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# Street entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe: Survivalist or growth oriented? - A case of Bulawayo city centre

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## Abstract

The paper explores the orientation of street entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe using Bulawayo Metropolitan Province as a case in point. It seeks to establish whether this phenomenon is growth or survivalist oriented by identifying the main characteristics of street entrepreneurs, investigating levels of business acumen and access to institutional support services by entrepreneurs, exploring opportunities and challenges faced by these entrepreneurs and proposing strategies that can be implemented to support and promote the establishment of growth oriented enterprises. The research targeted Bulawayo Street Entrepreneurs as its study population and employed multistage sampling to choose respondents. Data was gathered using questionnaires and key informant interviews. The research revealed that street entrepreneurship is survivalist oriented and that it's only a livelihood diversification strategy. Moreover, there is general lack of institutional support and business acumen to successfully direct street entrepreneurship activities towards growth. Street entrepreneurship offers a good opportunity for employment creation and sustainable livelihoods however it is faced with challenges that when rightfully addressed can contribute more to the economic wellbeing of the entrepreneurs. The paper thus concludes that there is need for the government of Zimbabwe to create an enabling environment that will help steer street entrepreneurship towards growth.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Street entrepreneurship, Survivalist oriented, Growth oriented, Institutional support

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs comprise a fundamental constituent of urban economies around the world (Pasteur, 2001). Their reasonably priced goods and services provide consumers with convenient and accessible retail options. Entrepreneurship as a livelihood strategy has existed for hundreds of years (Pasteur, 2001) and varies in scope, quality as well as time. Entrepreneurs are usually seen broadly as those who sell goods or services in public space (ILO, 2002). These goods and services range from food stuff, fabrics/clothes, shoes, cosmetics, flowers, traditional herbs, craft/artwork/pottery, kitchen ware, plastic products, hardware, electrical appliances and general merchandise such as stationary, school supplies, books, sweets, brooms, tobacco, air time and newspapers among others (Pasteur, 2001). The goods are traded on streets and other public spaces like sidewalks, alleyways, and medians (ibid). The diversity in their place of function and goods traded also signifies the differences in their orientation in terms of expansion. Zimbabwe has a high incidence of these entrepreneurs but very little has been done to establish their orientation in terms of growth.

This paper focuses on Street Entrepreneurs in the Bulawayo City Centre and attempts to establish whether they are growth or survivalist oriented. The Global Entrepreneurship Measure (GEM) surveys, define an entrepreneur as “somebody actively involved in starting a business or is the owner/manager of a business” (Harding et al., 2006:46). This definition also includes street entrepreneurs as these also start up, own and manage business ventures. The difference between mainstream enterprising and street enterprising is that (Bhowmik, 2007:34):

*Street entrepreneurship is the antithesis of conventional entrepreneurship, carried out in the streets without permanent premises, lacking appropriate business permits, violating zoning codes, failing to report tax liability, lacking compliance with labour regulations governing working conditions, and/or lacking legal guarantees in relation to suppliers and clients.*

Cross (2000) denotes that street entrepreneurs are either stationary vendors who occupy space on the pavements, flea markets or other public/private space or mobile vendors carrying their goods on pushcarts or in baskets on their heads. The study will focus on the stationary street entrepreneurs because they are easier to access and follow-up.

### 1.1. Entrepreneurship: An overview

Studies around the globe have shown that street enterprising is a topical subject and as an activity provides a large proportion of jobs with 48% in North America, 51% in Latin America, 65% in Asia and 72% in Sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2002). De Soto (1989) and (ILO) (2002) concur that generally, the informal sector is essentially an incubator for business potential and growth and thus street enterprises also portray some real business acumen, creativity and innovation. Although the whole idea of street enterprising began gaining respect in the Third World Countries, in recent years Western Countries and Post Socialist Countries have also began to depict it (Katungi et al., 2006; Round and Williams, 2008).

The debate on the orientation of enterprises, whether growth or survivalist, has continued to be a global issue either directly or indirectly (ibid). Case studies of street entrepreneurs in the Dominican Republic (Itzigsohn, 2000) and Somalia (Little, 2003), street garment businesses in India and the Philippines (Das, 2003) and home based micro-enterprises in Mexico (Staudt, 1998) have all given the consensus that street enterprising is merely a survival strategy and necessity driven. In the Western countries and Post Socialist transition economies however, street enterprising has been represented as a growth endeavour and own choice venture (Williams, 2007). These differences show the complexity and diversity of the subject of street enterprising from a global perspective.

Bhide (2000) advances that in the developing world entrepreneurship has played an important role in economic growth, innovation and competitiveness and in future may be integral to poverty alleviation. The misconception among theorists and researchers has been to place both the developed and developing countries on the same entrepreneurial platter yet these have distinct practices that lead to either growth or survival in different ways (Bhide, 2000).

In Zimbabwe, Street Entrepreneurship comprises a large percentage of the urban informal economy as a result of perpetual poverty and high levels of unemployment which have seen the number of enterprises increase as people resort to informal trading as a means of livelihood (Mboko and Hunter, 2009). This 'follows the economic collapse that characterised the country in the period after 2000, when the manufacturing sector shrunk up to over 47 percent' as alluded to by (Coltart, 2008:2). This according to Mboko and Hunter (2009) resulted in retrenchment and brain drain, while those who could not escape the country resorted to the informal sector. Some resorted to cross-border trading and sold their goods in street markets while others ventured into other activities such as poultry projects, vending and food catering (Coltart, 2008). Political hardships, coupled with the hyper inflationary environment which was estimated by unofficial sources to have reached one million percent by June 2008, further decimated the earnings and profits of entrepreneurs (Luebker, 2008: 17).

