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Effects of rural entrepreneurship on community development in Zambia

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Abstract

Rural entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in fostering the development of rural communities and nations at large. This study aimed to investigate the role of rural entrepreneurship in delivering community development. The study employed a quantitative approach, in which a structured questionnaire containing four indicator variables identified from the literature was administered to 197 respondents drawn from entrepreneurs involved in agriculture, retail, building construction, transportation business and metal fabrication operating in the rural areas of Copperbelt province, Zambia. The data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and regression analysis. The EFA results revealed that entrepreneurship was explained by four factors: entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation. However, the regression analysis established that of the four factors explaining entrepreneurship, only two factors, entrepreneurial characteristics and business operation, were significant in predicting community development in Copperbelt rural areas. Overall, this paper reaffirms that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in rural community development, leading to improved living standards, employment opportunities, alleviation of poverty and reduced rural-urban migration. Rural entrepreneurship is an essential stimulant of economic growth in developing countries.

Keywords: Community, Development, Entrepreneurship, Rural areas

Introduction

Rural areas are envisioned as carefree farmlands and grasslands dotted with small business stores, few social amenities and tight-knit communities. Rural areas in the Global South are diverse regarding topography, natural resources, culture and economy. According to researchers, extreme poverty levels, little economic activity and the absence of critical infrastructure and essential services characterise rural areas (del Olmo-García et al., 2023; Ihejimaizu, 2019; Jarinaa & Manida, 2024). Historically, agriculture and other resource-based industries have been at the centre of economic activities in rural areas. In developing countries, most agricultural activities are labour-based and subsistence-level, offering little economic growth. At the commercial scale, increased mechanization has led to increased levels of unemployment (Goetz et al., 2018). Development is further hampered by low literacy levels, exacerbated by rural-urban migration, where those with some skill migrate to cities for better economic prospects. These issues point to resource-deficient rural areas, with inadequate infrastructure such as roads, water and power supply networks, insufficient human capital and limited access to credit finance (Goetz et al., 2018; Stadel, 2019).

Rural entrepreneurship has gained significance as a local development approach with solid potential for job creation as well as improvements in quality of life (Fortunato, 2014; Galvao et al., 2020). Scholars have found a correlation between entrepreneurship and rural development (Abhijith, 2021; Lakshmanaswamy & Jasmine, 2023; Pato, 2020; Rajsinghot et al., 2024). The argument is that entrepreneurship has a multiplier effect in rural regions because it results in skill diversification among the rural population, attracts new inhabitants, drives market innovation and stimulates growth (Galambos & Amatori, 2016; Galvao et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2024). Therefore, this study sought to investigate the effects of entrepreneurship on community development in rural areas, with the Copperbelt province of Zambia as the study area.

Rural entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a broad concept with numerous definitions and meanings. The definition of entrepreneurship is still a source of contention among scholars. The idea of entrepreneurship is multifaceted, denoting different things to different people. Entrepreneurship comprises interconnected processes of vision, transformation and invention, necessitating a great deal of energy from the individual. It also stimulates economic growth in any setting (Akiri et al., 2016; Ekanem, 2024). Rural entrepreneurship entails creating new value by utilizing resources from a given environmental setting (Lebambo & Shambare, 2020; Sharma, 2024). Rural entrepreneurs focus on creating a new organization that introduces new products, serves or creates a new market or utilizes a new technology in a rural environment. It also involves pulling resources together to respond to unmet market demands and an ability to create and build something from practically nothing. Thus, rural entrepreneurs carry out entrepreneurial activities by establishing industrial and business units in the rural sector of the economy (Kushalakshi & Raghurama, 2014). Rural entrepreneurship is one of the most essential inputs in the economic development of a country; this cannot be overemphasized, especially in countries in the Global South, where a considerable number of the population live in rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship is considered one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration, economic disparity and unemployment and to develop rural areas and backward regions. In the Global South, rural areas are isolated, economically poor, and unmechanized (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2017).

Further, these areas lack critical infrastructure, such as roads, telecommunications, internet connectivity and electricity and water supply networks. Proponents of rural entrepreneurship opine that it is a strategic development intervention that could accelerate the rural development process. The literature review underscores the importance of entrepreneurship in stirring development in rural areas and points out critical issues for consideration, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of reviewed works on entrepreneurship for rural development.

