 2018), and this inhibits the potential ability of minority entrepreneurs to thrive (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2021).

In response to mounting pressure from pressure groups for comprehensive interventions, many governments around the world have started to formulate and implement “modern financing” policies to dismantle inhibitors to the success of minority entrepreneurs (Olawajuw, 2023b). Creating an enabling environment for all entrepreneurs where equal opportunities for both profitability and growth are presented is a lasting solution for addressing pronounced economic divides—“disparity and social injustice” (Olawajuw, 2023a). In alleviating obstacles prohibiting the scope of minority entrepreneurship, policymakers and commercial banks extend loan facilities and preferential procurement programmes. Some scholars argue that creating an inclusive operating environment goes beyond merely promoting business inception (Olawajuw, 2023c).

The National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) and Minority Entrepreneurs in Botswana

Botswana recognises the importance of entrepreneurship as a vehicle for economic transformation and development and is committed to channelling resources to further empower citizens (CEDA, 2020).

Government efforts to support entrepreneurial activities in Botswana are evidenced by several pro-entrepreneurship programmes and policies that have been established and rolled out. Therefore, the government of Botswana seeks to promote entrepreneurial activities by creating an economically enabling environment and addressing the key challenges facing start-ups and existing SMMEs. Generally, entrepreneurship and SMMEs face many challenges that hinder their success, including (i) limited access to finance, (ii) a weak entrepreneurship culture, (iii) a lack of entrepreneurial coaching and training, (iv) a restrictive legal and regulatory environment, and (v) a lack of pro-entrepreneurial policy (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019). The NEP for Botswana was designed to address the identified barriers to entrepreneurial endeavours in Botswana. The NEP aims to promote entrepreneurship development in Botswana. The objectives of the NEP are to:

- create an appropriate regulatory environment for the emergence of opportunity-driven and SMME entrepreneurs;
- promote entrepreneurship and skills development across all levels of the education system;
- promote the development and transfer of technology that supports innovation and a creative environment for the emergence of opportunity-driven and SMME entrepreneurs;
- facilitate availability and access to start-up finance and seed capital for all entrepreneurs;
- provide targeted economic incentives that would open up entrepreneurship business opportunities and address specific entrepreneurship bottlenecks;
- promote networking that encourages business linkages and collaboration among entrepreneurs;
- promote the development of high-tech-based industries in line with selected priority areas of Botswana's comparative and competitive advantages;

- create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that brings together interconnected entrepreneurial actors and processes to create opportunities for co-working; and
- collaboration in the entrepreneurial space (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019: 20).

The policy thematic areas include:

- i. an enabling environment for entrepreneurship;
- ii. entrepreneurship education and skills development;
- iii. facilitation of technology transfer and innovation;
- iv. improving access to start-up financing and seed capital;
- v. promoting awareness and networking;
- vi. entrepreneurship and industrial development;
- vii. targeted economic incentives for SMMEs and entrepreneurship development; and
- viii. national entrepreneurship ecosystem (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019).

The government of Botswana creates an inclusive environment and offers equal opportunities to start up by creating a conducive culture, policies and leadership; providing appropriate financing and markets; and providing government support and professional networks (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019).

Empirical Review

This section synthesises key studies that have investigated the intersection between entrepreneurship policy and minority entrepreneurs in developing countries, underscoring the various factors at play, the policies implemented, and their outcomes.

Cooney (2021) identified access to finance as the principal barrier for minority entrepreneurs, with many being excluded from formal financial services due to poor credit histories or discrimination by financial institutions. Similarly, Celliers et al. (2021) examined the challenges faced by South African entrepreneurs in securing funding from venture capital firms. Their research revealed that Black entrepreneurs were more likely to encounter higher interest rates, fewer credit opportunities, and a lower likelihood of receiving venture capital compared to their white counterparts.

