Fam dan Biz

The empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Mauritius

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Research Master thesis African Studies

African Studies Centre Leiden

Universiteit Leiden

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The Netherlands

25 September 2019

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Photo credit title page: Figure 1: A woman knitting a product for the Otentik Bazar. © Attitude Hotel Group Mauritius.

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[1] 'Fam dan Biz' is Mauritian Creole for 'women in business'

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Abstract

This research examines how entrepreneurship can influence Mauritian women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment. It seeks to shed light on the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in a fast-developing, ethnically diverse country. A critical approach was adopted, in which an analysis was made on the different areas in life (dimensions) in which women feel (more) empowered by their business or not. Furthermore, it recognized women as a heterogeneous group and researches how personal and entrepreneurial background influence sense of empowerment. During a fieldwork period of six months in Mauritius, data was collected. A mixed-methods approach was adopted and two datasets were created in order to both demonstrate (quantitative data) and explain (qualitative data) differences in empowerment. A main conclusion that can be drawn is that women generally do feel empowered by their business. However, entrepreneurship affects women's areas of life in different ways, which can partly be explained by the woman's background. Also, it was found that a sense of community and collective groups of women entrepreneur contributed enormously to women's sense of empowerment in multiple ways. This research thus contributes to discussions about women's empowerment through entrepreneurship by emphasizing that empowerment is an inherent individual process and that women have different backgrounds and entrepreneurial experiences, which in turn influences the way they feel empowered by their own business.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the help of some people, whom I would sincerely like to say thank you too. First of all, much appreciation goes to my supervisors Marleen Dekker and Akinyinka Akinyoade: thank you for guiding me through this research adventure, for your constructive feedback and for your encouragement whenever I needed it.

Thank you to Nicky Pouw, Klaas van Walraven, Agnieszka Kazimierczuk, Chibuike Uche, André Leliveld, and Harry Wels for brainstorming with me on topics and making me enthusiastic about my fieldwork and research. Also, I am grateful for my classmates Mariam, Felix, Mia, Daan, Manon, Alberto, Hannah, Lani, Joan, Lea, Yusra and Oumaima for the constructive feedback and supporting me during long library hours. Thank you Joris for always encouraging me and supporting me during this thesis writing process.

I would also like to thank Nicolas Ragodoo, my supervisor at the University of Mauritius, for caring for me during the first period of my stay. Thank you for the brainstorms on the operationalization of the research and for the suggestions of women organizations I could look into. I also express my gratitude to other researchers at the University of Mauritius, who laid out the basis data on Mauritian women entrepreneurs, specifically Harshan Kasseeah, Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur, and Ramola Ramtohul. Thank you to all the women's organizations that welcomed me and were interested in my research. A special thank you to Viren, who brought me in contact with a lot of women to interview and for making time to translate Creole to me. Also thank you for the car rides and interesting conversations on what life in Mauritius is like.

A great thank you to the people of Smart Traveller and *Tipimen*, who not only provided a roof over my head during my stay in Mauritius, but also distracted me with weekend trips and kept me sane. A special thanks to Michèle, Alisson, Diana and Tiffanie for always making me laugh. Thank you Piotr, Victor and Alisson as well for helping me with the translations of the surveys. Thank you Gabriel for letting me drive with you and the interesting and encouraging conversations. Thank you Dhyana for your attempt to teach me Mauritian Creole and for taking us with you to celebrate Diwali. Thank you Nadia for always letting me practicing my French and supplying me with endless roti's and *gateaux piments*.

Finally and most importantly, a major thank you to all the amazing women who shared their stories and experiences and who gave me an insight into their busy lives. You have truly inspired me to start my own business in the future. Consequently, by talking about your empowerment, you've empowered me as a person as well and convinced me that I can do anything.

Thank you very much,
Mersi byen.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
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AMFCE	Association Mauricienne Des Femmes chefs D'Entreprises
BRP	Basic Retirement Pension
CPE	Certificate of Primary Education
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DBM	Development Bank Mauritius
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EU	European Union
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MAW	Mauritius Alliance of Women
MFA	Multi-Fibre Agreement
MMM	Le Mouvement Militant Mauricien
MSM	Le Mouvement Socialiste Militant
MYP	Mauritius Yellow Pages
NWC	National Women Council
NWEC	National Women Entrepreneur Council
NYCBE	Nine Years Continuous Basic Education
PMSD	Le Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate
Rs	Mauritian Rupees
SC	Cambridge School Certificate
SME Mauritius Ltd	Small and Medium Enterprises Mauritius Ltd
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
US	United Status

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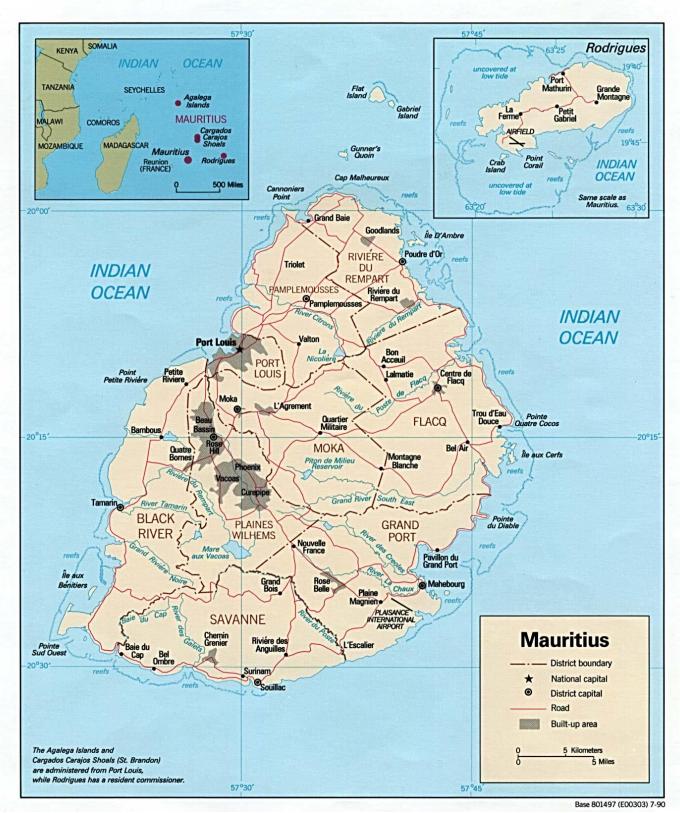*List of tables*

Map of Mauritius

Figure 2: Political map of Mauritius. © Nations Online 2019.

1. Introduction

From one citizen you gather idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven; and that heaven was copied after Mauritius.

- Mark Twain in *Following the Equator: A Journey around the World* (1897).

1.1 Research problem

Mauritius is known as a paradise holiday destination for its white sandy beaches, crystal clear blue water, lush green mountainous countryside and tropical climate. Apart from being a famous holiday destination, the island is often referred to as 'economic miracle in the Indian Ocean' (Bunwaree 2014). In the 1960s, however, Mauritius' prospects were rather gloomy because of the island's geographical isolation, the small size of the domestic market, a monocrop economy based on sugar, a rapid population growth and susceptibility for ethnic tensions (Bheenick & Schapiro 1991, Subramanian & Roy 2001). Nevertheless, since the 1970s the country successfully diversified its economy, experienced massive economic growth due to the establishment of an Export Processing Zone (EPZ), which consisted of fiscal concessions to attract foreign manufacturing firms (Bunwaree 2014, Subramanian & Roy 2001). The island is furthermore often praised for its good governance, strong (democratic) institutions, healthy public-private collaborations, ethnic tolerance, strong rule of law and good investment climate (Lincoln 2006, Rosunee n/d, Subramanian & Roy 2001).

One of the key factors contributing to the success of Mauritius' economic transformation was the mobilization of female labour. Mauritian women responded massively to the demand of cheap and low-skilled labour in the factories in the EPZ (Gunganah et al. 1997, Lincoln 2006, Seechurn et al. 2013, Subramanian & Roy 2001, Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Ayrga 2012). Many factories closed down in the early 2000s, however, due to the end of several preferential trade agreement with the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) and the government's plans to, in turn, focus more on service-related, high-skilled sectors. Job losses in the manufacturing sector affected women in particular, as they made up the majority of the labour force in the EPZ. These women often found difficulties in finding alternative employment, mainly due to their lower educational qualifications (Ramtohul 2008, Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Ayrga 2012).

Although inequality in Mauritius is low compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries, it does exist. Poverty in Mauritius increasingly has a woman's face (Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah 2013). Ramtohul (2008) emphasizes this 'feminisation of poverty' is a consequence of trade liberalisation. Equally, Bunwaree (2014) argues that while the employment of women in the EPZ sector advanced women's position in Mauritian society initially, the country now faces a number of emerging challenges in the light of trade liberalization, and gender equality seems to be regressing. Applying a gender lens to the island's economic development thus reveals that not all layers of society are equally influenced by the country's successful economic growth and that (retrenched) female workers are particularly vulnerable to the current transformation into a knowledge economy.

To stimulate Mauritian women to find new jobs and acquire an income, the government has started to promote entrepreneurship as alternative employment for women (Seechurn et al. 2013, Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah 2012). Day-Hookoomsing & Essoo (2003) state that "entrepreneurship all over the world is emerging today as an avenue for gainful employment, a means of helping women to assert themselves in the world of work, and a way of improving both their economic and social status" (4). It could furthermore open up opportunities for self-development and leadership for women. Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Kasseeah (2012) have a similar argument that entrepreneurship can be a crucial tool for women's economic empowerment, which would go beyond

poverty reduction, including women's liberation and development. Entrepreneurship can thus be understood as an activity that can empower women. This suggests that entrepreneurship can be understood in terms of an emancipatory act of change creation, as supplementing the narrow view of entrepreneurship as an economic act of wealth creation (Hughes et al. 2012).

Empowerment is one of the key buzzwords in development policy frames, which has led to the adoption of rather a-politicized one-size-fits-all approaches in policy making (Cornwall & Brock 2005). Feminist scholars have therefore argued that 'empowerment' has lost its ability to 'empower', as it is emptied of meaning. Cornwall & Anyidoho (2010) call for the need to ask critical questions when examining empowerment, such as: *whose women's empowerment? What kind of empowerment and who is doing the 'empowering'?* They emphasize how development policy frames often lack (historical) context and a specific place of time, which refers to the perceived universality of the empowerment policy frame (Cornwall & Anyidoho 2010). There is thus a need to reappropriate the notion of empowerment for emancipatory politics, which means that it is needed to "restore the complexity and the explanatory power of the concepts of power, agency, class and gender" (Cornwall & Anyidoho 2010:148).

This research looks into the gendered relationship between entrepreneurship and empowerment, by analysing how entrepreneurship affects Mauritian women's sense of empowerment. By examining the different kinds of empowerment (dimensions), heterogeneity (who are the women and how are they empowered differently?) and the context and actors (who is 'doing' the 'empowering'?), this research adopts a critical view of empowerment to try and restore its meaning and academic relevance. Researching different empowerment dimensions can help in our understanding of how women feel empowered, because it shows in which realms women feel more or less disadvantaged. For example, a woman that feels more empowered economically because she is able to get a loan, might not feel empowered socially because discriminatory norms against women have not (yet) changed, which impacts her overall sense of empowerment. Thus, improvement in one empowerment dimension does not automatically translate into empowerment in other dimensions and dimensions can influence and relate to each other. Researching how these dimensions relate and influence each other is thus important for our understanding of women's overall sense of empowerment.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that female entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group operating in a certain context. Women have different entrepreneurial experiences. Some women work part-time, by themselves and from home, while others work in a workshop and are part of a larger social project. Also, women have different personal backgrounds, including different ages, religions, and education levels that may affect their entrepreneurial activities and sense of empowerment (Vossenberg 2016). This research looks at how these differences in personal and entrepreneurial backgrounds impact women's sense of empowerment. Context gives us more insight in the differences that exist between women entrepreneurs. Mauritius is a culturally diverse society. Although by law discrimination is prohibited and the Mauritian government emphasizes a 'unity in diversity' rhetoric, in practice there are differences in well-being between religious-ethnic groups, which are related to social class as well (Bunwaree 2014). Also, context is important to understand Mauritian women's empowerment because there are many actors, such as the government or private projects, that offer support to women entrepreneurs, which in turn can emphasize women's sense of empowerment. The critical approach adopted here considers that women navigate their entrepreneurial activities within a certain context and that actors influence them and their possible sense of empowerment.

While the issue of female entrepreneurship and its influence on women's livelihoods in Mauritius has come to the attention of academic scholars, no critical analysis has been made on women's sense of empowerment as multidimensional, heterogeneous and contextual. The main focus of previous research lies on women's access to resources, in particular credit and training, and thus

focuses on women's economic empowerment[2], but no analyses have been made on how entrepreneurship might affect women's social, psychological or political empowerment and how the personal background and context of women influences their sense of empowerment. Furthermore, no analysis has been made of the role of the different actors and their impact on the empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

1.2 Research question and rationale

Women entrepreneurship is increasingly perceived as a 'magic' tool for women's empowerment in development policy frames (Batliwala 2007, Cornwall & Anyidoho 2010, Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009, Vossenberg 2016). While female entrepreneurship is a way for Mauritian women to participate in the economy and acquire some income, participation does not automatically equal empowerment (Moghadam & Senftova 2005). The aim of this research is to critically analyse the gendered relationship between entrepreneurship and women's empowerment in Mauritius. The main research question for this research is:

How does entrepreneurship influence Mauritian women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment?