Efforts to stabilise the economy commenced after the inception of the Government of National Unity (GNU) when the Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP) was launched. One of its major tenets was the promotion and development of entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe (Coltart, 2009). Traits of improvement in the entrepreneurial sector, like any other sector, only began to show after the introduction of the multi- currency system which was adopted by the government in 2009 (Reserve bank of Zimbabwe, 2009). The Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development (MSMECD) follows a policy framework that is aimed at developing and supporting the growth of small to medium enterprises in the country (Dube, 2010). According to Dube (2010) the Ministry disburses loans for enterprise development and these are administered by Small Enterprises Development Corporation (SEDCO) an arm of (MSMECD) whose main purpose is to offer financial assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises.

The high incidence of street enterprises in Zimbabwe, amidst the presence of a dedicated ministry mandated to monitor and support the development of entrepreneurship, is not matched by sufficient research to establish their orientation in terms of growth (ibid). According to the ILO (2010), the informal sector in Zimbabwe grew from the initial 10% before independence to 20% by 1986-1987, 27% by 1991 and

an estimated 40% by 2004. The labour force survey of 2007 showed that 70.4 percent of unskilled people were in the informal economy as enterprise owners (Luebker, 2008). Dube (2010) also noted that over 5 million Zimbabweans earn their living through the informal sector. Although there has been gradual measurement in terms of the growth of the sector over time, not much has been done to determine the capacity, growth and characteristics of these entities. In light of this, therefore, this paper seeks to explore the characteristics of street entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe, and determine whether they are growth or survivalist oriented, using Bulawayo City Centre as a case in point.

## 1.2. Conceptualization of Entrepreneurship

Adding on to the definition by the Global Entrepreneurship Measure (GEM) surveys, which agree that an entrepreneur is an individual that is involved in establishing or rather owns a business entity (Harding et al., 2006), the word *En-tre-pre-neur*, comes from the 13<sup>th</sup> century French verb *entreprende*, meaning “to do something or to undertake” (ibid). Entrepreneurship is largely viewed as the critical force driving most economies around the world as it centres on encouraging the growth of business, developing new employment opportunities and fuelling economic growth (ibid). It can even be traced back to the capitalistic system which views entrepreneurship as a productive endeavour that seeks to increase harvest while reducing labour employed in order to reduce costs significantly (Reynolds et al., 2001). Schumpeter first defined entrepreneurship to suit the modern times when he contended that it is an innovative process of change where new products, or combinations or procedures are created (ibid). Harding et al. (2006) ascertain that entrepreneurship follows a cycle that begins with perception of a business idea. This idea is developed into a marketable concept, leading to the setting up of the business or exploitation of the idea. The business is exposed to competition from other actors who want to exploit the same concept. The market matures eventually and yields profit then the cycle starts all over again, as new ideas and concepts replace the old ones which fade out. According to Harding et al. (2006), enterprises may not follow the cycle precisely, however, some attributes of the cycle maybe followed while others may be skipped, yet still while others may be integrated into the cycle. This then suggests that entrepreneurship is a process, and entrepreneurs have different characteristics and different typologies which make them operate in distinct ways (ibid).

## 1.3. Typologies: Survivalist and growth oriented entrepreneurs

There are various characteristics that distinguish survivalist from growth oriented enterprises. Motivation is one of the distinguishing factors, as growth oriented enterprises engage in entrepreneurship because of opportunity, to expand business while satisfying living standards in the household while survivalist oriented firms simply are not interested in expanding their business, do not show any entrepreneurial traits and operate temporarily while a market gap exists or until they can find waged work (Phillips and Panthaki, 2007; House, 1984; Reynolds et al., 2001 and Berner, Gomez and Knorringa, 2008). Moreover, survival entrepreneurs unlike their growth oriented counterparts operate with limited incomes below the minimum

subsistence wage set by the government, insufficient to reinvest in the business or to meet basic family needs and income estimations are a very difficult task (Daniels, 2001).

According to Karim and Marcucci (2001) women unlike men have largely been associated with the survival school as they usually fail to balance their reproductive and productive roles due to the multiplicity of roles they perform and the priority culture gives to their familial responsibilities. As such most women tend to engage in activities related to their traditional familial roles such as vending and hairdressing thus limiting them in terms of orientation, hence only engaging in entrepreneurship as a secondary supplement to the 'males' activities (ibid). In addition Marris (1968) accentuates that most survivalist entrepreneurs possess a tendency to feel compelled, when somewhat successful, to help those that are less successful at that time, whether in the family or at their work place, at the expense of business growth, in the hope and fear that "maybe" someday they may need help too from those individuals. This is called moral economy of the poor and includes the cost of educating relatives, caring for the aged and sick, contributing towards funeral expenses and employing them in the business (ibid).

Most survivalist oriented firms as opposed to their growth oriented counterparts fail to access loans and grants because of unfriendly terms and conditions and those that do usually struggle to service those loans and lack the necessary skills to carry out their duties meaningfully (Zandniapour et al., 2004 and Richardson 2004). As such these resort to the use of unsophisticated methods of borrowing, saving and investing such as informal money lenders, clubs and even buying property for resale in future (ibid). Although most entrepreneurs start small, growth oriented entrepreneurs show the capacity to accumulate capital, create jobs already in the initial phases of business inception and subsequently expand it vigorously while, survival oriented firms usually prefer to use surplus incomes to create new enterprises instead of enlarging the existing ones (Nitcher and Goldmark, 2009; Olomi et al., 2001).