In Los Angeles, Shelton and Minniti (2017) found that Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs often lacked access to the same social capital networks as their white peers. This social exclusion hindered their ability to access markets, build supplier relationships, and expand their businesses. Moreover, Bates et al. (2023) highlighted a systemic demographic gap in entrepreneurship and disparities in creditworthiness among minority groups in the United States. Their study emphasised that Black entrepreneurs and immigrants faced additional obstacles in raising external capital, navigating bureaucratic processes, and obtaining the necessary licences or permits to operate legally. Similarly, Robb and Morelix (2016) examined the impact of capital access on business profitability and found that minorities, particularly Black entrepreneurs in the U.S., were disproportionately affected by challenges related to both access to and the cost of capital.

In Georgia, Erkomaishvili (2016) investigated the role of entrepreneurship incubators and business development services (BDS) in supporting minority entrepreneurs. The research concluded that incubators providing mentorship, capacity-building, and networking opportunities helped mitigate some disadvantages faced by minority entrepreneurs, such as limited technical skills or experience. However, these services were predominantly concentrated in urban areas, limiting their reach and effectiveness for rural minority entrepreneurs.

Byun et al. (2018) observed that entrepreneurship education programmes targeting minority ethnic groups in Korea were essential in developing both business skills and entrepreneurial mindsets. These programmes enabled participants to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship, from business plan development to financial literacy, thereby enhancing their chances of securing funding and growing their ventures. In South Africa, Fatoki (2014) found that capacity-building programmes—offering training in financial management, marketing, and legal compliance—played a vital role in supporting Black entrepreneurs

with limited formal education. However, these programmes were often criticised for being insufficient and disconnected from the practical challenges faced by minority entrepreneurs.

Research by Ndala and Pelser (2020) assessed the effectiveness of government policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in Malawi. While policies such as affirmative action and small business development programmes did lead to an increase in the number of minority entrepreneurs, they were less successful in addressing structural inequalities, such as limited access to high-level finance and markets. The authors recommended the implementation of more comprehensive, long-term policies to address both the supply and demand aspects of entrepreneurship. Finally, Shelton and Minniti (2018) analysed the impact of preferential procurement programmes on market access for Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs. Their study concluded that preferential procurement could facilitate rapid business expansion for some minority entrepreneurs, enabling them to overcome personal limitations and establish viable enterprises by leveraging their minority status.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the systemic barriers faced by *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs of Zimbabwean origin and the influence of the National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) framework on their entrepreneurial activities in Botswana. The study also tries to unpack how Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs gained entry into the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the face of policy and ethnicity barriers and how Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs respond to the racial disparities they experience within the context of Botswana. As a result of the breadth and depth of the analysis needed in this study, a qualitative research approach is considered more appropriate because it allows the exploration and unearthing of thematic areas or phenomena (Cresswell, 2012). To the best of our knowledge, this method has not been previously employed in Botswana to understand and study *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs.

The choice of conducting focus group interviews/discussions allows the researcher to examine the experiences and attitudes of participants with common interests (homogeneity) (Basnet, 2018). A focus group interview/discussion is a qualitative data collection tool used to collect data from a homogeneous group of people on a predetermined thematic topic or area of interest (Creswell, 2012). It is used to present facts or

phenomena (Gill & Baillie, 2018). A focus group discussion facilitates free expression of opinions and discussion (Duggleby, 2005). Furthermore, focus group discussions offer a social setting in which the problem or issue is observed or experienced, showing how participants' perspectives can be formulated through interactions with others (Flick, 1998).

A combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques was applied in this research. Dzino-Silajdzic (2018) describes purposive sampling as a method of selecting only information-rich informants in a group of people. This sampling technique has the objective of providing an in-depth understanding of the systemic challenges faced by the *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana. From the initial interaction with the first participant, the present researcher managed to gain more information and contacts from other participants—a process commonly referred to as snowballing in research (Dzino-Silajdzic, 2018)—to meet the target population sample of 36 participants, from which four focus group discussions were formed involving nine members each (Basnet, 2018). The researcher believed that a sample size of 36 participants is sufficient to determine the experience, opinions, points of view (perceptions), and behavioural attitudes of *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs towards the NEP framework and barriers to entry and continuation into entrepreneurship and innovation endeavours in Botswana. Researchers believe that a sufficiently large sample size may cause confusion and information redundancy (Pansiri & Yalala, 2017). Each FGD lasted for 60 minutes.