Author(s) and year	Title of research	Key issues
Lakshmanaswamy & Jasmine, 2023	An empirical study on the role of rural entrepreneurship on socio-economic development among rural mass	Highlights the importance of rural entrepreneurship in better income-generating opportunities and serves as a means for the effective allocation of local resources

Author(s) and year	Title of research	Key issues
Jarinaa & Manida, 2024	Exploring the impact of rural entrepreneurship development in India's MSME sector	Advances in investment in infrastructure and technological advancements to unlock the full potential of rural entrepreneurship
Candelario-Moreno & Sánchez-Hernández, 2024	Redefining rural entrepreneurship: The impact of business ecosystems on the success of rural businesses in Extremadura, Spain	Resources tailored to rural entrepreneurship must be created, leveraging the area's endogenous resources and growth models
Sima, 2015	Sustainable rural development through rural entrepreneurship	Emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, feasibility and market studies and analysis and the need for a unique package of resources to exploit the opportunities
Pato, 2020	Entrepreneurship and innovation towards rural development evidence from a peripheral area in Portugal	Underscores the role of the community in the entrepreneurship and development process; fosters creation of a culture of entrepreneurship based on local and endogenous resources; Training and financial support
Pan et al., 2024	The impact of entrepreneurship of farmers on agriculture and rural economic growth: Innovation-driven perspective	The need to adopt specialized incentives and support measures to create a favourable atmosphere; Strengthen innovation; Build a distinctive innovation and entrepreneurship education system; Promote the effective integration of technologies
Ihejimaizu, 2019	The role of entrepreneurship in rural development in Cross River State, Nigeria	Utilization of local resources and reduction of rural-urban migration; Provision of incentives to rural entrepreneurs in the form of tax relief and concessions; Infrastructure development and maintenance in rural areas encourage trade and business transactions and serve as stimuli in boosting the rural economy
Abhijith, 2021	Role of entrepreneurship in rural development – An analysis	Rural entrepreneurship is one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration, economic disparity and unemployment and to develop rural areas and backward regions

Author(s) and year	Title of research	Key issues
del Olmo-García et al., 2023	Determinant factors for the development of rural entrepreneurship	Bank financing is essential for the development of rural entrepreneurship; The policy should focus on increasing investment in innovation and development that promote the discovery of opportunities in rural areas
Dzapasi, 2019	Role of government in rural entrepreneurship to economic development: The case of Murewa Rural-Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe	Need for effective rural entrepreneurship policy; Awareness programmes; Partnerships
Rajsinghot et al., 2024	Strengthening sustainable rural development through entrepreneurship: An Indian perspective	It is a more effective method of eradicating poverty and hunger, sustainable health and well-being, enhancing gender equality, quality education and decent work conditions, and promoting innovation in industries

The reviewed literature shows gaps in the relationship between individual entrepreneurship and community development elements. This suggests that efforts to develop rural communities through entrepreneurship must be further explored. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the effects of entrepreneurship on community development in rural areas and consequently identify the main predictors of the same.

Approaches to community development

Community development is a process that focuses on cultivating and enhancing a community's actions collectively to bring about improvements in social, cultural, economic, physical, political and environmental aspects of a community's life. Community development gives individuals and organizations within a society the ability to better their lives (Buye, 2021). Community development approaches are holistic and grounded in the ideologies of inclusivity, equity, empowerment, social justice and upholding human rights (Ledwith, 2016; Uddin, 2024). The following approaches are used in community development: needs-based, problem-solving, participatory, asset-based, power-conflict, welfare and rights-based.

Asset-based approach

This approach begins by first considering what is available in the community. Then, it builds on the assets and capacities of community members instead of focusing on what is lacking or deficient in a particular community. It emphasizes recognizing the strengths and resources of local people in developing communities. The approach relies on community members identifying and building their asset mapping strategy before turning to external partners (Chinyowa et al., 2016). It advances the ability of external resources to be relied upon once communities develop their assets. In attracting external resources, the partnership is encouraged more than just being recipients (Khadka, 2012). It perceives external stakeholders as responsive co-investors and co-creators in community-level action. Creating partnerships points to the political nature of capacity and asset growth. The major thrusts of the approach hinge on

partnerships, capacity building, networking, and communities identifying, leveraging and managing the evolutionary stages of development (Arefi, 2008; Nel, 2020). The development approach anchoring this study builds on this approach.