#### 1.4. Entrepreneurship development in Zimbabwe: Policy and practice

Entrepreneurship development in Zimbabwe has been placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Small to Medium and Cooperative Development (MSMECD). There has however, been an outcry that it does not sufficiently recognize and support the entrepreneurs, leaving them in the doldrums operating at the fringes of the law (Luebker, 2008). Mhone (1996) extends that in the colonial era, the law was used to benefit the interests of the settlers, ensuring that African labor was dependent, dominated and subjugated by the white formal sector employment, hence the reasons why the Zimbabwean curriculum, even up to today is highly vested with non-practical and non-entrepreneurial subjects (ibid). Daniels (2001) and Kapoor et al. (1997) establish that although bias was not exterminated completely, the informal entrepreneurial sector only became partially significant and recognized after independence, eventually leading to the establishment of the people's markets (flea markets) in central urban areas in the mid 1990s.

Several programmes targeted at entrepreneurs have been developed in Zimbabwe by the government to support entrepreneurship through the SMEs policy which guides sectoral practice and development, based on a number of key performances that if tapped on can lead to growth oriented outcomes such as enabling legal and regulatory environment among others. These programmes have been done with the co-operation

and support of such institutions as SEDCO and ILO among others, however this support has only been piecemeal and uncoordinated (Fifteen, Chuma and Mkandawire, 2004). With SEDCO in the driving seat, directly under the MSMECD, this support includes training, funding, educating entrepreneurs and assisting in employment creation through the establishment of income generating projects (Fifteen, Chuma and Mkandawire, 2004).

Entrepreneurial practice was met by Operation Murambatvina in 2005, a cleanup campaign by the Government where informal entrepreneurial business structures were destroyed, operators evicted and their wares confiscated in the name of restoring the glamour of the urban cities (Gumbo, 2005). This operation took place against the backdrop of economic decline which resulted in high emigration of entrepreneurs to neighboring countries to try and earn a livelihood (Potts, 2006). The government responded with a reconstruction program called Garikai/ Hlalani kuhle which encountered serious shortages of resources (ibid). The years that followed were characterized by economic turmoil, shortages of basic services and inputs and political stalemates that further decimated the entrepreneurs (Chirisa, 2009). The situation like in any other sector, only improved after the introduction of the multicurrency system by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe that was supplemented by the STERP (ibid).

Despite the importance of the SME sector, the efforts of the Zimbabwean government and other supporting institutions to promote and support this sector to fulfill its mandate, it still encounters some problems and challenges which affect negatively its development and contribution towards growth oriented outcomes (Chirisa, 2009). It remains to be seen what the future of entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe holds, especially considering the revision of the indigenization policy, the seemingly lucrative ZIMASET policy and the fact that the multicurrency system will at some point have to be done away with, paving way for the re adoption of the traditional Zimbabwean dollar.

## 2. Methods

This paper is based on the data collected in the Central Business District in Bulawayo province of Zimbabwe in September 2013. The methodology employed was both quantitative and qualitative, and the questions in the data collection instruments were derived from literature review. Data collection was through in-depth interviews, semi structured questionnaires and primary data. The entrepreneurs were scattered and widely dispersed throughout the Bulawayo City Centre operating from 20 vending sites, with a total of 1500 entrepreneurs. As such, accessibility of some of the entrepreneurs was a problem due to the limited time to leave their activities and attend to the researcher. This created logistic problems in the mobilisation of the respondents thereby warranting the use of multistage sampling for the researcher administered questionnaires. In light of the preceding, the researcher purposively selected Lobengula Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Markets as they were deemed to be the main trading sites in the city centre by the City Council for the questionnaires. The research targeted the 2 vending sites (that is 10% of the total number of sites) with a population of 130 and 120 entrepreneurs respectively. Ten percent of each site's population was calculated which resulted in a 13 and 12 entrepreneurs respectively, totalling to a sample of 25 respondents from both

sites who trade in various forms of entrepreneurial goods ranging from food stuffs to general merchandise. 5 In-depth interviews were carried out with key informants in Bulawayo. Secondary data helped to cover the gaps left by the primary research.

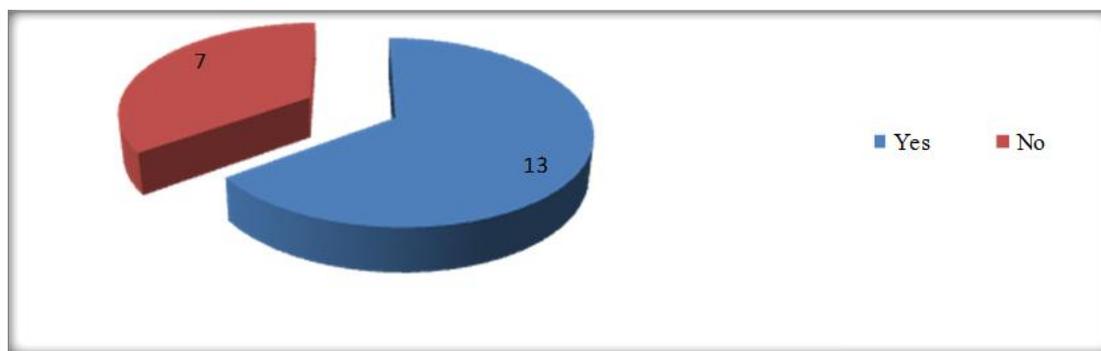
### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Demographic data

A total of 20 people (80% response rate) responded to the questionnaires. The majority of street entrepreneurs forty five (45%) are youths, aged between the ages of 25 and 34 with an average age of 29, and in terms of gender are female dominated constituting fifty five percent (55%). These are the most economically active and mostly affected by perpetual poverty and unemployment. The majority, seventy five percent (75%) of respondents have ordinary level ('O' Level) as their highest qualification owing to the fact that most of them could not continue with their studies due to failure or shortages of funds. Most of them are married, fifty five percent (55%) meaning that they have dependents motivating their entrepreneurial endeavours.