The researcher developed the interview guide from the literature review. Before the focus group discussion, the researcher conducted one focus group discussion with participants to gain insights into the key issues and to test the completeness of the study instrument. Furthermore, pilot interviews or discussions were conducted to adjust and correct the interview guide. Based on the findings from the pilot interviews, several changes were made, including the question structure, diction or choice of words (or technical jargon), language, and communication style, in the main interview guide based on the issues raised during the pilot interviews. The researcher was a Zimbabwean of the shona tribe and was very conversant in the *Mapositori* language. All questions were translated into the shona language, and the shona language was used during the field work. After the FGDs, the researcher translated the transcripts into English for presentation and analysis. The qualitative data collected through FGDs were analysed in stages, namely

“open coding, axial coding and selective coding” (Rahman et al., 2018). After all, four FGDs were carried out and fully transcribed, and open coding was utilised to identify and capture emerging codes. The open coding generated some new codes, resulting in the emergence of several themes (concepts and classes). It allows the creation of linkages between the “codes” to be developed from which categories were discovered through axial coding. The final stage is selective coding; in this case, the researcher identifies overarching themes and subthemes that form relationships among all the themes.

The study did not target *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs, and the targeted samples were beadwork, art and craft entrepreneurs, metal tin products entrepreneurs and second-hand clothes, as these are the entrepreneurial activities most dominated by *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs (Gwatiwa, 2014). The extant literature shows that the entrepreneurship of beadwork, art and craft, metal tin products, and second-hand clothes, where most *Mapositori* are overrepresented, requires very less venture capital than high-value-high-risk ventures (Themba & Josiah, 2015). The concentration of *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in what Munjeyi and Fourie (2024) referred to as subsistence entrepreneurship makes it significant and interesting to study these peculiar sectors to uncover the experience of minority entrepreneurs in Botswana. Interesting future researchers may refocus on entrepreneurs who graduated from subsistence entrepreneurship. The participants of Zimbabwean origin were the focus of this study as can be seen in Table 1.

Results

The reviewed scholarship literature highlights a critical gap in policy discourse regarding entrepreneurship and minority ethnic entrepreneurs. The impact of the National Entrepreneurship Policy and other government interventions on addressing the systemic challenges faced by *Mapositori* minority entrepreneurs was identified through the responses from the participants.

This study investigated the perspectives of 19 *Mapositori* minority entrepreneurs in Botswana with the aim of examining the impact of the government’s entrepreneurship initiatives on the entrepreneurial endeavours of *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs. The coding processes generated four themes, as presented in Table 1 below. The interview data were categorised under the themes presented in Table 2

below. The themes serve to answer the research questions this research puts forward.