Needs-based approach

Delivering development takes a top-down approach and assumes that the community is broken and thus requires external support to fix problems. A needs-based approach assesses the needs of communities through needs surveys to identify and quantify deficiencies and develop solutions to meet the identified needs (Khadka, 2012). In the process, the participation of community members is often ignored, and top leaders create policies. Here, experts quantify and assess the community's perceived needs when designing developmental programmes. In this approach, organizations and funders are the leading investors; money from the investors drives the development process. The relationship between the communities and external organizations is vertical, with communities seen as recipients (Nel, 2020).

Participatory approach

The participatory approach focuses on educating and encouraging people to engage in the development process. It proposes that people should be involved in every development project or programme stage, from inception to completion (Buye, 2021). It enables the poorest and marginalized people to participate in development efforts. Community involvement aims to empower individuals by improving their abilities and skills, allowing them to interact with the development process and decide their needs. Participatory mechanisms are a crucial model for giving people a representative and democratic voice in decision-making, which benefits their welfare and health (Riswan & Beegom, 2021). The major thrust of this approach is building the capacity of local communities through information sharing, skills training and organization to achieve effective participation and sustainable development.

Right-based approach

This approach uses established and accepted human rights standards as a common framework for assessing and guiding sustainable development initiatives. It involves systematically applying human rights principles during all programme policy development and implementation (Kindornay et al., 2012; Noh, 2022). According to this approach, human rights abuses need to be dealt with as they have made people suffer and kept in poverty. Thus, this approach translates people's needs into rights and recognizes the human person as the active subject and claim-holder. It recognizes that all people, including those living in poverty, have the right to be involved in processes that impact their lives; it promotes equality and non-discrimination, focusing on vulnerable or marginalized people (Moseli, 2022).

Problem-solving approach

The problem-solving approach focuses on different methods that can be used to create different solutions for the problems faced by communities (Kwong & Kan., 2017). According to this approach, agents of development, such as service providers and external entities, usually enter the community due to the problems and needs of the community that need to be met (Buye, 2021). It emphasizes confronting the problem, arguing that the tendency to avoid allows an escape from difficulties or dependence on others to solve the issues.

Other approaches include the power-conflict approach, which fosters creating harmonious communities by coming up with solutions that seek to address conflicts, especially those with the potential to slow down

or impair development. Also, the welfare approach seeks to interact with working communities to enhance their capacity, consequently improving their well-being (Buye, 2021).

Role of entrepreneurs in community development

In many places worldwide, entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a promising response to economic challenges, such as a lack of jobs and waning economic vitality in rural and developing areas. Different community development projects and programmes have quite distinct implications for community development. At the heart of anti-poverty work is often a concern for community development and the participation of low-income people. It entails continuous improvement of social, economic and environmental standards, thereby maintaining an attractive environment, having a vital social structure that promotes collaboration, equity and liberty, and having an essential economy that is diversified, competitive and accessible (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2016).

From a social perspective, community development has been linked to ensuring equity and the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Banks, 2019; Hale et al., 2019). Social equity is also central to Winston's (2022) analysis of social aspects of community development. It includes social equity, which involves fair distribution of resources, avoiding exclusionary practices and allowing residents to participate fully in society. Winston (2022) also posited that social equity entails meeting the basic human needs of the present so they can participate in society while protecting the quality of earth's life-support systems on which the welfare of current and future generations depends more so that the development is inclusive, well planned, governed and promotes a high quality of life with equality of access to decent quality services for all (Winston, 2022).

Economically, regardless of the definition used, economic development is often associated with creating jobs and wealth and improving quality of life. From this perspective, community development concerns the community's ability to be self-reliant, mobilize and build assets to sustainably improve their quality of life (Gallardo, 2015). Furthermore, entrepreneurs significantly impact local economies by helping to connect them to the larger global economy (Gherghina et al., 2020; Malizia et al., 2020). Beyond the direct economic value of entrepreneurship, Hassan et al. (2017) and Marques et al. (2019) found that entrepreneurial activity motivated by rural artisan professions or tourism can also contribute to the enhancement of local resources, cultural heritage and quality of life. Entrepreneurial activity of all origins creates new jobs and wealth that have spillover benefits into the greater region (Guerrero et al., 2016; Stuetzer et al., 2018).