The main contribution of this research is to study different Mauritian female entrepreneurs and their sense of empowerment in different dimensions to increase our understanding of how entrepreneurship can affects women's sense of empowerment in different ways. It contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relation between entrepreneurship and empowerment by emphasizing that women have different personal backgrounds and therefore their entrepreneurial experiences differ which in turn influences the way they feel empowered by their own business.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter two describes the research approach taken for this research. It starts with the theoretical foundations upon which this research is built and explains the concept of empowerment and its dimensions more comprehensively. Also, it looks into the literature on the relation between entrepreneurship and women's empowerment. This chapter also describes the methodological foundations of this research and explains the methods. To understand the Mauritian context better, chapter three gives an overview of the most important historic, economic, political and cultural aspects and the role of Mauritian women within all these aspects. Furthermore, an overview will be given of the actors that support women entrepreneurs in Mauritius. Chapter three will also discuss the fieldwork period and the sample and finally some remarks will be given on reflexivity, originality, relevance and obstacles of this research.

Chapter four will explore the dimensions of empowerment. First, an analysis will be made of the economic, political, social and psychological empowerment of the women. After that, an analysis is made on women's own definition of empowerment and how the dimensions relate and influence each other. Chapter five will examine the heterogeneity of Mauritian women entrepreneurs and researches how different backgrounds explain differences in empowerment. It will furthermore look at women's empowerment as contextual and will show that context matters for both women's heterogeneity and empowerment. Finally, chapter six will give a summary of the findings and concluding remarks on the main question how entrepreneurship influences Mauritian women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment.

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[2] For previous research on Mauritian women entrepreneurs, see Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah (2012); Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014); and Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2015).

2. Research approach

This chapter describes the theoretical and methodological foundations upon which this research is based. The theoretical foundation section conceptualizes empowerment and gives an overview of the literature on the gendered relationship between entrepreneurship and empowerment. While the theory provides the lens through which this research was carried out, the methodological foundations explain how this research was done and which methods were important for data collection and analysis.

2.1 Theoretical foundations: conceptualizing empowerment

Entrepreneurship is an opportunity and activity that can transform daily social realities. To research these social transformations, the concept of empowerment is used in this research. There is no academic consensus on a definition of empowerment and how to research or measure it. Kabeer (1999) explains that empowerment is an inherent individual experience that depends on many different aspects involved in an individual's life. The main issue for this research with empowerment is that it becomes nearly impossible to determine for every individual woman how empowered she was when she started her business, hence whether entrepreneurship led to empowerment or vice versa. However, this research examines the influence of entrepreneurship on women's sense of empowerment, thus whether women feel (more) empowered by their business. It does not try to measure empowerment, it merely tries to give an understanding of how entrepreneurship contributes to an improved or worsening sense of empowerment of women. Nevertheless, because there are no clear definitions, it is important here to set out what is meant with the concept of empowerment in this research.

Empowerment in its broadest sense can be understood as the "expansion of freedom of choice and action" (Malhotra & Schuler 2005:71). Fox & Romero (2017) argue that empowerment is defined as "*power* (control over one's own life and over resources) and *agency* (capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes)" (3). In essence, the concept of empowerment implicates a *process of change* and a *sense of agency*: women must be significant active actors in the process of change. Improving women's access to resources (economic, social and political) is thus critical, but not sufficient. Women need to have the collective or individual ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interests for resources to bring 'empowerment' (Malhotra & Schuler 2005). Kabeer (2005) argues that the concept of empowerment can be explored through three closely interrelated dimensions, namely *agency, resources*, and *achievements*. Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised and achievements refer to the outcome of agency. Agency is the central concept of empowerment and refers to the processes by which *choices* are made and put into effect (Kabeer 1999, 2005). Whether an opportunity to make a choice exists (*existence of choice*) depends on many things, including the institutional environment, but also the position of an individual or a group in society. For example, a female entrepreneur might not have access to acquire financial assets to start up her business, because certain laws prohibit women from getting loans without the permission of her husband. The existence of choice does not automatically mean that people use their choice, however. The *use of choice* refers to whether people take advantage of an opportunity to choose. If the before-mentioned female entrepreneur is legally allowed to take on a financial loan, she might still not (be able to) use this opportunity because her husband does not want her to get a loan, but rather work in the house. Finally, the *achievement of choice* refers to in how far people are able to achieve their desired outcome through their choices. If the female entrepreneur has taken on a loan, will she be able to reinvest income into her own business or is her income subsumed into the household income as a means of survival? (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005). According to Kabeer (1999) there is a problem

with choice: namely when women recognize the existence of gender inequalities, but do not consider these as unjust, which she calls "choosing not to choose" (441). She argues that while these can be perceived as 'choices', "they are choices which stem from, and serve to reinforce, women's subordinate status. They remind us that power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice, but also through the *kinds* of choices people make." (Kabeer 1999:441). According to Kabeer (1999), empowerment comes with the emergence of a critical consciousness, of an understanding of alternative options and the possibility of having chosen differently.

Empowerment thus revolves around notions of self-determination, choice and action (Moswete & Lacey 2015). In addition, Alsop & Heinsohn (2005) argue that empowerment is in a dialectic relationship with agency and the broader social environment in which one operates, the *opportunity structure*. This structure is shaped by the presence, operation and interactions of formal and informal, local and national institutions and determine whether certain individuals or groups have access to resources, and whether they can use these assets to achieve the desired outcomes (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005). The opportunity structure, or context, is thus an essential part of understanding women's empowerment and it shows that a more systematic transformation in society, specifically of the patriarchal structures that support institutions, is necessary for an increase of women's sense of empowerment (Malhotra & Schuler 2005).

Dimensions of empowerment

Kabeer (1999) understands empowerment as a process "by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (435). Empowerment thus automatically implicates that for someone to be empowered, there has to be some kind of disempowerment at first. Moswete & Lacey (2015) argue that empowerment is multi-faceted and complex, and that women might be empowered in one area of life, while feeling disempowered in other areas of life. Therefore, to research empowerment scholars have created different typologies of empowerment (Brody et al. 2015). The most important categories, or dimensions, of empowerment are: economic, political, social and psychological. The main advantage of researching dimensions of empowerment is that we can examine in what areas women feel more or less (dis)empowered. Moswete & Lacey (2015) emphasize, however, that these dimensions are interactive and at times overlapping. Researching how these dimensions relate and influence each other is thus important for our understanding of women's overall sense of empowerment. It nuances the understanding that improvements in empowerment automatically lead to empowerment in other areas. There is an underlying assumption that empowering women economically contributes to women's development as a whole and ultimately can lead to an improved livelihood (Duflo 2012). While this may be true to some extent, it is not always the case. For example, scholars have found that focusing on women's economic empowerment alone (often through a focus on improving women's income) might lead to negative side effects, such as an increase in domestic violence (Vossenberg 2016). In addition, providing women only with economic resources might look like economic empowerment, but they can possibly still be restricted in their freedom to act independently or move freely (Dekker 2013). Furthermore, an improvement in access to resources (economic empowerment) might also be a consequence of changing laws and societal norms (social empowerment). These examples show that categorizing empowerment in four dimensions leads to a better understanding of how different components of empowerment relate and interact in women's lives.

Economic empowerment, then, refers to "the improvement of women's access to and control over productive resources, land, capital, entrepreneurial opportunities, income parity with men or highly paid jobs outside the home" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). Political empowerment "involves the inclusion of women in positions of power and authority, access to political representation, female suffrage, and control over decision making at national and local levels" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). Social empowerment is rather complex and encompasses a mix of "improved social standing, opportunities to socialize that were previously denied to women" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603), for

example women's sense of personal development and self-fulfilment and improvements in social institutions, including laws and societal norms. Lastly, psychological empowerment refers to "a sense of confidence in the future and understanding of available options" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). Chapter three will discuss these dimensions more in-depth and will explain the indicators that are used to research the different dimensions.

Entrepreneurship as women 'empowerer'

Entrepreneurship is broadly defined as the process of designing, launching and running a new business. Small and medium-sized enterprises provide economic growth engines in many countries in the world. Including women in entrepreneurship supposedly 'untaps' the economy's full potential (UNCTAD 2000). There is thus a business case for promoting female entrepreneurship, as it contributes to economic development, and supposedly leads to women's social inclusion (Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur 2014). Entrepreneurship thus has the potential to contribute to women's empowerment. There are, however, some complications within these assumptions. There is a general underestimation of the role that gendered social and institutional contexts play and an overestimation of individual factors of women that can lead to entrepreneurial success (Hovorka & Dietrich 2011). Women are assumed to be 'natural' entrepreneurs, female and male entrepreneurs are assumed to possess similar characteristics independent of their gender and there is a common (gender-blind) assumption of entrepreneurship as individualist. According to Dolan & Roll (2013) there is a premise that women do not lack initiative or enterprise, but opportunity. Theories on 'general' entrepreneurship, however, are largely derived from the perspective of a (male) individual "who is very much a risk-taker who is in control, independent, powerful, knowledgeable, in brief, a 'self-made man'" (Hovorka & Dietrich 2011:56).

Vossenberg (2016) stresses that a gender-aware perspective in analysing differences in female and male entrepreneurs' experiences, needs and risks is necessary to understand the underlying gendered dynamics and institutions at play in a society. She understands gender as "a powerful ideological device, a structure that shapes, defines, limits and legitimizes the choices, behaviours and roles assigned to men and women (sex categories)" (Vossenberg 2016:12). A gender-aware perspective on entrepreneurship can reveal "how deeply rooted and entrenched masculine hegemony is in the entrepreneurial realm" (Hovorka & Dietrich 2011:62-63). As a result of the gendered nature of entrepreneurship, it is possible that the multiple roles that women have in the family, society and their business might conflict with each other (UNCTAD 2000).

Applying a gender perspective onto the concept of entrepreneurship means that entrepreneurs are "socially-embedded human beings who have a gender, body, class, age, family, religion and ethnicity and live within specific historical, social, economic or geographical contexts" (Vossenberg 2016:12). Female entrepreneurs are thus not one group, but rather a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with other personal characteristics (Malhotra & Schuler 2005). In addition to personal characteristics, we can distinguish between 'survivalist' female entrepreneurs, who are mostly present in informal sectors, and growth-oriented female entrepreneurs, who try to expand their businesses in the formal economy. Survivalist entrepreneurs do not always have the intention to extend their businesses, as it possibly overestimates their labour and management capacities. Different female entrepreneurs thus might encounter different obstacles and opportunities in having a business (Vossenberg 2016). Apart from personal characteristics, Vossenberg (2016) also emphasizes that women operate within a certain context. Context does not only determine the initial opportunities and possibilities for women entrepreneurs, it can also provide the kickstart that women need to become empowered. Moswete & Lacey (2015) argue that "it might be necessary for the empowerment process to be kick started by organizations that are external to the disadvantaged group or by contact with the outside world through which the disadvantage might be displayed" (603). Although external actors can contribute to empowerment, it is essential that it is women's own choice to start a business and that they have agency over their choices. Context and actors are thus important

aspects to consider when researching women's empowerment, and as we shall see in the next chapters, they are very relevant in the Mauritian case.

In trying to understand the gendered relation between entrepreneurship and empowerment, it is important to remember that participation does not necessarily equal empowerment (Moghadam & Senftova 2005). It is useful to distinguish here between what scholars have defined as 'practical' and 'strategic' gender needs. Women's practical gender needs result from their own position in society, while strategic gender needs imply the need to challenge gender hierarchies and other mechanisms of subordination (Moser 1989, Rowlands 1997). Practical gender needs, such as employment, do not automatically lead to patriarchal transformations in society. Put otherwise, inequalities in regulatory, normative and cognitive systems do not automatically disappear when women's participation in the labour force increases (Vossenberg 2016). Keeping these gendered processes in mind, entrepreneurship might not be the 'magic tool' for women's empowerment. The promotion of female entrepreneurship "bears the risk of over-stretching women's time, resourcefulness and talents to serve economic growth, without providing long-term benefits and opportunities for women themselves" (Vossenberg 2016:23).

Government interventions to promote female entrepreneurship follow a 'missing ingredient assumption', in which underlying gendered institutions and norms in a society are largely ignored and women's problems to start-up businesses are largely confined to a lack of credit and a lack of knowledge and education (Vossenberg 2016). Dolan & Roll (2013) argue that the premise of female entrepreneurship as a tool for women's empowerment rests on neoliberal motifs that rely on the creation of productive, self-sufficient citizens, that shift marginalized groups, such as women, "from a culture of dependency to one of self-reliance" (Dolan & Roll 2013:127). This would be a way for "millions of individuals to work their way out of poverty with 'dignity'" (Dolan & Roll 2013:127).

Findings in studies on the relation between entrepreneurship and empowerment remain ambiguous. Al-Dajani & Marlow (2013), in their study among 43 home-based enterprises operated by Palestinian migrant women in Jordan, find that within this particular context, women's sense of empowerment improved. They emphasize that entrepreneurship is not merely an economic undertaking, but also a socio-politically situated activity: being marginalised, subordinated, migrant women, these entrepreneurs found a way to preserve valued heritage, while at the same time acquiring income through home-based embroidery enterprises. Another study by Torri & Martinez (2014) on 42 female micro-entrepreneurs in India understands empowerment as a dynamic, socio-culturally constructed process, and finds that women's capabilities, learning abilities and leadership skills are improved via micro-entrepreneurship, as women became actively involved in the production and sales of herbal medicines in the Tamil Nadu region. However, entrepreneurial opportunities and activities fall short in "confronting marginalization resulting from established patriarchal norms and practices" (Torri & Martinez 2014:31).

2.2 Methodological foundations

This research starts from a *feminist-pragmatist* approach. Early feminist scholars were influenced by the pragmatist approach, because of its focus on the emancipatory potential of everyday lives experiences of marginalized groups. Seigfreid (1991) argues that the pragmatist approach still has to offer feminists many insights, including "its priority of human relations and actual experiences over abstract conceptual distinctions, [and] the valuing of inclusiveness and community" (10). Pragmatists emphasize that knowledge is gained through experiences, which are constant interactions between our beliefs, our actions and their consequences. Pluralism is a central value, knowledge is shaped by multiple experiential viewpoints and all epistemological claims are contextual. Pragmatists are committed to epistemology that is based on experience and relationality (Morgan 2014). An ontological implication that follows from a pragmatist approach is the position that an individual is not an autonomous being, but rather in reciprocity and interdependence with the broader social environment. 'Selfhood' takes place through the community, and therefore its relationality needs to

be taken into account (Whipps & Lake 2017). A complete discussion of the pragmatist position is beyond the scope of this research, but its most important contribution for this research is that it is a 'paradigm of choices'. It emphasizes that there is more than one way to examine the social world and that research should not be constrained by discussions about 'appropriate' procedures of scientific conduct, as they are not contradictory but rather both constructions and experiences of knowledge of our social world (Morgan 2014). Based on the nature of the research, it might be more insightful to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods.