#### 3.2. Characteristics of street entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is the main source of income for the majority of the street entrepreneurs, which is sixty five percent (65%) of the respondents as shown in Figure 1. The other thirty five (35%) had other sources of income which included remittances and wages from the formal sector hence their entrepreneurial activities may only be supplementary livelihood and income diversification measures.

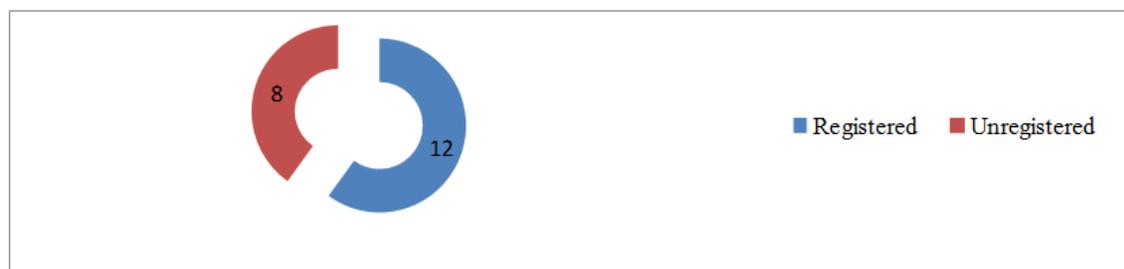


**Figure 1.** Entrepreneurship as the main source of income

Furthermore, the study sought to establish the number of years that the respondents had spent in the business of street entrepreneurship. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents indicated that they had been involved in entrepreneurship for less than 5 years while the other forty percent (40%) had been practising

for more than 7 years, with the highest having been in business for 39 years. This distribution could mean most street entrepreneurs in Bulawayo mushroomed after the 2008 to 2009 economic crisis.

The respondents were also asked if their businesses were registered or not, and the results are presented in Figure 2. In response, sixty percent (60%) of the respondents indicated that they were registered with the local authorities while the other forty percent (40%) were not registered. When asked their reasons, the registered entrepreneurs indicated the stringent measures taken by the local authorities against those that are not registered, while those that are not registered, confirmed and affirmed the neoliberal perspective which suggests that most entrepreneurs want to do away with state imposed institutional constraints, the need to avoid costs, time and efforts of formal registration (De Soto, 1989, 2001; London and Hart, 2004), a response to burdensome controls and an attempt to dodge them (Nwabuzor, 2005), and a rational response to over- regulation by government bureaucracies (Becker, 2004).

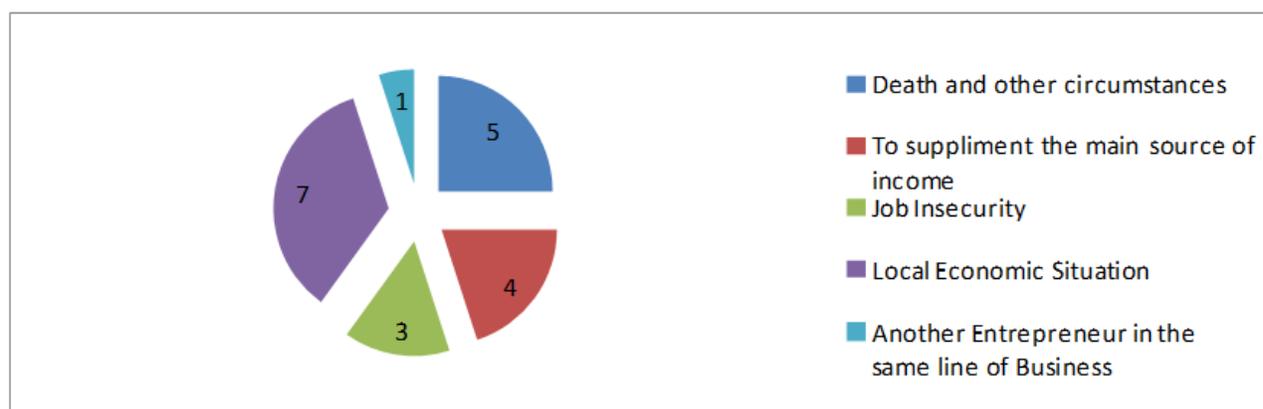


**Figure 2.** Registered / licensed entrepreneurs

Also imperative for the study was to establish if entrepreneurs paid their taxes, and the results showed clearly that sixty percent (60%) of the respondents pay tax or rentals to the local authorities while the other forty percent (40%) do not pay any form of tax or fee. According to an interview with a key informant from the Bulawayo City Council, the payment of tax and rent by entrepreneurs indicates that governance by local authorities is improving with most entrepreneurs being encouraged to pay tax. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs themselves attributed their compliance to the authoritarian nature of governance were entrepreneurs are forced to pay tax. The figures of those that do not pay tax could also be in accordance with the neoliberal perspective of the need by entrepreneurs to avoid burdensome controls and an attempt to dodge them (Nwabuzor, 2005).

It was also the purpose of the study to establish the motivation for the entrepreneurs to start their businesses on the streets. According to Berner, Gomez and Knorringa (2008), people practice street entrepreneurship for a numerous of reasons, with some perceiving it to be a necessary evil, their last alternative, or best choice, let alone a better alternative than low-wage formal employment, while others are in it for self-actualization, as a community service practice, or engagement in a supporting capacity of main income (ibid). On the other hand, some engage in entrepreneurship because of opportunity, to expand business while satisfying living standards in the household (Berner, Gomez and Knorringa 2008 and Reynolds et al., 2001).