Zambian scenario

Zambia is a middle-to-low-income country with a population of around 20 million. Zambia, like most Sub-Saharan countries, grapples with the scourge of poverty, which has continued to affect people, especially in rural areas. The World Bank estimates that 75% of Zambia's impoverished people live in rural areas. As of 2022, the extreme poverty level in rural areas stood at 65.1% compared to about 22.4% for urban areas, almost three times higher. This implies that 65.1% of households in rural areas could not meet the cost of the basic food basket (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022).

A study by Muya et al. (2017) revealed that only a tiny percentage of the rural population had access to water points that met the prescribed standards for safe water. Further, despite the growing mobile network, its growth in rural areas was limited by poor infrastructure. In contrast, the internet service

quality was graded as being poor. Moreover, rural roads in Zambia are abysmal and in deplorable condition. Drains are missing, or where they exist, they are narrow, inadequate and not constructed correctly. Bridges are missing, old, inadequate, poorly constructed and usually poorly maintained (Tembo et al., 2020).

The government aims to stimulate economic growth and development of rural areas, just like in many other countries. Communities, governments and other stakeholders need to collaborate to implement strategies that aim to improve the living conditions of rural people. Among these strategies is boosting socioeconomic conditions through rural entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2020). Regarding the development ideology, Zambia has been on a neoliberal trajectory since 1991, emphasizing allowing the markets to be fully involved in the development agenda. This sits well with the asset-based approach to community development, which, in a way, opines limiting the state's role but rather fosters community empowerment and partnerships (MacLeod & Emejulu, 2014).

Theoretical approach

The theoretical framework anchoring this paper is based on economic theory. Economic theory classifies entrepreneurship as both a function and a personality attribute. As a function attribute, entrepreneurship is viewed as any occupation/endeavour that employs the business principles of production, trade and distribution in its operation or undertaking (Bennett et al., 2019; Zucchella & Urban, 2019). Further, entrepreneurs are viewed as people who may not be inventive but as innovators with fresh marketing concepts that can stir economic growth (Juliana et al., 2021). According to Ferreira et al. (2020), the entrepreneur actively employs all sorts of innovative techniques in the economic system to gain a competitive advantage over possible competitors in the market environment. Entrepreneurship is thus essential in economic development because of its quick responsiveness to technological needs and the ability to improve innovation to fulfil demand (Coulibaly et al., 2018). An entrepreneur is also viewed as a self-employed individual who bears the risk and provides for their economic fulfilment. Across various industrial revolutions, the concept has evolved to include the need for adequate administrative or managerial skill sets. From an economic theory perspective, the entrepreneurship literature focuses on the economic value of entrepreneurship and relates the competitive character of overall marketing forces to the entrepreneur's inventive approaches. The argument is that an entrepreneur's inventive abilities stem from their environment and economic conditions, which exist as the leading progression in incremental, experimental, and evolutionary ways (Malerba & McKelvey, 2020).

Selection of indicator variables

The variables/constructs adopted in this study were informed by similar studies by Radipere (2014), Jiménez et al. (2015), Peprah et al. (2017), Kerr et al. (2018), Vasan (2020), Sahinidis et al. (2021), Edwin et al. (2021), Gyimah and Lussier (2021), Saah (2022), as well as del Olmo-García et al. (2023). Common attributes/constructs explaining entrepreneurship were identified from the literature and categorized into four primary constructs/variables: entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation. For each variable, measurement items were equally identified from the literature, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Variables and measurement indicators informing the conceptualization.