This research tries to both *demonstrate* and *explain* how entrepreneurship can contribute to women's sense of empowerment, by taking into account the diverse backgrounds of female entrepreneurs, and therefore a mixed-methods approach is most suitable. Both quantitative and qualitative data, methods and methodologies are mixed in order to enhance research findings (Creswell et al. 2006). A mixed methods research allows for an innovative way to do research outside of the established quantitative-qualitative dichotomy.

The value of the quantitative data[3] for this research is its ability to indicate and demonstrate the differences between variables, so that possible trends or patterns can be visualized. Furthermore, quantification of answers to survey questions allow for the interpretation and combinations of larger amounts of data (Lamont 2015). Quantitative data, however, does not tell us anything about meanings, processes or underlying dynamics, which is where the qualitative data tries to better explain these aspects. A strength of the mixed-methods approach is that the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis are accounted for, as they compensate for each other's weaknesses. Furthermore, more and different information related to the same phenomenon is gathered, which can lead to innovative and interesting results and more comprehensive insights. A weakness of the mixed-methods approach is that it is not incorporated into an epistemological tradition or philosophical foundations, and therefore might be perceived as eclectic. This 'eclecticism', however, can also be its strength. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2010) define methodological eclecticism as "selecting and then synergistically integrating the most appropriate techniques from a myriad of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to more thoroughly investigate a phenomenon of interest" (8). Furthermore, a feminist-pragmatist approach emphasizes a more practical approach to philosophy and theory to guide the research, and that it is not useful to be locked into a social paradigm with strict procedures on how to do research. In addition, methods and data are not necessarily automatically linked to only one epistemological position (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2010). A major implication of a feminist-pragmatist approach for this research is that women's own thoughts on empowerment play a central role and are compared to more abstract theoretical indicators, which ensures that women's own voices remain intact and that they are no less important than theoretical frameworks in answering the main question of this research.

Methods

This research has used a mix of methods for data collection. This section will explain and justify the methods that were used for data collection and analysis. The main methods of data collection are: in-depth semi-structured interviews, surveys, actor interviews, online document research and (participant) observation.

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[3] This research starts from a feminist-pragmatist approach, but a note is necessary on how to reconcile a feminist approach with the use of quantitative data. According to Oakley (1998), feminist scholarship rejects quantitative methods because they would imply oppressive power relations. However, there is not one feminist perspective and not one feminist methodology and different feminist issues need different research methods (Westmarland 2001). Research methods are not uniformly linked to social paradigms (Sandelowski 2000). According to Oakley (1998): "The case against quantitative ways of knowing is based on a rejection of reason and science as masculine and an embracing of experience as feminine: but this is essentialist thinking which buys into the very paradox that it protests about" (725). What makes a research feminist is the positionality of the researcher and the goal of the research. For a discussion on what quantitative data can actually contribute to feminist scholarship, see Oakley (1998), Sandelowski (2000), Westmarland (2001), and Nagy Hesse-Biber (2010).

The starting point for data collection were the *in-depth semi-structured interviews* with women entrepreneurs. A template with interview questions was made (Appendix A), upon which all of the interviews were largely based. The interviews started with basic questions about the women's businesses, mainly to break the ice and start with easy questions to get acquainted with each other. The second part was inspired by a business-life-story approach in which the start, maintaining and future goals of the business were the central discussion. The third part of the interview focused on the feelings that women have towards being an entrepreneur. It focused on their previous work experiences and why they decided to become an entrepreneur. Their emotions and what they like and do not like about being an entrepreneur was also discussed. The fourth part of the interview focused on being a woman entrepreneur in Mauritian society. Topics that were central for the discussion here were (in)equalities between men and women, but also differences in social class or religious background. This part of the interview started with a very general question: whether the women thought that everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to start a business. From the answers there, the discussion directed towards gender inequality or cultural differences. The advantage of asking a very open question at first was that women came up with rather surprising answers. The fifth part went into depth about the empowerment dimensions. Three empowerment dimensions were included: economic, political and social. The psychological empowerment dimensions became more clear in the earlier asked questions. Indicators were selected from the literature, which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter on dimensions. The section finished with open-ended questions about what "empowerment" means to the women and whether they feel empowered by their business. The sixth and final part covered personal details, including age, relationship status, religion and income. Finishing with these personal questions provided the big advantage that women felt more comfortable talking at the end of the interview, therefore there were no uncomfortable moments when asking for their income or stance on religion-ethnicity. Interviews, however, are very time-consuming and because of the more open-ended questions it can be hard to compare results. That is why surveys were conducted as well, which allowed for a larger group of women to gather data from and because they are more structured allowed for easier comparisons across answers. Nevertheless, the interviews increase the understanding of underlying dynamics that cannot be conducted from the surveys only. Women entrepreneurs were selected based on different personal traits to ensure heterogeneity. Contact with the women was established online via Instagram, via markets and through managers of special entrepreneur projects. All interviews with women were recorded after permission. The recordings were stored on a laptop hard-drive and on an external drive. Copies of recordings and interview transcriptions were also stored in Dropbox and Google Drive, after confidential personal details were removed. All names of the women were changed for reasons of anonymity.

The *survey* template was largely based on interesting outcomes from the in-depth interviews (Appendix B). The template consisted of roughly the same questions as in the interviews, but the open questions about the different empowerment questions were transformed into statements with which women could (dis)agree. The survey was made available online and spread amongst women entrepreneurs via Instagram. It was made available in both English and French and lasted approximately 10 minutes to fill in. Apart from an online survey, hardcopies were also distributed on markets and within private social projects. Sampling was thus largely based on convenience, rather than on selective personal characteristics as was the case for the interviews. The largest disadvantages of the surveys was the impersonal way of interviewing, which also resulted in many women not willing to share some personal details, particularly their income. An overestimation was made regarding how well women could read, leading sometimes to longer durations of the survey. Nevertheless, the surveys allowed for data from a larger group of women, which was particularly important in explaining the heterogeneity between women entrepreneurs.

The *actor interviews* took place during the whole fieldwork period, depending on the availability of the organisations. The questions focused mainly on the mission of the organisation or project and how they supported women entrepreneurs. It furthermore focused on how the organisation perceived empowerment and how their organisation contributed to women's

empowerment. Finally, a central discussion point was selection: how do the organisations select women in their programmes or projects, based on what criteria? These interviews were not recorded, because most organizations did not give permission for this, instead notes were taken during the interview.

Another method used for this research was *online document research*, which focused mainly on finding statistical data. The government of Mauritius has a department of Statistics and data is well available for almost every year and topic. The methodology and collection behind the data is described in many cases, increasing its reliability. Reports from the Statistics Department also critically analyse highlights in the data. Other websites from government departments were also used to gain more information on the different Ministries, Councils and their tasks.

To gain an understanding of Mauritian society, it was important to include *(participant) observation* as method. Participant observation is mainly used in ethnographic and social studies and is a method that enables researchers to "learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities" (Kawulich 2005:2). Participant observation was particularly useful in this research to provide context and to adjust the interviews and surveys to the local context. Participant observation furthermore allowed for observations to try to understand experiences and other aspects in society that were expressed by the women. Most Mauritians find it difficult to talk comfortably about the divisions in society, mainly based on social class, but also on religion-ethnicity. Observing how people from different religions or social classes interact in public (and private) allowed for a better understanding of the Mauritian context and thus the environment in which women run a business. Observation and informal talks also contributed to discovering underlying dynamics that were not previously mentioned in the 'official' interviews, therefore adding new information. In the case of inaccuracies, observation and informal talks were used to check and understand these. The main limitation of this method is that the observation is conducted by a biased human, therefore it is crucial to understand that the researcher's background has most likely influenced my informal talks, observations, analysis and interpretations (Kawulich 2005). Nevertheless, (participant) observation remains a useful method that has strengthened the development of the interviews and surveys and vice versa.

The choice was made to create two separate datasets (qualitative and quantitative), rather than one combined data set in order to preserve the authenticity of the answers given. While the survey and interview questions overlapped, they were not exactly the same, therefore making it difficult to implement an interview respondent's answers into the survey and vice versa without distorting it significantly. Furthermore, the goals of the two methods of data collection differed: the goal of the interviews was to provide information about underlying processes and in-depth dynamics, while the goal of the surveys was to gather a broader amount of data in order to compare a larger group of women. To analyse the qualitative data, this research used content analysis. Interviews were transcribed and coded according to important themes and then analysed based on these themes. For both the interviews and surveys, women were given the choice to respond to questions or not. For the survey dataset, this led in some cases to missing values. Percentages based on the survey data are valid percentages, which means that missing data is not taken into account. Under each table notes are given on these missing values to ensure reliability of the research. To analyse the quantitative data, this research used basic statistical analysis, consisting of crosstabulations, single- and multi-variable analysis in SPSS. Furthermore, to calculate average empowerment scores based on the empowerment statements in the surveys, Excel was used to display average empowerment scores per interest group, for example for age categories or education levels.

3. Research context and sample

After explaining the theoretical and methodological foundations upon which this research was built, it is important to understand the research context. The main question asked in this research is how entrepreneurship influences *Mauritian* women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment, and therefore some basic background information on the historical, societal, political and economic characteristics of the island is necessary. Furthermore, a description will be given of the role of women in Mauritian society and the empowerment actors that support women entrepreneurs. After a description of the research context, some notes will be given on the fieldwork for this research. Information on the sample and a general description of both datasets will be given. Finally, the last section will give some critical notes on reflexivity, the originality, relevance and obstacles of this research.

3.1 'Paradis Moris'[4]: an introduction to the research context

The Republic of Mauritius consists of the largest island Mauritius (2000km²), the smaller island Rodrigues (110km²) and a couple of smaller island groups (together 71km²). This research focuses on the main island Mauritius[5], which inhabits approximately 1,3 million people and has one of the highest population densities of the world. The volcanic island is located roughly 800km of the coast of Madagascar in the south-western Indian Ocean (CIA Factbook 2019). The island Mauritius does not have an indigenous population. It was discovered in the 16th century by Arab and Portuguese sailors, but they did not settle permanently (Seetah 2010). It was the Dutch, who settled on the island after 1598 and named it after their Prince Maurits van Nassau. Dutch colonizers introduced sugar-cane and brought with them the first slaves, but they left the island in 1710 due to hardships, such as natural disasters, illnesses and continuing slave revolts (Eriksen 1998). French colonizers then took the island under their control and starting from 1735 started to effectively develop the island. Large numbers of slaves were brought in from Madagascar, Mozambique and other African countries connected to the east African slave trade. The French set up a well-organized plantation system, in which sugar cane was the most important crop (Eriksen 1998). In 1810 Britain seized the island, but kept most of the existing plantation organization, which was recognized as a valuable asset. Local (French) traditions and customs remained allowed, which explains for a part why the British culture has not left much of its footprint in Mauritius nowadays (Eriksen 1998). Slavery was abandoned in 1835, which led to a high demand of indentured labourers for the growing sugar industry. Large numbers of people from several parts of India (including Hindu, Muslims, Indo-Christians and Tamil) were brought into the country, which led to an enormous change in demography. In the 1860s Indians accounted for over half of the Mauritian population. The late 19th century also saw an increase in Chinese immigration (Eriksen 1998).

Traditionally, religion-ethnicity was strongly related to social class and economic status. A thorough research on religion-ethnicity is done by Eriksen (1998). He argues that particularly occupational stereotypes still exist and act as self-fulfilling prophecies. Franco-Mauritians, often Christian, own 19 out of the 20 sugar plantations that traditionally were the backbone of the Mauritian economy. They control the most important means of production, own most of the land and are economically most powerful. Sino-Mauritians, a small mostly Christian minority, were the owners of Export Processing Zone (EPZ) factories and are present in retail trade and hospitality. Hindus used to work in the factories or in rural areas and nowadays often work in the public sector and have also held

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[4] Mauritian Creole for: 'Paradise Mauritius'.
[5] The other islands in the Republic of Mauritius were not taken into account because the contexts on these islands are significantly different, specifically in demographic and economic terms, therefore a comparison would not have been realizable. Furthermore, due to time and resource constrains it was not possible to fly to these islands to conduct research.

political power since independence. Muslims were traditionally business-owners. Christian-Creoles used to work on the sugar estates and as factory workers and the majority of dockworkers and fishermen is Creole. While these occupational stereotypes hold true to some extent, they are oversimplifications. Nevertheless, although Mauritius is often portrayed as 'unity in diversity' society, these historical divisions have left traces in present-day society. Income inequality has been increasing in the last 20 years and Creoles are particularly affected by the growing disparities (Kasenally 2011).