Table 1: *Excerpts from the participants' statements*

Emergent subthemes	Excerpts from the participants statements
The influence of social legitimacy (identity) and belonging on Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs in relation to Tswana-speaking economic frameworks and cultural values	<p><i>"Our forefathers migrated from Zimbabwe and settled here in Botswana and our major challenge was social legitimacy, citizenship...hindering us from getting formal jobs in government. To survive we find ourselves into [sic] arts and crafts"</i> (FGD1)</p> <p><i>"It took us nearly 6 decades before the government of Botswana issued and assisted us to acquire identity cards and still some of our own members are struggling to get the identification documents (omang). We then opt to venture into entrepreneurship for survival."</i> (FGD2)</p> <p><i>"Despite the fact that we have been here approximately 1950s, the government of Botswana only legitimise our stay in 2014 and 2015 and were [we're] not able to access government driven programmes like other Tswana speaking tribe."</i> (FGD3).</p> <p><i>"Because of our citizenship status, which was still debated by policymakers, were deprived access to government developmental projects. As means to improve our lives we ventured into pottery making, beadwork, and baskets making...that was the beginning of our journey into entrepreneurship."</i> (FGD4).</p> <p><i>"Our tribe is viewed as primitive because the true Bazezuru don't send their children to school or hospital- however, such traditional beliefs pushed us away from the modern Tswana economic framework and we remain subsistence entrepreneurs forever."</i> (FGD2)</p>
Systemic challenges affecting Mapositori minority entrepreneurs in Botswana	<p><i>"We are labelled uneducated and traditional people...and no one can assist us. Most of us didn't receive formal education making it so difficult to visit government offices for assistance."</i> (FGD1)</p> <p><i>"To access credit or funding from LEA or</i></p>

	<p><i>CEDA, you must have proper documentation. Some of us up to now don't have "omang"- a requisite to access government loans. This has affected our businesses ventures." (FGD2)</i></p> <p><i>"They say our business idea or proposal doesn't meet the expected standards...I don't know whether the rejection is based on tribal grounds or what? Furthermore, I can attest that we are all eligible to access funding and other services from LEA and CEDA , however, the approval criteria is too harsh and restrictive...LEA and CEDA check one's citizenship status, residency, and business proposal which the majority of us don't have...this is restrictive." (FGD3)</i></p> <p><i>"They say our ventures do not follow the funding guidelines because they are based on traditional and cultural beliefs. Business is about identifying areas not explored: we believe that the area of art and craftsmanship is our niche and we can do much better than other areas." (FGD4)</i></p> <p><i>"Our market is too closed and limited. We don't have money to expand to international markets like other Tswana speaking counterparts..." (FGD1)</i></p> <p><i>"Most people prefer to buy the same products from Chinese or other Tswana speaking tribe...the perception of the market is that our products are associated with rituals..." (FGD3)</i></p> <p><i>"We do not have international women support networks to showcase our talents in arts and crafts as well as music...however once in a while some donor community will promise to assist us pushing our products to international markets." (FGD4)</i></p>
Adaptive mechanisms employed by Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurs in response to discriminatory practices	<p><i>"Our leaders approached the government, and in 2014, 2015, the government assisted some of us to get Omang (identify card) from immigration and national registration. We are now able to apply for loans although there is a high rejection rate." (FGD2)</i></p> <p><i>"We depend on God and women sell artifacts like baskets, vegetables and door mates around the villages and cities" (FG1)</i></p> <p><i>"We survived through our regular customers..."</i></p>

	<p><i>and some unemployed people who want very cheap products.” (FDG1)</i></p> <p><i>“We established our associations in which we put resources together and those who might need some money...they will get it through the association and pay back at an interest...” (FGD4)</i></p> <p><i>“We lived as a community with shared values and spirit of togetherness, this means that us as Bazezuru tribe support each other...” (FGD4)</i></p> <p><i>“Our husbands supplied the products, and we manufacture beads, and baskets as well as doormats, cooking sticks and brooms...etc.” (FGD3)</i></p> <p><i>“We formed some synergies with some educated Tswana speaking people and we managed to access funding from LEA...”</i></p> <p><i>“We received some money from some well-wishers and friends to restock. Other members sell their cows to raise money for their business...” (FGD1)</i></p> <p><i>“Some used the allowance for their children (who were luck to receive university education) and use it to finance their business ventures... and it’s very sad development...”</i></p> <p><i>“We have strong ties with our members and communities however, we lacked business related networks that may assist in expanding our ventures...” (FGD3).</i></p>
<p>The influence of NEP and support initiatives on Mapositori minority sect entrepreneurial endeavors in Botswana</p>	<p><i>“Although the government of Botswana enacted the National Entrepreneurship Policy, to date there is no specific policy that addresses the needs and challenges faced by the Bazezuru entrepreneurs in Botswana...” (FGD1).</i></p> <p><i>“The government of Botswana has established two institutions whose mandate is to promote innovativeness and entrepreneurship in Botswana. These institutions are LEA and CEDA. They target local people only with documentation and sound business proposal...” (FGD3)</i></p> <p><i>“Yes, we have LEA and CEDA established to assist women and youth to start business for self-help...and is reserved for 100% citizen driven</i></p>