Variable	Measurements indicators	Authors
Entrepreneurial Characteristics	Age influences the ability to run a business	Vasan, 2020; Sahinidis et al., 2021
	Entrepreneur level of education	Jiménez et al. 2015; Saah, 2022
	Personality matches the business	Kerr et al. 2018; Li et al., 2020; Edwin et al. 2021; Meng et al., 2022
	Culture affects the way the business is run	Radipere, 2014; Peprah et al. 2017
Business Conception	Driven by innovations	Hessels, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2022; del Olmo-García et al., 2023
	Conducting market surveys to identify business opportunities	Timmons et al., 2004; Gyimah & Lussier, 2021; Lin et al., 2018; Murphy et al., 2019
	A business plan is prepared before launching the business	Gyimah & Lussier, 2021
	Market completion analysis is considered before the commencement	Timmons et al. 2004; Gyimah & Lussier, 2021
Business Realization	An organizational structure is developed at the time of starting a business	Harlin & Berglund, 2021
	Registering with all necessary institutions	Kumar & Borbora, 2016
	Market partnerships and synergies	Gyimah & Lussier, 2021
	A team of people with the proper knowledge and skill set is constituted to run the business	Ibrahim, 2010; Hessels, 2019; Gyimah & Lussier, 2021
Business Operation	Quality goods and services	Dhaliwal, 2016; Dzogbenuku & Keelson, 2019
	Commitment to business	Wang et al., 2015
	Business satisfaction	Przepiorka, 2017
Community Development	Lowers unemployment levels	del Olmo-García et al., 2023
	Improved health of citizens	Muhammed & Abubakar, 2019
	Improved quality of life in the community	Cusack, 2019; Muhammed & Abubakar, 2019
	Improved level of education	Gyimah & Lussier, 2021; del Olmo-García et al., 2023

The conceptual framework adapted for this study had four independent variables: entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation. The dependent variable in the framework is community development. Based on the literature and the preceding theory, the researchers hypothesized that community development is influenced by entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation, as presented in Figure 1.

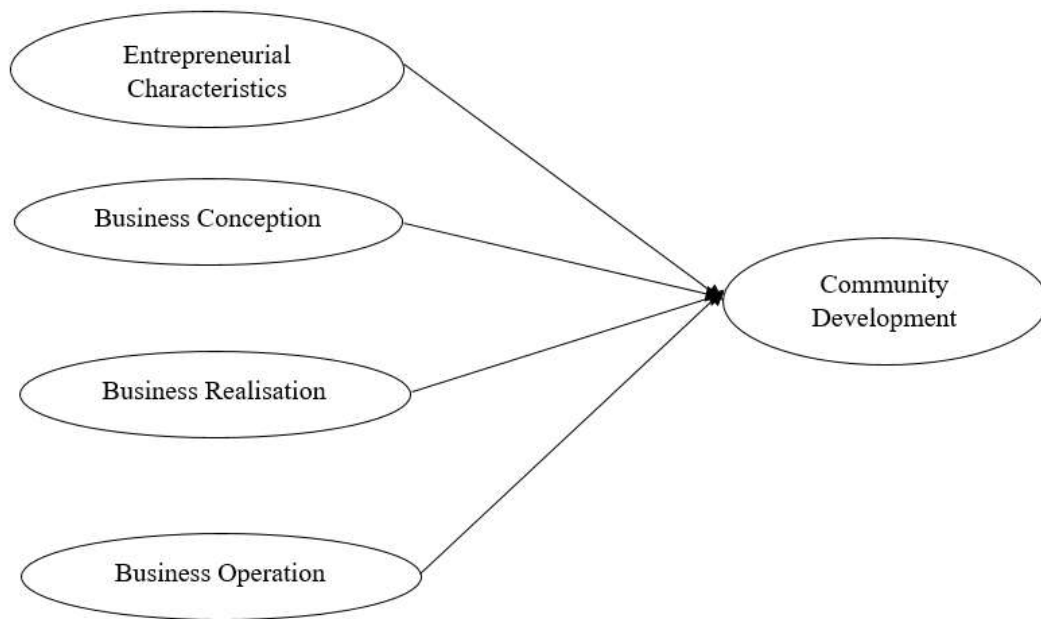


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

The following four relationships were hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Entrepreneurial characteristics have a considerable influence on community development.
 Ha: Entrepreneurial characteristics have no considerable influence on community development.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: Business conception has a significant influence on community development.
 Ha: Business conception has no considerable influence on community development.

Hypothesis 3

Ho: Business realization has a significant influence on community development.
 Ha: Business realization has no considerable influence on community development.

Hypothesis 4

Ho: Business operation has a significant influence on community development.
 Ha: Business operation has no considerable influence on the community.

Research methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive design with a quantitative approach. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended questions from 197 respondents who were purposively sampled and drawn from the rural districts of Copperbelt province. These included entrepreneurs in agriculture, retail (comprising those involved in buying and selling), building construction, transportation business and metal works (welders and fabricators). The extensive literature review informed the development of the questionnaire (instrument) used for the data collection, in which variables used to explain rural entrepreneurship for community development were identified and included in the questionnaire. A summary of the respondents' composition is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Nature of respondents' businesses.