Today, Indo-Mauritians (of which roughly 48% Hindu and 17% Muslim) comprise roughly 68% of the total population. Sino-Mauritians are roughly 1-2% of the total population, and are mainly Catholic. The 'general population'[6] consisted of Catholic and other Christian groups and comprises around 29% of the total population. Within this 'general population' are very different groups, such as the Franco-Mauritians (1%), who are the white elite landowners and descendants of the French/British colonizers, the 'coloureds', who are higher class mixed descendants of earlier slave owners and Creole slaves, and the Creole people, who are the descendants of slaves. The remainder of the general population are smaller ethnic groups from Indian descent, such as the Christian Tamil (CIA Factbook 2019, Carroll & Carroll 2000, Eriksen 1998). These groups of people interact with each other in the public sphere and there are no segregated residential areas or schools, but communities remain relatively closed off in private lives and inter-communal marriages are low (8%) (Nave 2000). Mauritian society is sometimes referred to as 'harmonious separatist': in which relatively closed communities with different cultural heritages live relatively stable close to each other (Seetah 2010). Because of this cultural diversity, many languages are spoken in Mauritius. The official language English is the least spoken, while French is more common. The most widely spoken language by inhabitants all over the island is Mauritian Creole, however, a local language that originates from the slaves. Other languages include Arabic and Indian languages such as Bhojpuri (CIA Factbook 2019, Eriksen 1998). Most Mauritians, especially the younger generation, speak multiple languages quite fluently.

Mauritius gained independence, without national liberation struggle, from Britain on 12 March 1968 and has a democratic political system based on the British parliamentary model. 62 members of parliament are chosen directly, while a maximum of 8 members is appointed by means of a 'best loser system', to make sure that ethnic minorities are well and equitable represented in the parliament (Gunganah et al. 1997). Mauritius has a multi-party system, of which the four main political parties are the Labour Party[7], *le Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate (PMSD)*[8], *Le Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM)*[9], and *le Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM)*[10]. Since independence, the Mauritian government has been led by the Labour Party or the MSM, with the exception of short periods where the MMM was at the head of the country.[11] The Jugnauth and Ramgoolam families have been dominating Mauritian politics since independence. The socialist ideology of the leading government

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[6] 'General population' was a term used by the government in its household surveys and national census. The last national census in which ethnicity was asked was held in the 1970s. After this, ethnicity was removed from the census.

[7] The Labour Party is a centre-left social-democratic political party and the oldest political party still functioning today. It was founded in 1936. The Labour Party won the first post-independent national elections when it was led by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam until 1982. Since 1991, the party has been led by his son Navin Ramgoolam, alternately being the leading government party and not (See: Ramtohul & Eriksen 2018).

[8] The PMSD is a right-wing conservative francophilic political party and was founded in 1955. It has alternately been an opposition party and part of the government coalition. It draws most of its support from the Christian Creole community. (See: Ramtohul & Eriksen 2018).

[9] The MMM is a left-wing socialist political party and was founded in 1969. It was the first national party that officially organized a women's wing in 1974 and emphasizes women's equal rights. Central figures within the MMM are Sir Anerood Jugnauth and Paul Bérenger, who have both been involved in the party since 1976. Paul Bérenger, a Christian of Franco-Mauritian descent, has been the only non-Hindu Prime Minister and was therefore also the only Prime Minister not belonging to either the Jugnauth or Ramgoolam families. (See: Ramtohul & Eriksen 2018).

[10] The MSM is a centre-left socialist political party founded in 1983 by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who led the MSM until 2003. Since 2003 his son Pravind Jugnauth has taken over the leadership. The MSM emerged out of the split between the leaders of two main parties comprising the coalition in 1983: the MMM founder Paul Bérenger and Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister at the time. Since its foundation in 1983, the MSM has been the leading government party for five times out of eight elections. It draws most of its support from the country's Hindu majority. (See: Ramtohul & Eriksen 2018).

[11] This was the case during two short periods between 1982-1983 and between 2003-2005. (See: Ramtohul & Eriksen 2018).

parties since independence can clearly be seen in the social welfare system that the island has developed. The government provides free health care and free public transport for students, senior citizens and disabled persons (Cheun 2018). It also provides a Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) of Rs5.000 per month to all its citizens above 60 years. The government has set up special (youth) unemployment programmes, social housing programmes for low income families, and family planning programmes to ensure the decline of population growth on the island (Awtar 2012, IPPF 2019).

Furthermore, free education is given on public schools up to the tertiary level. Children take examinations at certain stages in order to gain access to the next education level. The first examination takes place after six years of primary school and is called the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). After five years post-primary education, children take examinations for the Cambridge School Certificate (SC). After SC, children can take an additional two years of schooling that prepares for academics, the final examinations for this are called Higher School Certificate (HSC).[12] Finally, the highest education level is University. There are several public universities, including the University of Mauritius, but also private institutions, such as the Australian private university Curtin and the African Leadership University. In 2018, 97% of all children were enrolled in primary education, of which 50,3% were boys. 65% of these children were enrolled in public schools. If a child did not pass a certain certification, they would have to drop out of school. Therefore, enrolment rates in secondary education in 2018 were lower: 73%, of which 48% were girls. For SC and HSC the pass rates in 2018 were respectively 71,6% and 74,4%. The gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education is estimated at 46,6%, of which around 55% are girls (Statistics Mauritius 2018a).

In the 1960s, the economic prospects for Mauritius were gloomy because of the island's geographical isolation, the small size of the domestic market, a monocrop economy based on sugar cane, a rapid population growth and susceptibility for ethnic tensions (Bheenick & Schapiro 1991, Cheun 2018, Subramanian & Roy 2001). However, in the 1970s, the Mauritian government used profits from sugar rents to establish an EPZ. The EPZ consisted of fiscal concessions that would attract foreign manufacturing firms, particularly in the textile sector, to locate their labour-intensive activities in Mauritius. The EPZ expanded further in the 1980s and 1990s and attracted more foreign investment. Mauritius enjoyed several preferential trade agreements with the EU and the US, such as a sugar quota and the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) that included quota on textiles and clothes (Bunwaree 2014, Ramtohul 2008, Subramanian & Roy 2001). Since the early 2000s, however, these preferential trade agreements phased out in the light of global trade liberalisation. As a consequence, the Mauritian EPZ sector hardly maintained competitive with textile export giants such as China, India and Vietnam (Rosunee, n/d). The Mauritian government has responded to this with plans to transform its economy into a knowledge economy, based on new capital-intensive sectors, such as financial services ICT (Day-Hookoomsing & Essoo 2003, Gunganah et al. 1997, Seechurn et al. 2013). The increasing tourist sector also remains a major source of income. Today, Mauritius is characterised as an upper middle-income economy (World Bank 2019). 70% of the total labour force works in services, while 24% works in manufacturing and 6% in agriculture. The unemployment rate in 2018 was 6.9% (Mauritius Statistics 2018b).

Women in Mauritius

In colonial times, the Mauritian state was modelled on the British model, which was characterised by male hegemony at all levels. Therefore, Mauritian society was dominated by a strong patriarchal ideology. Women were the inalienable property of their husbands and any focus on women was limited to marriage and their reproductive roles. Religious beliefs, cultural practices and the education system reinforced women's subordination (Ramtohul 2010-2011).

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[12] The government of Mauritius recently (2017) changed the education system into a Nine Years Continuous Basic Education, but none of the women in this research were in primary or secondary education, therefore this research takes into account the education system before 2017 based on CPE, SC and HSC.

Women's emancipation in Mauritius started before independence, but most of the early women's organizations were connected to socio-religious organizations that were headed by men, and therefore not autonomous. The awareness for women's rights started to increase after independence in the mid-70s, when women massively responded to employment opportunities in the EPZ and trade unions became particularly important political spaces for women to address their concerns. The EPZ had major consequences for women politically and economically. Economically, the EPZ created mass employment opportunities for women, because the factories needed cheap, low-skilled labour, which led to an influx of many younger working class women with lower levels of education (Ramtohul 2010-2011). Initially, Creole women were overrepresented in the factories, but the EPZ 'zone' was not confined to a limited area on the island, but rather comprised the whole island, therefore giving manufacturing firms the opportunity to locate their factories in places best suited to their needs (Bheenick & Schapiro 1991, Eriksen 1998). Foreign firms, in turn, located their factories in the rural areas, which made it easier for rural women, mainly Hindu, to start working in the factories. The overall increased participation of women in economic sectors also meant that women's awareness of their rights, roles and negotiating power increased (Gunganah et al. 1997). Furthermore, according to Eriksen (1998), the factories were spaces where women from different ethnicities and religions worked together, creating interesting multicultural spaces where women united along dimensions of class and gender. The way in which the EPZ contributed to the empowerment of working class women becomes apparent in the following interview with a woman working in a textile factory from National Geographic in 1993:

> For a Mauritian woman to work, is to be free. Before, a girl could not leave home until her parents found a husband for her, and then she moved into her husband's family's home and spent the rest of her life having babies. I met my husband at work, and it was my decision to marry him. Now we live in our own house (McCarry 1993).

Politically, during this period non-ethnic/religious organisations emerged, such as the women's wing of the political party MMM (Ramtohul 2010-2011). The increase of awareness for women's rights and gender issues was also enhanced by the global attention for women's rights in the 1970s, particularly the 1975 UN Year of Women provided an impulse for local Mauritian women to focus political attention on women's rights. Collective action alliances, such as the Mauritius Alliance of Women (MAW) united women from different ethnicities, religions, social classes to fight together for women's rights, particularly in marriage. Abuses within marriages were common and particularly orthodox Hindu women experienced a lot of pressure to have a male first-born to 'deserve' a civil marriage, apart from their religious marriages. Women had no rights or legal status within the marriage, their husbands decided whether they could work, whether they could open a bank account and whether they could access their salaries. The lobbying of women's collective groups eventually led to the amendment of the marriage laws in the early 1980s, which entitled women to equal rights and more economic autonomy (Ramtohul 2010-2011).

However, the phasing out of the MFA and the closing down of EPZ factories had significant impacts on women's employment. The new emerging financial services and ICT sectors required skilled professionals, therefore the workers who were retrenched from the traditional manufacturing sector - based on cheap, low-skilled labour - were not automatically absorbed into the new sectors (Seechurn et al. 2013). For women it was especially harder to transfer into other sectors and find alternative employment because of lower educational qualifications, that did not fit the high-tech sectors in which the government started to invest. Women generally earn less monthly income (on average Rs18.600) compared to men (Rs24.400) (Statistics Mauritius 2018b). Furthermore, the women's unemployment rate (10,1% in 2018) is still higher than the men's (4,7% in 2018) (Statistics Mauritius 2018b). Women also remain underrepresented in politics: today there are 13 female members of parliament, which is 18,8% of the total (Women Political Leaders 2019). The Mauritian government has promoted entrepreneurship and self-employment as an alternative way for women to earn a viable income and

has encouraged them to set up small businesses (Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur 2014, Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah 2012). Most of these women are involved in low value added activities, such as food services, and the production and sales of souvenirs and handicrafts. Many female entrepreneurs were previously employed in the textile and garment industries in the EPZ sector (Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah 2013, Ramtohul & Neelian 2013). Despite the government's efforts to promote women entrepreneurship, women remain overrepresented as employees. Only 1,5% of working women is an employer (compared to 4,7% men) and 8,7% of working women is own account worker (compared to 17,9% men) (Statistics Mauritius 2018b). Nevertheless, Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014) do find in their survey amongst 158 women entrepreneurs, that their entrepreneurship has contributed to an improved livelihood, mainly in terms of an increased household income.

Empowerment actors

Since the mid-70s the Mauritian government has significantly stepped up its game on promoting gender equality. A Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare was set up in 1976. Their stated mission is to: "design and implement policies and programmes geared towards promoting gender equality and equity, protecting the rights of children and enhancing their overall development and promoting the welfare of families" (Ministry of Gender Equality 2019a). The Ministry's objectives are two-fold: on the one hand they implement gender-sensitive policies and promote a gender-sensitive perspective in policies of other ministries. On the other hand it promotes and defends women's rights and work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. There is a clear discourse within the government of being gender-aware and implementing gender-sensitive policies, although this does not mean that in reality women feel more empowered. Two female government officials in the Ministry clearly distinguished between what the Ministry aims to do and reality. In reality, they felt that women were not taken seriously by men and that it was hard to get a loan, open a bank account or buy a house without the consent of a man (Interview Ministry of Gender Equality, December 2018).

Under this Ministry fall two parastatal bodies: the National Women's Council (NWC) and the National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWEC). The NWC was set up in 1985 and mainly establishes relations and effective communication with women's organizations in the country. It also assists in the implementation and evaluation of Government policies related to women (Ministry of Gender Equality 2019b). The NWEC was set up in 1999 and its vision is to "acts as a driver and facilitator in empowering women entrepreneurs" (Ministry of Gender Equality 2019c). Women can join the NWEC for a small fee and enrol in training programmes and the organization gives advice to women about the registration of their businesses and how to get credit. These organizations reflect the government's policy and are (supposed to be) available for all women, no matter their background. Some public actors implement policies in a top-down way, while there are also local grassroot public actors who work on the ground.

Apart from public organizations, more and more private actors have joined the playing field in promoting women's empowerment and/or entrepreneurship. These can be divided into several categories. The first category private actors are (women) platforms. These are organizations and initiatives that are non-governmental and that bring together local artisans/(women) entrepreneurs who work independently. The main goal of this category actor is to provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to support each other and increase their personal network. Some organizations provide a certification (Made in Moris) or a space to meet and be creative (Le Workshop), while others function as networking organizations, such as the Association Mauricienne Des Femmes chefs D'Entreprises (AMFCE) or the Mauritius Yellow Pages (MYP) network. Both platforms focus on women who have an established brand and who run relatively viable businesses in different sectors. The main sectors that they focus on are more high-value added sectors. These platforms contribute to women's empowerment through trainings, mentoring and by giving women access to an international network. They also emphasize that they work together with local Mauritian women organizations, such as the NWEC and often provide to these organizations their women to give trainings. Their view on

empowerment is that "by encouraging women entrepreneurship they hope to change mindsets and empower women to realise their potential and take charge of their own destiny" (Interview MYP Network, December 2018). The platforms can thus be small and online-based (such as the Fam dan Biz-Facebook group) or a national branch of a larger international organization (such as the AMFCE). While these platforms are in theory available to all women, mainly women who have established a clear brand and/or who have entrepreneurial activities online use these.