Figure 3 shows that thirty five percent (35%) were motivated by the difficult economic situation while twenty five percent (25%) engage in entrepreneurship because of the death of the bread winner and other unfortunate circumstances such as divorce. Twenty percent (20%) indicated the need to supplement main source of income as their major motivator while fifteen percent (15%) alluded to job insecurity in the previous jobs. Only five percent (5%) of the respondents was motivated by another entrepreneur who engaged in the same line of business. These findings thus concur with Berner, Gomez and Knorringa (2008) on the different motivations. Only five percent (5%) of the respondents entered in the quest to make profits like another entrepreneur in the same line of business.

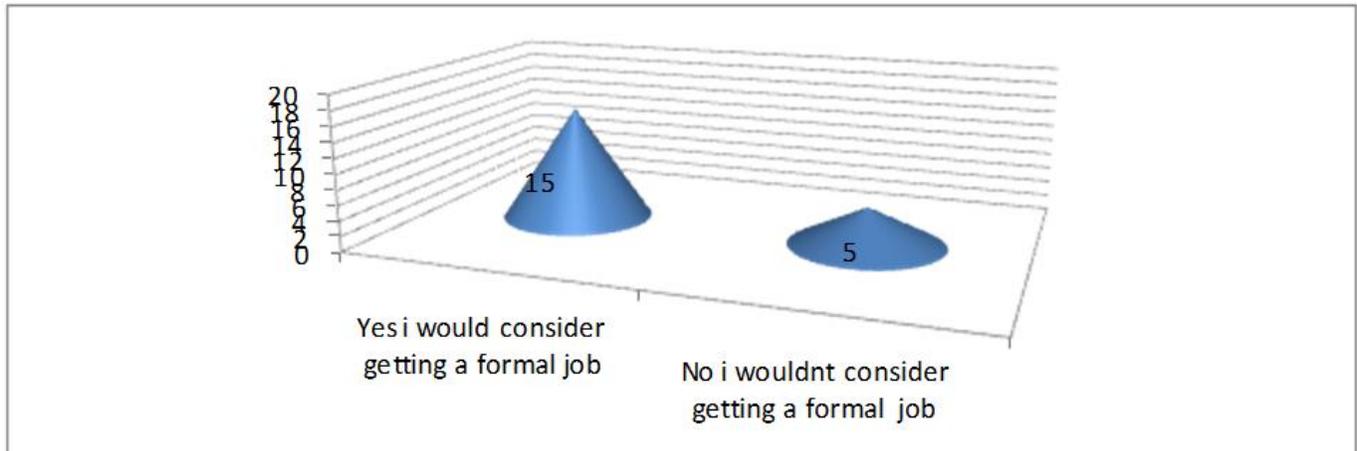


**Figure 3.** Motivation to start a business

This study also established the products or services being offered by the street entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs indicated a variety of goods which included electrical appliances, kitchen utensils (especially traditional), cosmetics and facials, photo shooting and print business, foot ware, vegetables both traditional and non-traditional, flower industry (both perishable and non perishable), meat (fish, chicken cuts, sausages), bread, traditional food stuffs (millet, rapoko, wheat, sugar beans, sorghum, *amacimbi*), traditional milk-*amasi*, ecocash agents (selling airtime, cell phone charging services, solar lamps), caravan kitchens offering all cooked food, craft industry (baskets, hats, grass brooms, mats, bead earrings, neck less), and other accessories. This is in accordance with Pasteur (2001) who insinuates that street entrepreneurs trade in almost any kind of product or service, from the traditional to the non traditional and from food to non food items, with different varieties and quantities.

Respondents were also asked if they would consider getting another formal job. Their responses are quantified in the Figure 4. Given an opportunity, seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents claimed that they would consider getting another formal job while only twenty five (25%) would not consider getting another formal job. When asked their reasons, the respondents who would get another job, indicated that they were only in their current work because of circumstances beyond their control. The other category of those who wouldn't want to get another job indicated that they were aged, beyond pension and other remuneration benefits. This is in accordance with Reynolds et al. (2001) who articulate that most survivalist

oriented entrepreneurs would prefer the stability of a regular and stable job, even if at a similar low income as from their enterprise and this shows the unsustainable nature of the businesses run by street entrepreneurs.



**Figure 4.** Possibility to Consider Getting another Job

The study also established that before starting their businesses, some of the entrepreneurs were either employed in other low waged jobs, at school completing their ordinary levels, or sited at home as household care givers. This also concurs with Reynolds et al. (2001) who note that limited work experience and low standards of living usually result in entrepreneurs also engaging in low income activities. Women are the most affected, as the multiplicity of roles, especially for them and the priority culture has given to their familial responsibilities tends to put severe constraints not only to the scope and capacity of their operations but also to the entrepreneurial choices they can perform, as such they mostly operate at subsistence level (Women of Zimbabwe Arise, 2010).

In relation to income generated per month, the majority, eighty percent (80%) of the respondents indicated an average figure of \$150 per month while the other ten percent (10%) gave figures above \$300. Only ten percent (10%) did not give decisive answers attributing to the fluctuations caused by seasonal/timely changes in business boom. The findings concur with Daniels (2001) who speculates that survivalists barely have an income to satisfy the needs of the households, let alone reinvest profits in the business. The income is below the poverty datum line of \$620 per month in Zimbabwe.