Business type	n	%
Retail (buying and selling)	45	22.8
Agriculture	48	24.4
Transportation business	15	7.6
Building construction	24	12.2
Mining	3	1.5
Services	22	11.2
Metalworks	5	2.5
Manufacturing	14	7.1
Others	21	10.7
Total	197	100.0

The data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis, regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Factor analysis was carried out to explain the extent to which each item in the dataset was associated with the respective factor (variable). Further, regression analysis was carried out to evaluate relationships between the independent and dependent variables (community development). The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis and standard F and tests at 95% significance level.

Results

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

EFA was conducted to assess the uni-dimensionality and reliability of each factor. The extraction and rotation methods of principal components with Varimax rotation were specified. The results revealed that the attributes of all the factors had Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values of 0.605, which is slightly below the 0.7 threshold but still acceptable. Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be significant ($p = 0.000$), as shown in Table 4. This indicated that the factor analysis was appropriate (Rehbinder, 2011; Chisumbe et al., 2022). The KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity are used to determine the suitability of data for factor analysis and whether the variables in the dataset are appropriate for extracting meaningful factors.

Table 4: KMO value.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.605
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2242.145
	Df	276
	Sig.	.000

Factor loadings were calculated for each variable. The factor loadings denoted the relationship between the items (statements) under each variable and the extracted components that explained their variation. The items not shown in Table 5 were 'deleted' for not loading at all, double loading and loadings below 0.5.

Table 5: Variables and factor loadings.

Factors/variables	Undeleted items	Factor loadings
Entrepreneurial Characteristics	Age influences the ability to run a business	0.837
	Level of education helps run the operations of the business	0.733
	Personality matches the business	0.880
	Culture affects the way the business is run	0.885
Business Conception	Promotes innovations	0.624
	A market survey is conducted to identify business opportunities	0.548
	A business plan is prepared before launching the business	0.827
	Market completion analysis is considered prior to commencement	0.819
Business Realization	An organization structure is developed at the time of starting a business	0.807
	Register with all necessary institutions such as PACRA, Banks and ZRA	0.875
	Development of market partnerships and synergies	0.788
	A team of people with the proper knowledge and skill set is constituted to run the business	0.510
Business Operation	Market penetration, quality goods or services	0.727
	Commitment to business	0.781
	Business satisfaction	0.835
Community Development	Lowers unemployment levels	0.614
	There is improved health of citizens	0.860
	There is an improved quality of life in the community	0.717
	Improved access to education	0.778

The total variance explained was 84.62%. This implies that a more significant percentage of the variation in the scores on the Likert scale was explained. All these statistics affirm that the data's validity was good, the research instrument was well prepared and the respondents understood the questions. Furthermore, good validity indicates that the research instrument sufficiently evaluated the phenomenon of rural entrepreneurship and community development. Table 6 shows the reliability statistics for the five main variables considered in this research.

Table 6: Reliability statistics.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	No. of 'undeleted items'
Entrepreneurial characteristics	0.704	4
Business conception	0.837	5
Business realization	0.644	2
Business operation	0.694	3
Community development	0.672	4

Different methods of determining reliability are used by different scholars in different situations and settings to assess the reliability of the data; this study employed consistent reliability. This method involves determination of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Entrepreneurial characteristics and business conception had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, indicating strong reliability. Business realization, business operation and community development had Cronbach alpha values slightly below 0.7, but they were good enough, as they were above 0.5. Overall, the collected data were highly consistent and reproducible. The respondents answered the questions similarly and consistently.

Regression analysis

The regression analysis evaluated relationships between the four independent variables (entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation) and the dependent variable (community development). The strength of relationships was determined by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient (R). The research model was evaluated using ANOVA and the model summary. All statistics were generated based on a 95% confidence interval. The relationship between each predictor variable and the dependent variable was determined based on the Pearson correlation coefficients. Table 7 shows the Pearson correlation (R) values for each relationship. The P-value to denote the significance of the relationship was calculated for each value of R.

The relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and community development was positive, linear, slightly above average and significant ($R = 0.645$; $P = 0.000$; $P < 0.05$). The relationship between business conception and community development was positive, linear, weak and not significant ($R = 0.037$; $P = 0.679$; $P > 0.05$). Similarly, the relationship between business realization and community development was positive, linear, weak and not significant ($R = 0.062$; $P = 0.488$; $P > 0.05$). The relationship between business operation and community development was positive, linear, average and significant ($R = 0.648$; $P = 0.000$; $P < 0.05$). The analysis revealed that only entrepreneurial characteristics and business operations significantly influenced community development in the Copperbelt rural area. In contrast, business conception and realization did not significantly influence community development.

The relationships between four demographic variables (gender, age, education level and business tenure) and community development were tested. The statistics in Table 7 reveal that gender had a weak and insignificant relationship with community development ($R = -0.108$; $P = 0.168$; $P > 0.05$). Age had a slightly below average, linear and significant relationship with community development ($R = 0.397$; $P = 0.000$; $P < 0.05$). The highest qualification had an average, linear and significant relationship with community development ($R = 0.538$; $P = 0.000$; $P < 0.05$). Tenure of business had a weak, linear and insignificant relationship with community development ($R = 0.037$; $P = 0.371$; $P > 0.05$).

Table 7: Correlation coefficients.

		Community development	Entrepreneurial characteristics	Business conception	Business realization	Business operation	Gender	Age	Education Level	Tenure of business
Pearson correlation	Community development	1.000								
	Entrepreneurial characteristics	.645	1.000							
	Business conception	.037	.356	1.000						
	Business realization	.062	.271	.134	1.000					
	Business operation	.648	.433	.596	.433	1.000				
	Gender	-.108	-.234	.186	-.528	-.249	1.000			
	Age	.397	.311	.234	.683	.420	-.359	1.000		
	Education level	.538	.373	.181	.265	.579	-.443	.221	1.000	
	Tenure of business	.037	.295	.192	.123	.099	.059	.185	.133	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	Community development	.							
Entrepreneurial characteristics		.000	.							
Business conception		.679	.001	.						
Business realization		.488	.007	.117	.					
Business operation		.000	.000	.000	.000	.				
Gender		.168	.018	.048	.000	.013	.			
Age		.000	.002	.018	.000	.000	.001	.		
Education level		.000	.000	.052	.008	.000	.000	.024	.	
Tenure of business		.371	.004	.043	.136	.189	.302	.049	.118	.

The combined effect of the predictor variables, entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation on the dependent variable was tested, and the related statistics calculated are presented in the model summary shown in Table 8. The overall relationship between the independent and dependent variables was linear, positive and significant ($R = 0.727$; $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The model's coefficient of determination (R square) was 0.528, which shows that the variation in community development explained by the independent variables was 52.8%. The remaining 47.2% of the variation would be explained by factors not considered in this research.

Table 8: Model summary statistics.

Model summary									
Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-Squared	Std. error of the estimate	R-squared change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	.727 ^a	.528	.504	.39430	.528	21.292	4	76	.000

a. Predictors: (constant), entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and operation.

ANOVA was another technique used to evaluate the model developed for the research. This was done by evaluating the fit between the conceptualized relationships and the collected data. A summary of the ANOVA statistical results is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Analysis of variance.

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.241	4	3.310	21.292	.000 ^b
	Residual	11.816	76	.155		
	Total	25.057	80			

a. Dependent variable: Community development

b. Predictors: (constant), entrepreneurial characteristics, business conception, business realization and business operation

The F-value for the model was significant at a 95% confidence interval with α at the significance level of 0.05. Thus $P < \alpha$; $0.000 < 0.05$. The results indicated that the data suited the model and that the model developed for the current research was significant.

Hypothesis testing

The research tested four hypotheses. The testing was done by comparing the P-values with the significance level (α). Since the confidence level was 95%, the significance level was 5% (0.05). The decision rule for the hypotheses was not to reject H_0 , the null hypothesis if its P-value is smaller than the level of significance ($P < \alpha$ or $P < 0.05$). Table 10 shows the null hypotheses for all key relationships, the respective statistics and the conclusion for each test.

Table 10: Hypothesis test statistics.