The second category actors are private social projects. These projects are also non-governmental, and often part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments of larger corporations. It is mandatory in Mauritius for all profit-making organizations to contribute 2% of their profits to CSR projects, which mostly focus on environmental concerns or society (Ragodoo 2013). Rather than bringing together independent women entrepreneurs, the social projects provide work for 'women entrepreneurs'. The women in these projects, according to the definition in this research, are not entrepreneurs, because they do not have their own business. However, the projects always emphasize that they are, in fact, entrepreneurs. Private social projects have a very clear goal of empowering women. They are social businesses and actively contribute to enhance women's skills and improve their lives by giving them the opportunity to work for the project. However, they also emphasize that women within the project feel like a 'family' and that the project also serves as a community. The projects are roughly designed in the same way, although there are minor differences between them. The women within the project are provided with the materials, designs and sometimes a workshop to make their products. Marketing and sales is in the hands of the project itself. The project 'buys' the products from the women. Often the women have to determine their own price for the product, with help from the project. Some of the women had other customers apart from the project, but most of them would only provide products for the project. The way women are paid depends on the project: some of the projects buy directly from the women and then sell their products in hotel shops or stores, so that women get a somewhat stable income per month and they can work all-year-round, also in the low tourist season. Other projects pay the women commission when the product in the store is sold, which means that women do not earn a stable income per month. This category private actors mainly focus on 'employing' women from underprivileged backgrounds.

The final category private actors are concept stores, which are commercial businesses. The most important artisan concept stores in Mauritius are considered for this research. Although these stores do not focus on women only, many of their producers/providers are women, because women are overrepresented in the artisan/handicraft sector. These stores are mainly available to women who have already established their own brand. While these business that are profit-oriented, they do provide an important place for women to sell their products. Many concept stores display only local and hand-made products. Le Rendez-Vous is one of the most famous concept stores on the island. The owners emphasize that they want to create visibility for local Mauritian artisans and agree that most of these are women. They emphasize that it is empowering to build a community of women and to connect different women artisans. Thus, although their goal is not to empower women by itself, it is often a side effect that is created when women entrepreneurs come together. Table 1 shows an overview of the four categories of actors and which organizations were considered in this research.

Table 1: Empowerment actors in Mauritius considered in this research

Public actors	(Women) Platforms	Private social projects	Concept stores
National Women Entrepreneur Council	Mauritius Yellow Pages (MYP) Entrepreneur Network*	Vacoas Baskets Vieux Grand Port	Otentik Bazar (Attitude Hotel Group)*
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare	Association Mauricienne Des Femmes chefs D'Entreprises (AMFCE)	Beautiful Local Hands (Beachcomber Hotel Group)**	Le Rendez-Vous concept store**
SME Mauritius Ltd*	Made in Moris*	Imiloa**	Esafodaz**
National Women Council	Fam dan Biz	ZEBR'IN	Pop Up Store Mauritius**
Development Bank Mauritius*	Le Workshop Creative Space*	Baz'Art Kreasion (CSR ELN group)	Designbazar.mu**
		Ankara Mauritius	

* Not only focused on women

** Not only focused on women, but the majority are women

There are thus many different empowerment actors in Mauritius. On a small island, they run into each other and know each other well. However, not many actors indicated that they work together with other actors. Private actors were particularly negative about working together with government actors, because "nothing would ever happen", mainly because of its slow bureaucracy (Interview private organization October 2018). While some private actors, such as the women platform AMFCE, have had collaborations with the government, almost all other private actors did no such thing and were not planning on doing this. They were, however, relatively positive towards working together with other private actors. Nevertheless, real collaborations turned out to be rare. During the final fieldwork period, it became evident that (rare) collaborations between private actors did not always work out and the manager of one of the projects accused other organizations of exploiting the women working in their projects (Interview private organization December 2018). These were dynamics not previously taken into account, because the emphasis in the interviews was on dynamics between public and private actors. Nevertheless, it does partly explain why there are so many actors contributing to women's empowerment who do not work together, despite being on such a small island.

3.2 Sample

The fieldwork for this research was carried out on the island of Mauritius between August, 23 2018 and January, 26 2019. The first month was used to explore the field and to determine a specific sample. This was not determined beforehand, because previous research and literature did not specify in which sector Mauritian women were present. At first, the tourist sector was considered in which many small-scale shop holders selling souvenirs were female. These shops were concentrated in the North of the island, which is where most tourist infrastructure is. This area was also practical, since my place of stay was Péreybère, which is a small coastal town in the North. However, after several attempts, it became clear that it was hard to talk to the female shop holders about their business. Most of them considered me a tourist and were not enthusiast to talk unless they could sell something. Furthermore, it was hard to determine whether these were women who owned the shop themselves, or whether they were working in family businesses. It was thus unclear whether these women were entrepreneurs, co-owners or employees. Many of the products that these small shops offered were not made in Mauritius, but rather cheap imported goods from China, India and Vietnam.

These findings led to the exploration of a second, different sample, which in the end provided the data for this research. The sample in this research consisted of women producers, rather than sales persons. It became clear that many women producers were artisans in the creative handicraft sector. This research thus focuses on women who create hand-made products, made in Mauritius. The creative handicraft sector in Mauritius comprises mainly of jewellery making, fabric-based production,

and the production of small souvenirs.[13] This sector is particularly interesting for this research because the government and private actors claim to empower women by offering training programmes or workshops within this creative sector. There are thus enough women with different backgrounds and experiences to compare empowerment within this sector. A note must be made, however, on finding retrenched women who had previously worked in the EPZ industry. Not many women in this research indicated that they had worked in EPZ factories, although they were the main focus group for the Mauritian government to promote female entrepreneurship. There might be multiple reasons for this, including that former EPZ women might be more present in other sectors. Tandrayen-Ragoobur & Kasseeah (2012) find in their research on women entrepreneurs in Mauritius that former EPZ women often had businesses in low-value added activities and that they sold their products mainly on the local market. A lot of these women were operating in the informal economy and could be categorized as 'survivalist' entrepreneurs for whom it is hard to expand their business (Kasseeah & Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014). It could have been then, that for this research knowledge of the Mauritian context was not enough to find the women entrepreneurs in these local, informal economies. Another possible reason could be that former EPZ women are more often employees, rather than entrepreneurs, because they were employees as well when they worked in the factories. An entrepreneurial mindset is not developed instantly when the government promotes entrepreneurship as alternative job option. Because this research focused only on the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, these are unfortunately suggestions and further research on these women is necessary.

To ensure heterogeneity, this research focused on three groups of women, namely women in CSR projects, women who get support from public programmes and independent women entrepreneurs who did not specifically get support from projects or the government. For the interviews, women were also selected to ensure diversity in backgrounds, accounting for different ages, education levels, religions and social classes. While the initial plan was to ensure diverse backgrounds in the surveys as well, this was hard to control for. The surveys online were filled in anonymously and therefore it was hard to control who would fill these in.[14] Nevertheless, the goal was to reach all three types of entrepreneurs (CSR, independent and public programme). In the end, it proved to be hard to find women in public programmes, mainly due to lack of access and privacy issues and language boundaries. Since women artisans live all over the island, no geographical delineation was determined for the island and interviews were conducted based on availability and ability of women to transport. The majority of the data was collected in October and November 2018, which was the start of the Christmas season. Many Christmas markets focused on hand-made products, and therefore it became relatively easy to get in contact with women artisans. Instagram provided another important tool to find women to interview, since many women were selling their products online. While the Christmas season had helped tremendously to find women, it was also a major set-back. The closer to Christmas; the less women were available to interview, because they were busy with their orders. After Christmas, most women took a holiday and therefore most women were not available in the months December and January, which were the final months of this fieldwork.

The theoretical framework and methodological foundations for this research were determined during the writing of a research proposal prior to the fieldwork period. The research proposal focused initially on the different dimensions of empowerment, on heterogeneity of women entrepreneurs and on support systems and networks. Through this lens, the Mauritian context was explored. It turned out that dimensions of empowerment were very relevant, since there were significant differences in between dimensions indicated by the interviewees. Also heterogeneity remained a useful theoretical framework, since women entrepreneurs were indeed a diverse group of women, who had different

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[13] Although there are also women entrepreneurs who produces locally hand-made food products, these are not included in this research. Food production is a different sector: in order to produce and sell food there are many different trade licenses needed, which would make a comparison hard with handicraft souvenirs.

[14] To ensure that the women filling in the online surveys were actually entrepreneurs, women were asked the name and main activities of their businesses for administrative purposes. This information has only been used to check whether the women fall within the sample chosen in this research.

entrepreneurial experiences and different sense of empowerment. It did not became evident, however, that support systems and networks played a large role in the Mauritian context. Instead, context and actors seemed to play a much larger role, and therefore the focus shifted to this. Some women, however, did indicate that support systems and networks of women entrepreneurs together were important for them to feel empowered. These 'collective groups' are finally incorporated into both the dimensions and heterogeneity chapters, as a sense of community and collectiveness proved to be an important factor influencing empowerment, therefore combining dimensions but also bridging women entrepreneurs with different backgrounds.

General description data

A general description of both datasets will be discussed in this section. The general results of the quantitative dataset can be found in Appendix C. Some notes on the chosen variables will be given here. Since the quantitative dataset was based on convenient sampling, it is important to point out biases that may have occurred and that have to be taken in mind for the rest of the research. First, age categories were created to correspond with important life phases, including women's relationship status and whether they have children or not. Table 2 and 3 are crosstabulations of the chosen age categories (20-29 years; 30-39 years; and 40+ years) and show how children and relationship status relate to the age categories. It shows from the tables that women in the youngest age category (20-29 years) are most often single or in a relationship and have no children. The older age categories (30-39 years and 40+ years) are most often married and have children.[15] Therefore, the age categories reflect life phases relatively well. There are some noticeable biases in the data here. First, there are less women in the youngest age category (20-29 years) than in the other age categories, therefore there is a bias towards the older age categories. Secondly, there are more women with children than without children and lastly, the majority of women is married. These biases should be kept in mind when studying the results, as they possibly influence the data on empowerment.

Table 2: Crosstabulation age categories and (no) children

Age category	Children			
	No children	Children	Total	Valid % with children per age category (children/total)
20-29 years	9	0	9	0
30-39 years	5	12	17	70,6
40+ years	1	15	16	93,8
Total	15	27	42	

Note: Survey results. n=42. Missing values: 7, of which no data on both age and children for 2 women and no data on age for 2 women without children and 3 women with children. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table 3: Crosstabulation age categories and relationship status

Age category	Relationship status			
	Single	In a relationship	Married	Total
20-29 years	4	4	1	9
30-39 years	2*	3	12	17
40+ years	1	1	14	16
Total	7	8	27	42

* Including one divorced woman.

Note: Survey results. n=42. Missing values: 7, of which no data on both age and relationship status for 2 women and no data on age for 1 single woman, 1 woman in relationship and 3 married women.

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[15] Note on the amount of children: it was concluded that this does not significantly impact women's empowerment and is therefore not taken into account. The majority of women (83,7%) have a maximum of two children. Birth rates in Mauritius are generally not very high due to active family planning programmes of the government, seen as necessary in the 1980s to prevent an exploding population growth on the small island (see 3.1 introduction to the research context).

Highest attained education level is another variable used in this research. The three major education levels in Mauritius (CPE, SC/HSC and University) were taken as separate categories and can be seen in table 4. It shows from the table that there is a slight bias towards women in University, because they are more numerous, which is an important aspect to keep in mind.

Table 4: Frequencies highest attained education level

Highest attained education level	Frequency	Valid %
CPE	15	31,9
SC/HSC	11	23,4
University	21	44,7
Total	47	

Note: Survey results. n=47. Missing values: 2 women no data on education level. Valid % calculated without missing values.

The next important variable for this research is social class. This can be a difficult concept to use in research, because it is very context-specific and runs the risk of reducing respondents to categories, based on by the researcher chosen criteria. Therefore, this research has chosen to ask women themselves what they believe their social class is. Table 5 shows the frequencies of self-defined social class for the sample in this research. It can be noted that there is a strong bias towards middle class women, which reflects the larger middle class that exists in Mauritian society.

Table 5: Frequencies self-defined social class

Self-defined social class	Frequency	Valid %
Lower class	4	8,7
Middle class	33	71,7
Upper middle class*	9	19,6
Total	46	

*Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: 3 women no data on self-defined social class. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Self-defined social class becomes particularly interesting when compared to other aspects that define a person's economic or social status such as education, income and religion-ethnicity. Table 6 shows a crosstabulation of self-defined social class and highest attained education level. Interesting is that education levels within the middle class differ enormously, which should be kept in mind when researching empowerment based on social class. It seems that women did not define their social class based on their education level.

Table 6: Crosstabulation self-defined social class and highest attained education level

	Self-defined social class			
Highest attained education level	Lower Class	Middle class	Upper middle class*	Total
CPE	2	12	1	15
SC/HSC	1	7	2	10
University	1	14	6	21
Total	4	33	9	46

* Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: no data on both education level and self-defined social class for 3 women.

To compare social class with income, this research looks at both the income women have from their business and the total household income. Table 7 shows a crosstabulation of women's self-defined

social class and their income per month from their businesses. A baseline was set at Rs10.000, which is the amount that most CSR projects strive their women to earn. This amount was chosen rather than the relative poverty line, because many women do not live in poverty and it would therefore distort the image.

Table 7: Crosstabulation self-defined social class and income from the business per month (in Rs)

	Self-defined social class			
Income business per month	Lower Class	Middle class	Upper middle class*	Total
< Rs10.000	3	11	0	14
Rs10.000+	0	4	5	9
Insecure	1	16	1	18
Total	4	31	6	41

* Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=41. Missing values: 8, of which no data on both income and self-defined social class for 3 women and no data on income for 2 middle class women and 3 upper middle class women.

Table 8 shows a crosstabulation of self-defined social class and total household income per month. Rs15.000 and Rs100.000 were chosen as baselines for total household income per month. Rs15.000 is what most women indicated as what they need per month for basics for the household.