The findings also revealed that most of the businesses employed between 1 and 5 employees who were related as either brothers, sisters or cousins. According to a research by Mead and Liedholm (1988) only 1 percent of enterprises with four or less workers graduated the next category of more than 10 workers. In addition (ibid) in a research in Mexico concluded that only 12 percent of the single-worker firms expanded. According to Karim and Marcucci (2001) relatives may not have the innovation, motivation, skills and acumen required in entrepreneurship to propel the business towards growth. This therefore, to a larger extent points to the fact that most street entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe are only survivalist oriented.

All these characteristics concur with the opinions of key informants who all agreed that street entrepreneurship is a subsistence level livelihood diversification activity, with little capital and incomes, and that most of those in the city center are usually bound to be registered.

### 3.3. Business acumen and institutional support

Aggregated responses on business acumen and institutional support were presented in Figure 5, showing that sixty five percent (65%) of the respondents save and invest their incomes while thirty five percent (35%) do not save their incomes. Most of the respondents save their incomes informally through clubs and at home. When asked why they opted to save informally the respondents attributed largely to the cumbersome imposed constraints and burdensome controls, like the high bank charges, difficult bank registration procedures and the requirement of collateral. These are terms and conditions which a majority of entrepreneurs would hardly meet.

Moreover, others indicated that the distribution was a result of the subsistence level incomes which are not saveable. Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents have received institutional support services while eighty five percent (85%) of the respondents had not received any institutional support. This could be an indication that institutional programmes have not been revised, reviewed or amended specifically to promote growth oriented street enterprises in Bulawayo and Zimbabwe as a whole. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents kept financial/accounting records while the other sixty percent (60%) did not keep financial records in their businesses. This is in line with what other scholars have pointed out that survival oriented entrepreneurs are not keen to grow their business hence prefer to use mental management of enterprises at the expense of 'by-the-book' management (Mead and Liedholm, 1998). Twenty five percent (25%) of the respondents indicated that they had received entrepreneurial training before, or during their entrepreneurial practice while the other seventy five percent (75%) had never receive any entrepreneurial training.

The study also sought to establish the entrepreneurs' borrowing mechanisms. Figure 6 indicates the results thereof, that sixty five percent (65%) of the respondents borrow money from relatives and friends, five percent (5%) borrow from commercial banks while thirty percent (30%) of the respondents borrow informally from clubs, and money lenders otherwise known as '*simbazo*'<sup>1</sup> in the street lingo. None of the respondents borrow from the private sector. This distribution was largely attributed by respondents to the cumbersome procedures of acquiring loans from banks and the requirement of collateral which most of the entrepreneurs do not have, hence rendering them not qualified for loans. The Simbazos –informal money lenders on the other hand charge high interest rates which further decimates the street businesses. As a result most entrepreneurs tend to borrow informally from clubs, at home and from friends.

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<sup>1</sup> '*Simbazo*' is a term given to informal money lenders by entrepreneurs on the streets. It relates to the haphazard and off the book manner in which the whole process of lending is handled, and the unregulated terms and conditions of the lending process which at times results in entrepreneurs being overcharged interests and given unreasonable payment/servicing terms.