	<p>projects.” (FGD4)</p> <p>“I think some of our members who are in towns such as Gaborone are benefiting from government schemes...those in the rural areas sell only vegetable and artifacts around the villages.” FGD4)</p>
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Source: Author’s compilation (2024)

From the summary provided in Table 1 above, it can be inferred that the success of *Mapositori* entrepreneurship relies broadly on the inclusivity of the National Entrepreneurship Policy. It can be further deduced that the NEP mandate is anchored in improving access to capital financing and addressing SMME challenges. It became so vivid during the focus group discussions that *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs are not accessing and enjoying pro-entrepreneurship programmes due to their citizenship status, education status, and rigid funding approval processes.

During the interview process, the researchers observed a culture of entrepreneurship and innovations among the participants. All participants revealed that the *Mapositori* originated from Zimbabwe alluded to the challenge of securing identity documents (national identity cards) from the immigration and national registries. The challenge pertaining securing identification documents (IDs) negatively impacts the minority entrepreneurs who are pursuing entrepreneurial venture in Botswana as they themselves need to access funding and other government services. Excerpt from FGD2 stresses,

It took us nearly 6 decades before the government of Botswana issued and assisted us to acquire identity cards and still some of our own members are struggling to get the identification documents (omang). We then opt to venture into entrepreneurship for survival...

It can be argued that the failure to obtain an identity card impacted their ability to access funding from the government and other commercial banks in Botswana, leading to poor creativity and innovation capability.

Furthermore, after participants, participants outlined the primary barriers to their entrepreneurship. The fieldwork study revealed that the lack of capital financing, limited access to domestic and international markets, limited access to pro-minority programmes, and other business synergies and networks were the primary obstacles to the viability and growth of *Mapositori* minority entrepreneurs in Botswana. The

participants in all FGDs emphasised that they are excluded from national programmes because of lack of documentation and education; consequently, they are using limited resources as advocated by Solomon and Mathias (2020), Sahut et al. (2021), Ratten (2023), Simeoni and Testa (2018) and Sarasvathy (2001). The majority of the participants interviewed showed ways by which they overcome discriminatory practices in the application processes. A notable finding for *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana is that they have adopted some strategies, although they are primitive, to overcome entry into entrepreneurship and innovation. The following are the strategies adopted to overcome operating challenges: (i) sourcing funding from friends, (ii) selling cows, (iii) practising indigenous entrepreneurship, (iv) advocating citizenship status, and (v) forming synergies. The study did not evaluate how successful these strategies were in strengthening their entrepreneurial drive.

The majority of the participants were ignorant of the existence of the NEP in Botswana. However, the government established the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, Young Farmers Fund, CEDA Credit Guarantee Scheme, Entrepreneur Mortgage Assistance Venture Capital Fund, Youth Development Fund, LEA, and CEDA to help young people and women start businesses to bridge the economic divide (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2019; LEA, 2021). They further revealed that *Mapositori* minority sects may access funding from these institutions if they meet the selection and approval criteria, as stated in the policy documents, including issues related to citizenship status, the feasibility of business proposals and business registration. The *Mapositori* minority sects are not eligible for capital financing because of (i) a lack of proper documentation, (ii) poor business plans or proposals, and/or (iii) a lack of security/collateral requirements (CEDA, 2020). According to the revised CEDA guidelines of 2020, to access funding from, for example, CEDA, the applicant must meet certain specific requirements, such as the submission of detailed business proposals, collateral security, licences, business premises or land, and viability of the proposed project (in terms of market, management, profitability projections, sustainability, and projection of business growth and impact) (CEDA, 2020). It can also be argued that the majority of the *Mapositori* minority sects pursued a traditional and subsistence business model or philosophy that disqualified them from receiving funding from the government and other institutions. In this regard, it can be argued that the participants do not have tangible assets, commitment fees (or

contributions) or sound business proposals or ideas. This study is anchored on the true *Mapositori* who are making baskets, beadworks and vegetables, not the modernised so-called “*Mazezurus*” flooding Bus rank who are involved in forex trading.