Table 8: Crosstabulation self-defined social class and total household income per month (in Rs)

	Self-defined social class			
Total household income per month	Lower Class	Middle class	Upper middle class*	Total
< Rs15.000	3	10	0	13
Rs15.000-100.000	1	8	0	9
Rs100.000+	0	2	5	7
Insecure	0	7	1	8
Total	4	27	6	37

* Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=37. Missing values: 12, of which no data on both income and self-defined social class for 3 women and no data on income for 6 middle class women and 3 upper middle class women.

Comparing education level and income with self-defined social class, increases the reliability of the chosen variable. Although education level does not necessarily correspond with self-defined social class, it can be seen that income does roughly relate to what women themselves define as their social class. Noticeable of income is that quite a few women indicated that their income is insecure and that they would not know exactly how much they have to spend each month. A final note must be made on the missing values here: compared to the other survey questions, a lot of women did not feel comfortable sharing the answers to the income questions, therefore there is relatively more data missing here, which affects the final results.

As mentioned before, Mauritius is a multicultural plural society with many different religions and ethnicities. This research has categorized these different women into religious categories, but it must be noted that there can be many sub-religions and ethnicities within one religious category. Therefore, this research defines it as religion-ethnicity rather than just religion. Because the surveys were based on convenient sampling, it was impossible to make sure that all categories were equally represented. Table 9 shows the number of respondents and their religion-ethnicity compared to the total population. Religion is generally still important for most Mauritian women, although some women deliberately chose the option 'no religion'. There was only one Muslim woman who filled in the survey, therefore these results are not representative. There is only a small amount of Hindu

women entrepreneurs who filled in the survey, especially compared to the total population this number is quite small. Interestingly enough, the Christian / Catholic category is the largest group of women entrepreneurs in this study. There is thus a strong bias in this research towards these women.

Table 9: Religion-ethnicity of survey respondents compared to total Mauritian society

Religion-ethnicity	Frequency	Valid % (frequency/total)	Compared to total population
No religion	5	10,9	No data[16]
Muslim	1	2,2	17%
Hindu	8	17,4	48%
Christian / Catholic*	32	69,6	35%
Total	46		

* Including Creole-Catholic, Franco-Mauritian, Christian Indo-Mauritian, Protestant/Anglican, Sino-Catholic.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: no data on religion-ethnicity for 3 women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

As mentioned in the research context, religion-ethnicity was traditionally tied to people's social class and their occupations. Nowadays, religion-ethnicity might still be an important aspect for women to define themselves and others. However, as can be seen in table 10, religious-ethnic boundaries are hard to fit along the lines of social class. It does not show from this research that the two correspond. This is mainly due to the unequal amount of respondents of different religions in this research, but partly also because of a larger middle class that is not divided along ethnic lines anymore. The Christian/Catholic group is divided over all social classes, mainly because there are still major differences between women in this group.

Table 10: Crosstabulation self-defined social class and religion-ethnicity

	Self-defined social class			
Religion-ethnicity	Lower Class	Middle class	Upper middle class*	Total
No religion	1	1	3	5
Muslim	0	1	0	1
Hindu	0	6	2	8
Christian / Catholic**	3	25	4	32
Total	4	33	9	46

* Including 1 high class.

** Including Creole-Catholic, Franco-Mauritian, Christian Indo-Mauritian, Protestant/Anglican, Sino-Catholic.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: no data on both religion-ethnicity and self-defined social class for 3 women.

A final personal characteristic looked at in this research is type of entrepreneur, which is based on the entrepreneurial experiences of women. The frequencies can be found in table 11. It shows from the table that, unfortunately, not many public programme entrepreneurs were found to fill in the survey, therefore these results are not very representative. Within the independent category, there are also still large differences between women in terms of age and women working part-time and fulltime for example. This will be touched upon in chapter four on heterogeneity.

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[16] The last national in which ethnicity was asked was held in the 1970s. After this, ethnicity was removed from the census. At this time, no data was gather about people who did not have a religion or ethnicity.

Table 11: Frequencies types of entrepreneur

Type of entrepreneur	Frequency	%
Independent	24	49,0
Public programme	6	12,2
CSR project	19	38,8
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

The categorizations for types of entrepreneurs were created by looking at where women get support for their business. Table 12 shows a couple of organizations where women can get support. It shows here that 6 women receive support from government organizations (NWEC and SME)[17]. The table also shows that many women indicated to receive support from concept stores (Pop up Store, DesignBazar.mu, Le Rendez-Vous). Being an independent entrepreneur thus does not mean that you do not seek for support at all, but the support that these women get from concept stores is more in terms of a place for them to sell their products and is part of their business strategy. Independent women entrepreneurs have to arrange product placements in these stores themselves (Interview Le Rendez-Vous, November 2018). Finally, the table shows that the amount of CSR women (table 11) and the amount of women receiving support from CSR projects are equal.

Table 12: Frequencies organizations where women go to for support

Organizations for support	Frequency	% of total women uses this organization (frequency/n)
No support from an organization	9	18,4
NWEC	3	6,1
SME/SMEDA	5	10,2
Fam dan Biz	3	6,1
Pop up Store Mauritius	23	46,9
DesignBazar.mu online concept store	6	12,2
Le Rendez-Vous concept store	15	30,6
CSR Projects	19	38,8
Other concept stores	6	12,2

Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Some general remarks can also be made on characteristics on women's businesses. These results can be found in Appendix C and will briefly be mentioned here. Firstly, it shows from the data that the main customers of women in the handicraft sector are tourists or expats. The most important locations for sales are in a shop and on markets or festivals. Many women are either in a CSR project (38,8%) or self-employed (34,7%) and the majority (61,5%) works from home. When it comes to how long women have had their business, respondents were quite equally divided: 51,0% of the women indicated to have their business for max. 4 years, while 49,0% indicated to have the business for 5 years or longer. The majority of women (71,4%) did not have another job next to their business.

For the majority of women (44,9%) a passion for handicrafts was the main reason to start a business. Resources and money were indicated by 63,3% of the women as asset they needed the most for starting their business. The majority of women (50,0%) liked the most about their business that they were doing something with passion. An insecure income was indicated most often by 62,5% of the women as most difficult part of the business. A majority of women (65,3%) indicated household needs as most important spending with the money they earn from the business. If women would need extra money for their business, they most often indicated that they would get it from family (24,4%) or their own savings (22,2%). The majority of women (72,1%) indicated that they feel empowered by

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[17] A total of 6 women receive support from government organizations, 2 women indicated to receive support from both the SME and NWEC.

their business. These results are generalized. Chapter four analyses the differences between women's characteristics and reflects on how these differences influence their sense of empowerment.

For the qualitative dataset, selected sampling was used, which means that women were selected based on different characteristics to ensure diversity in the sample. Ages ranged from 19 years to 50 years old. A strong bias within the qualitative data can be found in education level: 8 out of the 12 women went to University, which could significantly bias the results on empowerment. Ensuring differences in religion-ethnicity were particularly important to select on, and finally a wide range of religion-ethnicities was included. There was a bias here towards Catholic / Christian women, but it was ensured that as many different religions and ethnicities within this category were included.[18] A couple of Hindu women were included, but unfortunately no Muslim women were found to interview. The majority of the interviewees earned between Rs5.000 and Rs10.000 per month with their business, although several women below Rs5.000 and above the Rs10.000 baseline were also included. Half of the women interviewed worked on their business part-time and half of the women worked fulltime. Finally, type of entrepreneur was an important characteristic for selection. There is a bias here, however, towards the 'independent' entrepreneur category: 8 out of the 12 women were independent entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, for the interviews the amount of women within a certain category did not necessarily matter. From the one interview with a public programme woman a lot of information was gained, because interviews go in-depth. A limitation of biases in interviews, however, is that it is not possible to compare women's stories and answers if there is only one woman within a certain category.

3.3 Reflexivity, originality, relevance and obstacles

Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be defined as "the knowledge of one's own identity and how one is positioned in the social world" (Ortbals & Rincker 2009:297). The recognition that the process of collecting data is an intensely personal one is important, particularly when it comes to fieldwork research, in which interviewing takes a primary role, which in essence is a social practice and social encounter (Ortbals & Bincker 2009). Fieldwork is a dialogical process between the researcher and the person being 'researched'. It is thus essential to include an understanding of the subjectivity (the positionality and biography) of the researcher, to understand the role of the researcher on the research process (England 1994). Furthermore, as England (1994) argues, the "researched cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork is personal" (85).

My own positionality as researcher for sure affected my research. As a white, European, young woman who did not speak French fluently, it was hard to connect with locals. White Europeans are almost always associated with tourists, and therefore it was hard to convince the women entrepreneurs that I was doing research here and that I was interested in their experiences. Being young eventually proved to be a major advantage. I positioned myself as a learner, and was eager to learn from the women I talked to. It also made it easier to talk to younger women entrepreneurs, because we had a lot of things in common and I felt that they saw me mainly as a fellow student, rather than an authority. It was important for me that women didn't see me as an authority, because I wanted to include them in my research as literal as possible to include their own voices. I started and ended each interview and survey with a note on consent and would tell the women in interviews that they could always skip a question or stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable.

Because my French is not fluent, I mainly interviewed women who spoke English. This of course influenced who I could interview or not. In two cases I needed a translator. Two women that I interviewed only understood Creole, and one woman didn't speak English. In these cases I found

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[18] Included in the interviews within the Catholic / Christian group were: a Franco-Mauritian, an expat, Creole women, a Catholic Sino-Mauritian and a Christian Indo-Mauritian.

someone to translate for me. The ideal translator, for this research a woman who was unfamiliar with the interviewees, was hard to find. Therefore, the Creole translator was the male manager of the project where the women were working in. Although I initially thought that this would cause problems, it actually helped me to get the right data. Because the women were familiar with this man, they did not feel uncomfortable sharing personal things and the manager himself was also very interested in what they had to say and cared about them. In the other case, I found a female friend who was able to translate for me in French. 'Empowerment' turned out to be a hard word to translate in French or Creole. Sometimes it would be translated into 'independence'. Because of the difficulties encountered during the interviews, empowerment in the surveys was not translated into French. Although this led to some women not understanding the word, it was believed that this was a more suitable way to research women's own definitions of empowerment, because it safeguarded against incomplete translations.

Originality, relevance and obstacles

This research understands entrepreneurship as an emancipatory act of change creation, which supplements the more narrow view of entrepreneurship as an economic act of wealth creation (Hughes et al. 2012). Therefore it will take a more innovative, interdisciplinary and more comprehensive approach to entrepreneurship as empowering. By using an Africanist interdisciplinary perspective, the picture that exists of Mauritius as 'economic miracle' is complicated. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Mauritius is not a 'typical' Sub-Saharan African country in terms of governance, economy and demographic composition of society. Nevertheless, insights and methods from African Studies give an interesting new outlook on research on Mauritius. Mauritius is often praised for its good governance and economic growth, but this does not mean that there is an automatic trickle-down effect to the whole society. This research examines how women entrepreneurs benefit from the 'economic miracle' by looking at their empowerment. Most interesting is the question whether all women feel equally empowered and if not, how differences can be explained. Finally, this research uses a mixed-methods approach, that tries to both demonstrate patterns and understand phenomenon.

The academic relevance of this research is to create a better understanding of the gendered relationship between entrepreneurship and empowerment. It contributes to academic debates on female entrepreneurs as heterogeneous group and how empowerment of entrepreneurs might differ according to their type of entrepreneurship and personal background. In addition, it looks at the micro-level consequences of the 'economic miracle' Mauritius. It sheds lights on how women have been able to benefit (or not) from the economic development of the small island economy. Lastly, this research contributes to broader discussions on the different dimensions and concepts through which empowerment can be researched. The social relevance of this study lies in its ability to highlight entrepreneurship as a gendered process, and that women do not automatically have the same opportunities as men when it comes to pursuing entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, it shows how within this category of 'women entrepreneurs' there are also considerable differences. This study will shed more light on the 'marginal in the miracle' in Mauritius.

The main obstacle for this research were language boundaries. If I was able to speak French fluently, I could have spoken to many different other women entrepreneurs and wouldn't have had to narrow down my interviewees based on the language they speak. Another obstacle was that this research was carried out during the Christmas season and the high tourist season, which are the busiest seasons for women entrepreneurs, especially those in the creative handicraft sector. Therefore, women were not always available for interviews. Also, government training programmes were not given in this period, therefore it was hard to reach these women.

4. Dimensions of empowerment

This research looks into the dimensions of empowerment. It explores how women feel empowered within the different dimensions and how these dimensions can relate to each other. First of all, however, a re-cap of the conceptualization of empowerment is useful. Empowerment was previously conceptualized as the process "by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer 1999:435). The concept implies that there is a process of change and a sense of agency, which means that women must be significant actors in the process of change and understand the availability of their options. Empowerment in its broadest sense is thus understood as the "expansion of freedom of choice and action" (Malhotra & Schuler 2005:71). To explain the value of exploring dimensions of empowerment, this research identified that empowerment is multi-faceted and complex, and that women might be empowered in one area of life, while feeling disempowered in other areas of life. Therefore, to research empowerment scholars have created different typologies of empowerment (Brody et al. 2015). The dimensions explored here are economic, political, social and psychological.

Economic empowerment refers to "the improvement of women's access to and control over productive resources, land, capital, [and] entrepreneurial opportunities" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). Economic empowerment consists of women gaining control over their own economic destiny, by improving their economic status while simultaneously gaining more control over that status. It was researched through the following indicators: access to and control over resources (Kabeer 1999); financial independence and sustainable income (Moswete & Lacey 2015); and income decision making (Mahmud & Tasneem 2014).

Political empowerment "involves the inclusion of women in positions of power and authority, access to political representation, female suffrage, and control over decision making at national and local levels" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). Because the overall goal of women entrepreneurs in this research was to have a viable businesses rather than insinuate political change, the indicators that were used to research political empowerment were: awareness of government programmes and women's use of these (Tsikata & Darkwah 2014); feeling represented by the government (Kabeer 2005); and participation in public life (Mahmud & Tasneem 2014). The political dimensions of empowerment in this research thus emphasized politics as state affairs.