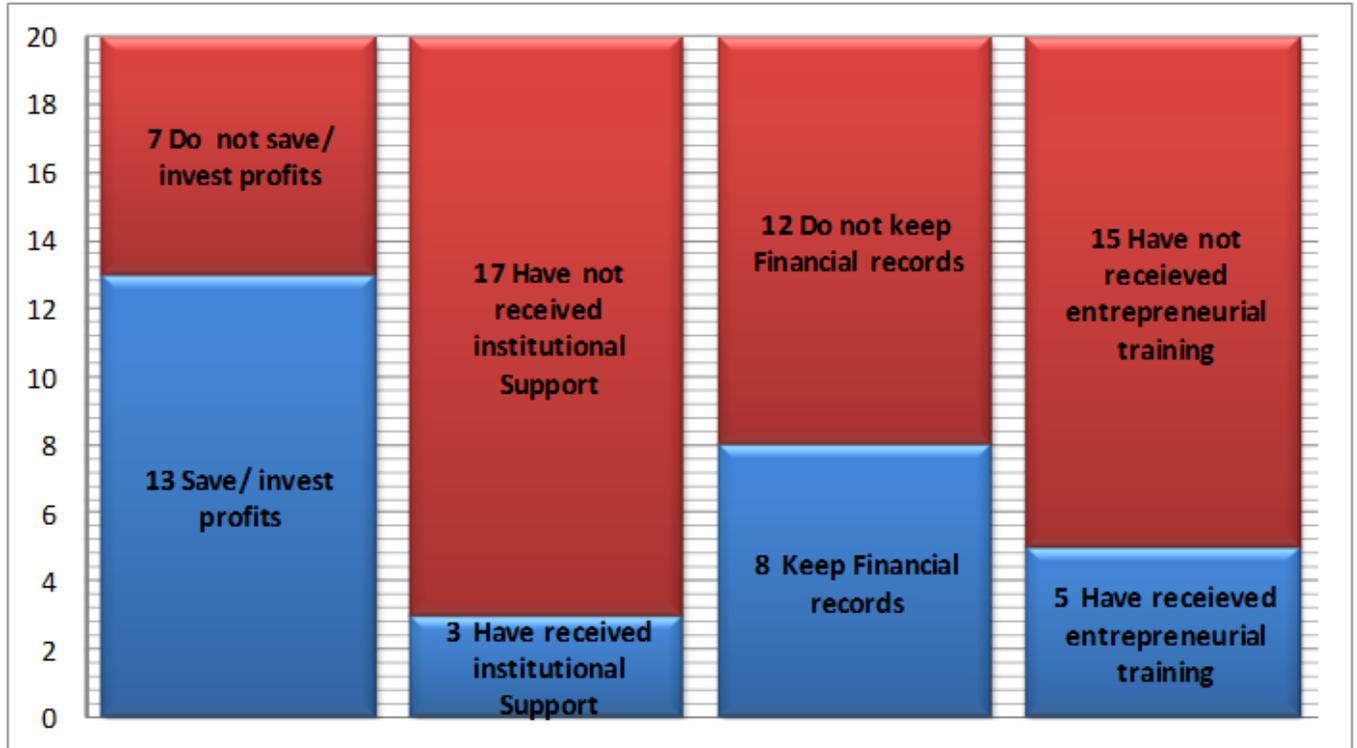


Figure 5. Business Acumen and Institutional Support

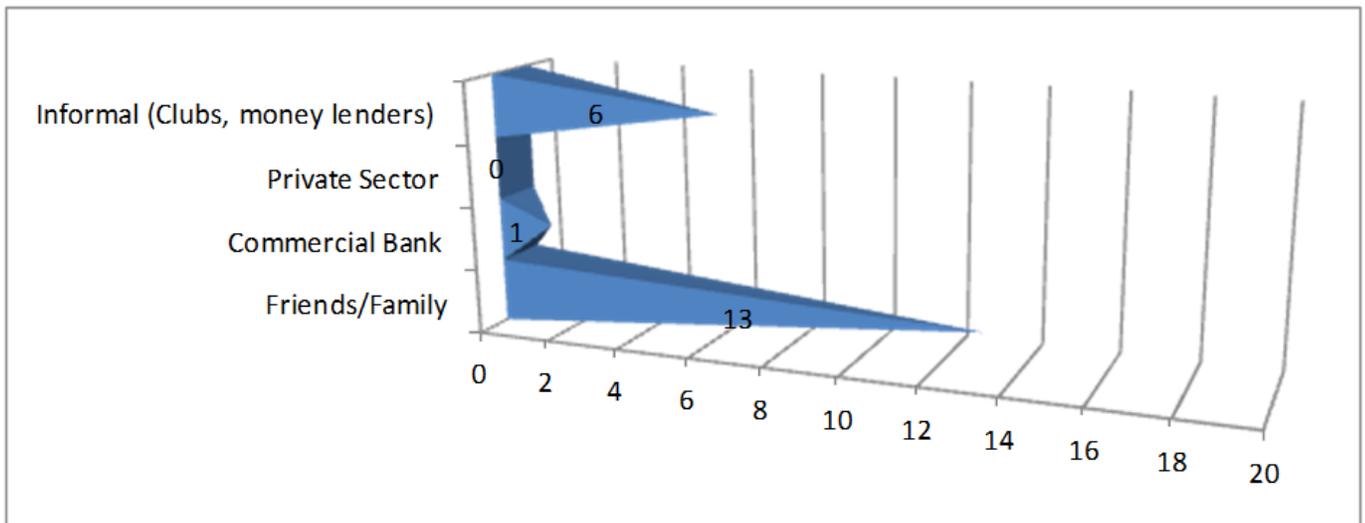


Figure 6. Entrepreneurs' borrowing mechanisms

When asked about the marketing or advertising procedures they use, most of the respondents seventy five percent (75%) either did not market their businesses or made use of non-sophisticated methodologies such as word of mouth otherwise known as touting in advertising lingo mostly used on the streets. This could be attributed to the high service fees charged by the media and limited business acumen among the entrepreneurs. Only twenty five percent (25%) use sophisticated methods such as flyers, posters, business cards among others. Those that use sophisticated methods demonstrated a significant possession of business acumen and knowledge. This is in line with the advances by Cross and Morales (2007) who posit that survivalist entrepreneurs usually lack skills and formal knowledge to carry out their business activities meaningfully, hence usually resort to unsophisticated informal methods to just make their businesses survive.

### 3.4. Opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe

The respondents highlighted a number of challenges that they encounter in their businesses. These challenges include, but , are not limited to limited operating space which usually affects their activities during the rainy season; confiscation of products by the local authorities and police although currently minimal; competition from other entrepreneurs especially the mobile and unregistered entrepreneurs; late payment of debts by regular customers; customers negotiating for lower prices for products and street agents overcharging goods to benefit from the mark-up (known as to 'get a cut' in the street lingo). These responses on challenges concurred with the assertion by Chirisa (2009) that the SME sector in Zimbabwe is experiencing problems such as a lack of appropriate management skills to run their business entities, access to loans, inhibiting legal frameworks, inconsistent economy, and unstable national politics, access to markets, poor quality products, bad publicity and registration bureaucracy.

The findings also showed the measures that are taken by the street entrepreneurs to reduce the impact of the aforementioned challenges. Street entrepreneurs admitted that usually they engage in temporary mobile vending to get rid of the deteriorating stock due to limited customers. Moreover, and especially in case of broking, they borrow money from their friends, relatives and other informal places to boost and resuscitate their businesses. Some reduce prices for their goods; usually resulting in loses and break evens while others prefer to consume their stock otherwise known as 'stuff' in the street lingo, rather than to throw it away when it rotes. Others depend on the associations such as (BUPTA) Bulawayo Upcoming Traders Association and Zimele, but these, with their limited influence are rather not trust worthy in solving the challenges. These findings are in line with advances of the post modernist theory that places great emphasis on social capital at the expense of economic gain. This theory, suggests that the streets merge business and friendship relations leading to greater community solidarity, personal freedom and flexibility (Cross and Morales, 2007).