Null hypothesis	P-Value vs sig. level	Conclusion
There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and community development	0.000 < 0.05	Rejected
There is no significant relationship between business conception and community development.	0.679 > 0.05	Accepted
There is no significant relationship between business realization and community development.	0.488 > 0.05	Accepted
There is no significant relationship between business operation and community development.	0.000 < 0.05	Rejected

Null hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and community development, which was rejected empirically ($P\text{-value} < \alpha$; $0.000 < 0.05$). It was inferred that there was a significant relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and community development. On the contrary, null hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between business conception and community development, was accepted ($P\text{-value} > \alpha$; $0.679 > 0.05$). It was inferred that there is no significant relationship between business conception and community development. Null hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between business realization and community development was accepted statistically ($P\text{-value} > \alpha$; $0.488 > 0.05$). It was inferred that there was no significant relationship between business realization and community development. Conversely, null hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between business operation and community development, was rejected statistically ($P\text{-value} < \alpha$; $0.000 < 0.05$). It was upheld as it is and worthwhile to infer that there was a significant relationship between business operation and community development.

Discussion

Influence of entrepreneurial characteristics on community development

Entrepreneurial characteristics had a significant relationship with community development. Its variable coefficient for predicting community development was equally significant. Further, the associated hypothesis: There is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and community development was statistically supported. The implication is that the attributes of entrepreneurs, such as age, education level, personality and culture, contribute significantly to the ability to do business and community development. Overall, the entrepreneurial characteristics were impactful. The findings are supported by Li et al. (2020) and Meng et al. (2022), positing that to speed up economic development in rural areas, it is essential to build up the critical mass of first-generation entrepreneurs. The characteristics of entrepreneurs in the Copperbelt rural area helped them contribute to community development. These findings agree with Kerr et al. (2018) and Edwin et al. (2021), emphasizing the importance of entrepreneur characteristics on community development.

Influence of business conception on community development

The relationship between business conception and community development was found to be weak and not significant. Furthermore, the hypothesis that business conception has a significant relationship with community development was not statistically supported. The implication is that efforts made at the conception stage of the business were not translating into community development. Another possibility is that the businesses were not effectively defined. This could be attributed to failure to properly document the business idea, poor definition of the business concept and limited knowledge and skills

on the part of some of the businesspeople involved in rural entrepreneurship. This result contrasts with studies by Lin et al. (2018) and Murphy et al. (2019) on the significance of business conception on rural entrepreneurship.

Influence of business realization on community development

The relationship between business realization and community development was found to be weak and not significant. Furthermore, the hypothesis that business realization has a significant relationship with community development was not empirically supported. The implication is that efforts made when realizing or setting up the businesses were not translating into improved community development. Another possibility was that the coordination and organization were not effectively done at the beginning. This could be attributed to limited use of tools such as organization charts, poor formalization of the business with bodies such as the Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA), the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) and banks and limited knowledge and skills on the part of some of the personnel involved in business realization. The finding that business realization did not significantly influence community development is contrary to what Ibrahim (2010) found on the role played by rural entrepreneurship in employment generation, showing that rural entrepreneurship has a high potential for creating new jobs, considering the vast resources in rural areas.

Influence of business operation on community development

Business operation had a significant relationship with community development. Its variable coefficient for predicting community development was equally significant. Further, the associated hypothesis: business operation has a significant relationship with community development was statistically supported. The implication is that the attributes of business operations focusing on commitment, providing quality goods or services needed by the market and having business satisfaction from running the business contributed to overall entrepreneurship and community development. These results suggest that commitment to running a business is significant in explaining entrepreneurship and predicting rural community development. On the importance of commitment, the results agree with Wang et al. (2015). Similarly, the results agree with Dhaliwal (2016) and Dzogbenuku and Keelson (2019) on the need to provide quality goods or services which respond to the market in explaining business operations as an entrepreneur thereby contributing to community development.

Conclusion

This paper reaffirms that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in rural community development, leading to improved living standards, employment opportunities, alleviation of poverty, utilization of local resources and reduction of rural-urban migration. Specifically, rural entrepreneurship is an essential facilitator of economic development, especially in rural areas. The relationship between rural entrepreneurship and community development was assessed in this study, and the findings showed that rural entrepreneurship significantly influences community development in rural areas. Therefore, the authors recommend investing in critical infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications and electricity infrastructure in rural areas to attract entrepreneurs and stimulate rural community development.

Though exciting and valuable findings have emerged from this study, they are not without limitations. Consideration should be given to the following limitations concerning this current study. First, the research was conducted in Copperbelt province only; therefore, it is recommended that a similar research study be

conducted in another geographical location from another developing country. Second, additional factors or constructs can be considered to improve the conceptualized framework.

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