Social empowerment is rather complex and encompasses a mix of "improved social standing, opportunities to socialize that were previously denied to women" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603), for example public perceptions and women's status in society and improvements in social institutions, including laws and societal norms. Social empowerment was researched through the indicators: safety in public (Mahmud & Tasneem 2014); a changed division of household tasks (Brody et al. 2015); women's positions in society or the community and the public perception of women entrepreneurs (Mahmud & Tasneem 2014).

Finally, psychological empowerment refers to "a sense of confidence in the future and understanding of available options" (Moswete & Lacey 2015: 603). It was researched by the following indicators: confidence and a sense of personal development (Brody et al. 2015); the level of stress experienced; and through confidence in the future and understanding of available options (Moswete & Lacey 2015).

It was noted before that the main advantage of researching dimensions of empowerment is that we can examine in what areas women feel more or less (dis)empowered. Moswete & Lacey (2015) emphasize, however, that these dimensions are interactive and at times overlapping. Researching how these dimensions relate and influence each other is thus important for our understanding of women's

overall sense of empowerment. For this research there is one particular multi-dimensional phenomenon that plays a large role in many women's lives, namely that of collective women groups. Furthermore, Tsikata & Darkwah (2014) emphasize the importance of allowing women the opportunity to give their own definition of empowerment, in which it turns out dimensions also usually overlap. The analysis section of this research tries to bridge abstract theories to reality by taking into account where dimensions can overlap and how these relations between dimensions affect empowerment.

4.1 Economic empowerment: resources, financial independence and income decision making

According to Kabeer (1999), resources are important pre-conditions that are necessary for someone to feel more empowered. She emphasizes that through resources, women increase their ability to make choices. Their gain in choices increases their possibility of alternative choices, therefore women also gain the ability to exercise choice. Access to resources is thus important to research in order to understand what options to gain resources are available to women, but equally important is control over resources, which examines the ways in which women entrepreneurs decide what happens with the resources that they've gained. Kabeer (1999) argues that by analysing control over resources, researchers can go "beyond simple 'access' indicators in order to grasp how 'resources' translate into the realization of choice"(444).

In order to research *access to resources*, women entrepreneurs were asked how they would get money for their business if needed. The government bank of Mauritius and several other commercial banks offer special credit for small-scale women entrepreneurs, therefore it could be expected that women have relatively easy access to resources. However, the majority of women in the surveys (46,7%)[19] indicated that they would get a loan from family, friends or their partner. Another 22,2% indicated that they would use their own savings, and only 20,0% indicated that they would get a loan from a bank. During the interviews, many women said they wouldn't take out a loan, because they would be unsure if they could pay it back and it would cause a lot of stress. Also, small handicraft businesses do not need large capital inflows. Particularly women who are able to do their sales and marketing online are able to do this without a lot of money: "I hardly had any expenses, because I would sell my products via Instagram and Facebook, therefore I didn't have any costs for displaying my products and marketing, apart from my own time" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018).

Nevertheless, resources and money were indicated by 63,3% of the women in the surveys as the most important needs to start the business. Camille set up three different businesses, including a successful concept-store, and says: "In order to set up the store, we needed more money to be able to pay the artisans who provided us with products. I come from a family of entrepreneurs, so I knew what I needed to set up the business and how to get a loan at the bank. The interest rate is high, but because of the size and viability of the business, we expect to pay it back within three or four years" (Interview Camille, November 2018). Other women who would have concrete future plans to let their business grow also indicated that they would likely take out a loan if they would proceed with their business fulltime.

To research *control over resources*, women were asked how they spend the income from their business and whether saving and reinvesting is a priority to them. The majority of women in the surveys (65,3%) indicated that they spend the majority of their business' income on household needs. While women in the surveys indicated that they would like their business to grow in the future (14,3% agreed, 79,6% strongly agreed), for 53,1% of women saving and reinvestments were not seen as a priority. Whether or not women find saving and reinvesting a priority depends on many things. Some women have a fulltime job next to their business and mainly do it for leisure. Also, some women just started their business and are 'trying it out', therefore saving and reinvestments are not (yet) a priority to them. Women with larger businesses or women who decided to give up their fulltime job to focus solely on their business more often found reinvestments a priority. Some other women indicated that

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[19] All percentages used for this chapter can be found in the tables in Appendix C.

they need the money mainly for household needs, and therefore do not see the point in savings, nor really have the option to save.

Financial independence here is defined as the ability of women to earn enough financial means to live a comfortable life, which includes basic necessities, but more importantly includes their income to be high enough for them to choose on what things they can spend their income, and thus does not force them to spend their whole income on basic household needs. Financial independence is an important indicator for economic empowerment, because it increases women's economic status and gives them more control. Moswete & Lacey (2015) find in their study on the empowerment of women in the cultural tourist sector in Botswana that financial independence was one of the most commonly identified empowerment issues in their study. The increase in financial means through women's businesses made them feel less dependent on others, for example their husbands, for money.

Women in the surveys indicated that they generally agreed (65,3%) that they feel more financially independent since they started the business. The interviewees also felt more financially independent, mainly because they had an extra side income from which they could buy extra things. Marie and Agathe said: "Our family is happy with the extra income, we can now buy extra things. We finally had money to build a gate for our house. It also feels good that we don't have to ask our husbands for money and that we can buy stuff for ourselves" (Interview Marie and Agathe, October 2018).

Financial independence can decrease when women's monthly income is not stable. Having an insecure income was indicated by 62,5% of the women in the survey as one of the most difficult things in having their own businesses. While many women agreed that they feel financially independent, the majority of women in the surveys disagreed that they have a sustainable income per month (53,1%). A lot of women work order-based, either because they are self-employed or because they still have another job next to the business. Because most women work order-based and have a very small business, it can be hard for them to take the risks needed to let the business grow: "We need my fulltime job to support our family, which is why I can't take a lot of risks or put a lot of time in the business" (Interview Diana, November 2018). For some women, these risks and an unstable income make them feel less financially independent. Michèle just quit her job to focus fully on her own business, and she said: "I do not feel financially independent at all. I put my own savings into the business and sales can go up or down each month depending on orders. I feel like I can take some risks because of my savings, but it will take some time before my business will give me a sustainable income per month and a feeling of financial independence" (Interview Michèle, November 2018). Apart from orders, some women also said that their income depends on the tourist season. Especially in the low tourist season, it can be hard to find clients for hand-made products or souvenirs and competition from other women entrepreneurs can be tough. Camille mentions, however, that the tourist industry in Mauritius is going well and that tourists more often come all year around (Interview Camille, November 2018).

It seems paradoxical that while many women have an insecure income per month, they do feel more financially independent. However, because many women do earn an extra income (even though this is not a stable income) with their business, their financial independence does increase. Aadhya says: "I do not earn a stable income with my business and I rely more on my other part-time jobs for money. However, I do feel more financially free because of the bit extra income that I make with my business" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). Women with larger and well-established businesses do earn a sustainable income per month. It seems that the size and viability of the business is particularly important for a stable income. Women do feel the risk to start working for their own business fulltime, the beginning can be quite tough and might increase insecurity. Some women who have families to support might not have the choice to take these risks.

Income decision making refers to the control that women have over their income. It is an important indicator for economic empowerment because it examines the agency women have over their income (Mahmud & Tasneem 2014). To research income decision making, this research focused

on how women spend their income and how they decide on what they spend their income. There is furthermore attention to the main reason women started their business, particularly whether this was a necessity to earn money or rather a personal choice.

None of the interviewees mentioned that there was really a change in how they decide (together with a partner or parents) how to spend the total household budget since they started a business. Some women earn as much money as their partners, while others contribute a bit less to the total household budget. If the amount with which women contribute to the household budget was lower than their partners' contribution, there were still no differences in how the women decided together with their partner how to spend their total household budget. Juliette says: "Approximately 25% of the total household income comes from my business. My husband remains the main income provider, but we decide together what we do with the money" (Interview Juliette, October 2018). For Marie and Agathe this is a bit different: "The money that we earn with the business is our money and our husbands do not interfere, we do what we want with the money" (Interview Marie and Agathe, October 2018). For younger women who live with their parents, there are differences. Most often their parents decide on the household budget, and the money they make with their business is usually for their own personal savings.

4.2 Political empowerment: awareness, representation and public participation

Political empowerment was researched through the indicators awareness, representation and public participation. The indicator *awareness* was based on the research of Tsikata & Darkwah (2014) on methodological innovations and challenges in researching empowerment. One section of their research on the empowerment of Ghanaian women focused on resources that were provided by the state and how women had made use of these and whether that had been important for them to feel empowered. Awareness and use of public assets could thus potentially empower women, because they are (in theory) available to all women and can support women in building a business. This awareness furthermore enhances women's understanding of available options and increase the opportunity for women to make critical choices (Brody et al. 2015).

The Mauritian government, specifically the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and the National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWEC), offers many training programmes and special credit for women entrepreneurs. However, most women interviewed for this research were not aware of these training programmes, nor were they interested. The survey asked women from which organizations they would go to for support and only 12,2% indicated that they would go to a government organization. Of the interviewees, a couple of women were registered at SME or NWEC, but they did not follow any training programmes. Clara said: "From time to time I go to the NWEC or SME, but they just ask for money" (Interview Clara, November 2018). Other women were not yet registered, but were planning on doing so when their business grows a bit more in the future. Navya, however, emphasized that these organizations are only open during working hours and not accessible online, therefore it is hard for her with a fulltime job to go there (Interview Navya, November 2018). Some women, such as Michèle are not really interested in the training programmes: "I don't really know how they [the NWEC/SME] could help me, I'm independent enough to arrange my own product placements and market stalls and I prefer doing my own thing" (Interview Michèle, November 2018). Whether or not women would go to the government for support thus depends on many different reasons. Most interviewees said that there is a lack of information, which is hardly available online, hence it is necessary to go to the offices in Port Louis or Phoenix, which is not always easy for everyone. "It is always difficult to find out the exact criteria and conditions for, for example, a loan from the bank: you know there is something available, but it is very hard to find out what you have to do, it can be challenging" (Interview Diana, November 2018). Aadhya mentions that the service can be quite bad: "I'm registered at SME and they explained me how to get my trade license, but communication was bad: you can't find anything online and you have to take a day off to go to Port Louis to fill in lots of paper work. Whenever I had questions I felt like they did not really want to help

me. It takes a long time before your license is processed as well" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). It's interesting however, that most interviewees indicated that they were not aware of the government services for women entrepreneurs, since the NWEC and SME actively visit markets all over the island to hand out flyers and recruit women for their programmes. Some women also mention this: "One woman from the NWEC came to my stand and gave me a flyer, it sounds like a nice community and I might be interested in participating in one of their programmes" (Interview Navya, Novermber 2018). One woman wrote her thesis in University on the training programmes that the government offers, but her main conclusion was that these courses are not innovative enough and focus mainly on 'traditional women's fields' (Interview Krisha, November 2018). Daksha also mentions that there is a lack of clear regulations, especially when it comes to copyright laws: "I sell my products online and it is very hard to do something about other people who copy my designs, there are no clear rules or indications of what I can do about it and whether I can ask the government for help" (Interview Daksha, November 2018).

One interviewee, Juliette, did follow a leadership course at the NWEC. She heard of the programme when she had a stall at a local market in her hometown and one woman of the NWEC came by and gave her a flyer. Although you pay to get registered at the NWEC, the workshops and courses are for free, you just have to buy and bring your own materials that you need for the workshop. Juliette lives in the North and Phoenix is therefore quite far: "I went to Phoenix by moped, which was okay, but the transportation costs are for myself" (Interview Juliette, October 2018). The most added value that she gained from participating in the course were the social contacts: "I made a lot of friends who are also women entrepreneurs and they feel like a support group. We remain in touch via Whatsapp and we can talk about all of our problems with each other". The NWEC also organizes markets and offers women the opportunity to get a stall: "You have to pay rent to get a stall, but there is a lot of competition between the women about who gets the stall". Nevertheless, Juliette has had positive experiences with the NWEC and it seems like there strategy of visiting markets to gain awareness for the programmes they offer is paying off.

Apart from awareness, it is also important to include whether women feel represented by the government and whether they are politically active. Kabeer (2005) argues that apart from women's direct involvement as politicians, it is important for women that the current government is able to identify relevant policy concerns. *Feeling represented by the government* is thus an important indicator for political empowerment because it shows the trust women have in the current government. Because women entrepreneurs are not politicians, trust that the government represents their interests and what they need as businesswomen is important for them in order to sustain their business and ultimately for them to feel politically empowered. Furthermore, Mahmud & Tasneem (2014) argue that public participation is an important indicator of political empowerment, and they emphasize particularly whether women are politically active in terms of voting and joining a political organization. They found for their research on economic activities and empowerment of women in Bangladesh that although most women voted, they were not actively engaged in other aspects of governance in public life.

In the surveys women were asked whether they feel represented by the government. On this statement 50,0% of the women disagreed, 45,8% was neutral and only 4,2% agreed. Another statement asking whether the women were satisfied with government services for women entrepreneurs 41,7% disagreed and 58,3% was neutral. The survey data thus projects a significantly negative view on government representation. Many interviewees mention that they do not feel represented by the government because of the administrative and bureaucratic hurdles that they have to take to get licenses. "We were quite young when we set up the business and we needed our parents' permission for everything. It is not clearly documented what exactly you need and you need a different permit for everything that you have to re-new every year" (Interview Navya, November 2018). Permission from parents was the reason that Daksha did not register her business, since her parents do not agree with her having the business. Other women also said that they think that the government could make the administrative processes much easier and more accessible. Interestingly enough,

Juliette, who participated in a NWEC course, also said that she does not feel supported by the government: "There is a lot of paper work and you need a guarantee to get a loan and there is no one really who helps you with the process itself: the NWEC tells us that we can get a loan but we have to do the rest ourselves" (Interview Juliette, October 2018). Clara mentioned that her business is actually a social association, but the government recognizes it as a commercial enterprise, hence she pays more taxes. She is trying to change this, but said that she does not feel represented by the government at all: "One day a politician came by with a journalist to write a story about our association, but the politician acted like 'they' did such a good work, while they didn't do anything" (Interview Clara, November 2018). Some women do not agree with this, however: "the government does a lot, but women too often tend to wait for the government to come and do everything for them. This is not the right attitude, you need to be independent and also do your own thing" (Interview Krisha, November 2018).