When asked about the kind of assistance needed to make street businesses growth oriented, most respondents alluded to the provision of operating space, licenses, capital to stay afloat, revitalise the formal and industrial sector to absorb some people in the streets while leaving some breathing space for the remaining street entrepreneurs, capacity building and skills training, targeted assistance, and the provision of market linkages. These findings concur with the findings from key informants that job creation in the

formal sector can help relax the street sector allowing for it to refocus its orientation towards growth rather than just the absorption of failed employees in the formal sector. These findings tally with comments by Berner et al. (2008), relating on success factors for entrepreneurs that it is the security of tenure that comes in handy in determining the success of the business. Getting rid of all negatives that lead to the uncertainty of the business for instance by providing operating space, provision of market linkages, and even capacity building among others indicated by the findings of the study, all eventually lead to growth of the business. Moreover a majority of respondents that they were neither insured due to the cumbersome procedures, nor portrayed knowledge and acumen of insurance thus confirming the sentiments that unlike their growth oriented counterparts, the survivalist oriented entrepreneurs usually resort to unsophisticated informal methods and strategies just to make their businesses survive (ibid)

The study also revealed the importance of social relationships on the success of street businesses, and the results showed that eighty percent (80%) of the respondents rate social relationships as very useful to the success of their enterprises. This is in line with the comments by Kennedy (1988) on a study by Khalaf and Shawyri (1966) in Labanon, who assert that in times of change, instability and uncertainty, kinship, moral economy of the poor and social relations act as a cushion, palliative and stabilizing agents to help cope with the demands of the situation. Ten percent (10%) rated social relationships as useful while the other ten percent (10%) rated social relationships as very useless. No respondent rated social relationships as useless. The majority of entrepreneurs, who rated it as very useful, attributed to such help as change, money for start up or to boost the business, giving each other customers or marketing and selling each other's goods/products. Those who rate it as very useless confirmed the statement by Marris (1968:19) which advances that:

*...No sooner does a man rise above his kinsfolk than he is overwhelmed by the imperative demands which rob him of the profits of his enterprise. He cannot save money to expand his affairs and sooner or later either fails or becomes discouraged from further effort. The ambitious and talented are ruinously exploited by their less able and vigorous family and friends.*

### 3.5. Orientation of street enterprises in Bulawayo: Growth or survivalist?

According to Berner et al. (2008) Survivalist enterprises symbolize a set of activities undertaken by people unable to secure regular wage employment and entrepreneurs of this nature are present not by choice, innovation, motivation, or risk taking propensity but are there as a means of survival (ibid). Growth oriented enterprises on the other hand are defined as very small businesses, often involving one owner, some family members and at most one to four paid employees with limited capital base and engage in an activity in order to maximize profits/incomes (ibid). This study ventured into different variables such as records keeping and inventory management, business acumen and skills, motivation, income, savings and investment, access to financial, institutional and business support services (loans and credits), insurance and risk management among others. These variables were tested on the street entrepreneurs to deliberate as to whether they are growth or survivalist oriented. This testing was largely guided by the distinctions of growth and survivalist oriented entrepreneurs as attributed by different scholars and theorists key among them being (Berner,

Gomez and Knorrinda, 2008). Organised into four objectives, including to identify the main characteristics of street entrepreneurs in Bulawayo; to investigate the levels of business acumen and access to institutional services by entrepreneurs in Bulawayo; to find out the opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe and to explore strategies that can be implemented to support and promote the establishment of growth oriented enterprises in Zimbabwe, the findings from this study indicated to a greater extent that street entrepreneurs in Bulawayo possess typical attributes of survivalist oriented entrepreneurs with limited institutional support. The study established that most street enterprises have existed for less than 5 years, employing less than 5 people and making an average of \$150 dollars income per month, as such the majority entrepreneurs would opt to get another formal job other than what they do and they are only motivated by necessity and lack of other options to make livelihoods. Berner, Gomez and Knorrinda (2008) thus categorise such characteristics under the survival oriented type of entrepreneurs. These lack the innovation, motivation and other entrepreneurial traits that allow them to look for activities with growth potential.

In terms of their saving mechanisms, street entrepreneurs only save informally and at subsistence level. The entrepreneurs in the streets rely on their families, friends and informal clubs. More over the majority of street entrepreneurs have not received institutional support services let alone entrepreneurial skill training, hence only resort to the use of non sophisticated business procedures, and marketing strategies. Moreover, largely, a majority of them do not keep financial records. This agrees with the modernisation theory, which sees street entrepreneurs as backward and underdeveloped (Parkard, 2007) and ascertain the study carried out in Zambia by Phillips and Panthaki (2007) which noted that survival entrepreneurship was an effort, not showing any entrepreneurial traits, but simply a temporary activity while a gap existed in the market.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The mandate and main thrust of the study was to establish whether street entrepreneurship in Bulawayo and Zimbabwe at large is growth oriented or survivalist oriented. The study concluded that most street entrepreneurs engage in their activities as just a livelihood diversification strategy to supplement other sources of income. These entrepreneurs mostly use non sophisticated business strategies, operate mostly at subsistence level, unidentifiable, with limited specialisation working from hand to mouth, and prefer to work under the carpet or off the books. These conclusions align toward the survival oriented type of entrepreneurs. The study also concluded that institutional support is pivotal to the success of any business, including those in the streets. Interviews with key informants indicated that even if the programs were in place to support entrepreneurs, these programs had limited efficiency due to such factors as non-compliance by street traders to the terms and conditions, and also limited resources to see the fruition of programs. The study accomplished that empty promises by organisations is one of the challenges for limited support. Dealing with institutional hurdles is thus imperative to the change in orientation of businesses (Mead and Liedholm, 1998). Finally the study concluded that the challenge for the street businesses is that they still receive similar amenities and attention as compared to those businesses out of the street. This is largely because of shortage

of research in the areas of entrepreneurial orientation which bring to light that, survivalists and growth based entrepreneurs are different and hence requiring different specific targeted assistance.

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