This study revealed that, with regard to the legitimacy of *Mapositori* minority entrepreneurs operating in Botswana, they are regarded as “mazezurans” and discriminated against on race and tribal grounds. Furthermore, undoubtedly, *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs do not have proper documentation to confirm their citizenship status. However, in recent years, the government of Botswana has intervened and started to formalise its citizenship (April & Itege, 2020). Thus, in 2014 and 2015, the immigration and citizenship department registered a significant number of Bazezuru tribes (Mazonde, 2017).

With regard to barriers relating to entrepreneurial activities, this study found the same systemic challenges previously found in the extant literature (Adam, 2023). The common challenges established by this study, which are specific to this special group, include access to the market, access to venture capital, loss of security, lack of proper business ideas or plans, legal and regulatory complexity, and lack of local and international networks (MITI, 2019). Although these challenges are common to all entrepreneurs in Botswana and beyond regardless of gender or ethnicity (Rahman, Ullah, & Thompson, 2018: 189) and the challenges often intensify due to some ethnicity and other factors specific to *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs (CEDA, 2020), such as discrimination (Dana, 2018), limited access to finance (Bates et al., 2021), lower legitimacy status (Bates et al., 2018), and limited access to both domestic and international markets (Fairlie, 2018). Furthermore, this study also established that the *Mapositori* minority sect also experienced some domestic barriers and issues peculiar to its limited education and legitimacy status (LEA, 2021).

The study also found evidence that the government of Botswana’s NEP is geared at promoting entrepreneurship and inclusivity. However, the NEP does not explicitly (re)solve the specific challenges experienced by *Mapositori* minority sects – who originate from Zimbabwe. Looking closely at the details of the NEP framework, it is important to note that there is potential for the intersection between *Mapositori entrepreneurship and the NEP* in many ways. For instance, the NEP framework promotes an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that facilitates the participation of all entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds. The word ‘inclusivity’ implies that the government can create equal opportunities that could

largely benefit the *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs in Botswana. Moreover, the NEP outlines various strategies aimed at improving access to support services, heterogeneity or diversity in entrepreneurship and innovation and policy advocacy and outreach programmes. Although these efforts are not targeted at a specific group, the *Mapositori* minority sect entrepreneurs could also directly and indirectly benefit.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is essential for job creation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable economic growth. This study highlights the complex challenges faced by *Mapositori* minority entrepreneurs in Botswana, particularly regarding their struggle for social recognition and access to financial resources, which are significantly affected by their citizenship and civil status. Although the government's National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) promotes inclusivity, it fails to adequately address the specific needs of the *Mapositori* community. Barriers such as limited access to capital financing, market entry, and legitimacy, compounded by systemic discrimination, impede their entrepreneurial potential. Nevertheless, the resilience demonstrated by the participants reflects a strong entrepreneurial culture that fosters adaptive survival strategies. For the NEP to be genuinely inclusive, it must explicitly incorporate provisions that address the unique challenges faced by minority entrepreneurs, thus fostering an equitable entrepreneurial environment that leverages the diverse capabilities within Botswana's economy.

Promoting inclusivity, diversity, and innovation within the entrepreneurial landscape can significantly enhance the participation of various groups and mitigate systemic barriers to viable high-value entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, the government and NGOs should extend entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and business development services to these marginalised entrepreneurs, facilitating poverty eradication and job creation and contributing to sustained economic growth and development.

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