To understand the way in which women feel connected to politics, this research also focused on whether women are *politically active*. The survey data shows that only 2,1% of the women was politically active and 75,0% was not interested in politics. In the interviews the majority of women also indicated that they are not interested in politics for multiple reasons: "I did not vote in the last elections, I don't feel like it will change anything anyway. I do not feel confident about politics in this country. If you want something, you have to do it by yourself" (Interview Juliette, October 2018). A lack of confidence in the current government is more often mentioned by women who are not interested in politics. Camille mentions that she is not interested in politics because she feels like the established parties are corrupt, they are family- and friend-based and mainly looking for money (Interview Camille, November 2018). There is, however, a large difference between older and younger women in this case. The younger women entrepreneurs indicate that they are more interested in politics, most of them support a new smaller political party *Résistance Alternative*, which focuses on climate change and sustainability. The overall feeling, however, is that the current government does not represent the women's interests and that it will not change anytime soon.

4.3 Social empowerment: safety, household, social position and public perceptions

Social empowerment was researched through the indicators safety in public, changes in the division of household tasks, and the social position and public perceptions on women entrepreneurs. Mahmud & Tasneem (2014) find in their research that an important aspect of social empowerment of women in Bangladesh depended on whether women could move around freely unaccompanied. To research this mobility, this research emphasizes *safety* as indicator. Safety in the public sphere is important for women entrepreneurs, because they have to be able to get out in public safely in order to get supplies, sell their products and do marketing. "Safety can really be an issue, especially when you meet clients for face-to-face deliveries" (Interview Daksha, November 2018). Many women in Mauritius travel between major cities by public transport, which is the cheapest way to get around. Survey results show that only 31,3% of the women agreed that they felt safe on the street and in public transport, while 27,1% was neutral and 41,7% disagreed. This percentage increases when women were asked whether they feel safe as a woman travelling at night: 75,6% disagreed. The interviewees have mixed answers about safety. A couple of women feel safe and they've never had negative experiences: "I'm not afraid, but I am aware and careful. I think it depends on your own attitude as well" (Interview Clara, November 2018). Other women, mainly younger women, say that they feel less safe, and some have had negative experiences in the past: "I think Mauritian women generally don't really feel safe. Men in the bus stare at you, gaze at you, it is very uncomfortable. Women are restricted here: you cannot just wear whatever you want and people are not used to women sitting somewhere by themselves" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). She has had a bad experience herself where a man touched her in the bus and feels like this kind of harassment is still very present and isn't improving. Some women have their own cars and prefer not to take the bus because they would feel more unsafe. Camille, however, says that she would like to take the bus and go to markets, but because she is a white Mauritian, people will

treat her as a tourist or in less-touristy areas will stare at her. She does not really feel unsafe, but rather uncomfortable because of this (Interview Camille, November 2018). Although safety is thus an issue for these women entrepreneurs, Krisha thinks that it is not specific to women: "Men get attacked too, I don't think there is a large difference between men and women, especially at night" (Interview Krisha, November 2018).

Brody et al (2015) stress that the ability of women to exert control over decision making within the household is another important aspect of social empowerment. The *division of household tasks* was chosen as indicator here, because when women start businesses, they have less time to spend on household tasks and care. Therefore, a more equal division of household tasks would increase the time women have for their business and would avoid them taking up too many tasks and feeling overwhelmed or stressed. The interviewees, however, noticed that there wasn't a lot of change in the division of household tasks. Marie and Agathe mentioned that their husbands have always helped them in the household, hence there was no change (Interview Marie & Agathe, October 2018). Juliette said that the division has stayed the same, but is has become easier for her to do the household now that she works from home. Only Clara indicated that the division of household tasks has changed a lot since she started the business. She now works fulltime and her husband and sons do more tasks and help her out when she's tired after work.

Social empowerment also includes the position of women in society and the public perception that exists of women entrepreneurs. Mahmud & Tasneem (2014) argue that including attitudes and perceptions of women in the analysis of empowerment reflect the internal transformations (a critical consciousness) that are important for women to feel socially empowered. This research looked specifically at what the women themselves thought of their social positions and the public perception on them. The women were asked whether they thought that everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to start a business. Survey results show that 70,9% of the women disagreed with this statement. In the interviews women also disagreed, but they emphasized different aspects. Multiple women emphasized that it is important to have a good and original business idea. Motivation, determination and creativity were also mentioned. Knowledge of marketing, technology and sales and a network can also increase your opportunities. Technology is seen as particularly important by some women: "Your ability to work with technology and your knowledge about marketing can create greater opportunities for your business" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). It is relatively easy to start an online business with an Instagram account, which is a good platform for initial exposure and marketing and first sales. Survey results show that online tools are important in order to sell your products: in 44,9% of the cases, women indicated that they use online spaces for sales. However, online shopping is not yet mainstream: "Online shopping is on the rise, but it is still relatively new and not yet a common way to pay for most Mauritians. Most people don't have a credit card or no knowledge of online banking" (Interview Diana, November 2018). There are also pitfalls for online business: "When you put something online on Instagram, it is very easy for other people to copy your designs. There are no real copyright rules" (Interview Daksha, November 2018).

Apart from these business-related aspects, women also mentioned social and personal aspects that can influence your opportunities. Survey results show that 43,8% of the women agreed that gender can influence your opportunities and that men and women entrepreneurs face different obstacles. In the interviews, women felt more nuanced about significant gender differences. Some women even thought that women entrepreneurs have it easier: "Women are more driven towards a goal. They are less hesitant and more determined and thus motivated to make their business a success" (Interview Marie & Agathe, October 2018). However, Navya mentions that it can be harder for women to do the physical stuff, such as setting up tables on markets. Survey results indicated that the majority of women (53,2%) felt that Mauritians respect women who have a business. "I think respect for women really relates to the state of mind of a person, there is no general thought. The state of mind depends again on your cultural background, social class, family etc." (Interview Camille, November 2018). Krisha adds: "Some people think that it is not the place of a woman, she should stay at home. Mauritians can still be pretty traditional" (Interview Krisha, November 2018). Women working, however, might also

be a necessity in present-day Mauritius: "People don't understand why women work, but life has become more expensive and many households need the extra money. So even though there is this stereotype that women shouldn't work, the income of only the man is usually not enough anymore" (Interview Clara, November 2018).

Another possible underlying aspect might be the cultural background of women. However, survey results showed that 54,2% of the women did not feel that cultural or religious background matters for the success of a business. Diana said: "Everyone should have the same opportunities to start a business, because the registration process is fairly easy and cheap. However, I feel like culture wise there might be restrictions for girls and women whose family is very orthodox and traditional" (Interview Diana, November 2018). Clara agreed that culture matters: "Generally your career and opportunities depend on where you were born. It is not really about religion or colour, but more about in which family you are born" (Interview Clara, November 2018). Marie and Agathe, on the other hand, disagreed: "religion and social class do not play a role, it is all about willingness" (Interview Marie & Agathe, October 2018). Daksha emphasized that social class can be important for your business: "Usually, when someone is from a higher class you know more people and your start will be less difficult because you can more easily get resources" (Interview Daksha, November 2018).

Noticeable is that instead of emphasizing cultural or religious background, most of the interviews emphasized how important their family background is for their business. A lot of parents from the women have or had businesses of their own. Their parents were usually supportive of them starting their own businesses. In the survey results support from family is mentioned as the third most important aspect women needed when starting a business. Michèle said: "When it comes to your background, I think it is very important to have the support of your parents. My parents have been very supportive, although they are not entrepreneurs themselves" (Interview Michèle, November 2018). Daksha explained the struggles she has because her lack of support: "My family does not support me at all, they think it is a waste of money and time. My family is quite orthodox and traditional and they see me as the rebel of the family. They don't know exactly that I still have the business and I have to look for places to work so that they don't find out. It is quite hard to develop my business this way, since I work from home" (Interview Daksha, November 2018).

Public perception is the final social indicator for this research. Women were asked whether they thought that entrepreneurship is perceived by society as a good career. Survey results show that the majority of women (48,9%) felt that Mauritians generally think that entrepreneurship is a good career. Alisson thinks that entrepreneurship is still seen as an unconventional career path: "My family was not very happy when I stopped working in the public sector. They were quite sceptical and didn't see this as the 'normal career path' you would normally take. They preferred for me to have a more secure job, but luckily their attitude is slowly changing" (Interview Alisson, November 2018). Aadhya adds that she thinks entrepreneurship is not for everyone: "Most people just want a stable and secure job, I think that only those who are really passionate will succeed" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018).

4.4 Psychological empowerment: confidence, stress and the future

Brody et al. (2015) define psychological empowerment as "the ability to make choices and act on them" (19) and give certain indicators that could be used to research it, such as a sense of self-worth, self-confidence, or self-esteem. Increased *confidence* is an indicator that tells us something about the sense of personal development of women. Increased confidence allows women to feel more confident about their capacities and abilities to make choices and consequently act upon them, which in turn can lead to psychological empowerment.

The women in the survey all agreed that they feel more confident about themselves and their abilities because of their business (of which 53,1% strongly agreed). The majority of women (75,5%) also strongly agreed that they like having their own business. The interviewees were also generally positive about their experiences as entrepreneur. Navya mentioned that she feels like her communication skills have improved because of her business, because you meet so many people. For

Diana as an expat, her business was also a way to get her own local contacts, which made her settling in Mauritius easier. Survey results show that the majority of women (71,4%) felt like their life had improved since they've had their business. In the interviews, many women mention that their business makes them happier because they can be creative and can do something they are passionate about. Alisson said: "I feel a lot better about myself. I am not stuck in traffic and I don't have to wake up early, I love the freedom that being an entrepreneur brings. It is my way to get out of the normal system a little bit" (Interview Alisson, November 2018). Not for everyone life feels improved, Michèle said: "I don't feel yet like my life has improved. I just started working on my business fulltime and everything is new, I have a lot to figure out by myself. I feel a lot of pressure to make it work" (Interview Michèle, November 2018).

Being your own boss brings with it many responsibilities and the need for planning to make sure that deadlines are made in time, which can cause stress. *Stress* is an important psychological indicator because it may influence empowerment negatively. Too much stress is not good for women's (mental) health. Some stress, however, can be considered normal and healthy and can improve women's work because they feel pressure. The majority of women (73,5%) indeed felt like their business can give them a lot of stress. However, survey results also show that 87,8% of the women thought that they know how to deal with responsibilities and deadlines. The interviewees also indicate that having a business can be quite stressful. It can be hard to come up with new products or projects and to remain innovative. It can also be difficult to start when they do not have a lot of capital or connections. Another reason for stress can be when equipment breaks. Upcoming markets and packaging also require a lot of work in a short amount of time. Larger orders can cause stress because most women work by themselves. All women, however, say that generally clients understand if an order takes longer and negotiations about delivery times are relatively easy. Michèle mentioned that her business gives her a good kind of stress, which gives her a boost when she finishes orders in time. Alisson mentioned that in the beginning it can also be stressful to ensure the quality of the products, because it is a constant trial and error of what works or not. Almost all women agree that they know how to deal with the stress and that it is worth the satisfaction when the products are finished: "Having a business can be tiring, but I accept the tiredness and I know that it's part of the job. This is what I wanted to do and the tiredness is part of it" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018).

An understanding of available options and confidence in the *future* can contribute significantly to an increase in psychological empowerment. Moswete & Lacey (2015) found that women entrepreneurs in Botswana increasingly had the belief that they had the capacity to fulfil their dreams and that they felt confident to make decisions about their future. Survey results show that most women (93,9%) would like their business to grow in the future. This is also reflected in most of the interviews. Future plans range from getting more recognition to founding a shop. Alisson would like her brand to be known in the larger hotels, so that her work becomes an image of Mauritian souvenirs. Daksha also wanted people to know about her and she would like to find the right balance between working hard and doing what you love. Juliette would like to set up a shop in collaboration with other women entrepreneurs. Diana's goal was to quit her fulltime job and focus fully on the business, because she feels that she works a lot better when she is her own boss. Marie and Agathe, on the other hand, were fine with what they are doing now and say that because of their older age, they will keep doing what they are doing now and they have enough orders with that. Diana emphasized that the market for handicraft products is getting quite saturated in Mauritius and that innovation is key. While most women would like their business to grow in the future, not all women have concrete business plans to do this in the near future. Some women still work fulltime next to their business, and might prefer their business to remain a side-job.

4.5 Analysis

Inspired by the research of Tsikata & Darkwah (2014), this research provided an opportunity for women to express their own understanding of empowerment and whether they feel empowered by their business according to their own given definition. The theoretical framework used in this research is a useful tool to analyse empowerment, but it remains an abstract analytical tool in which it is determined for the women when they feel empowered based on certain indicators. To ensure that the women do not lose their own voice in this analysis, women's own definitions of empowerment are taken into account, which fits a feminist approach. Both in the interviews and surveys women were asked open questions on what they define as empowerment and whether they feel empowered by their business. By analysing these answers, it is possible to get a grip of aspects within the dimensions that are most important for women to feel empowered. The answers also show how the empowerment dimensions relate to each other and that not everything in reality can easily be reduced into the theoretical framework. Table 13 shows the different aspects of empowerment mentioned in the open answers of women in their own definitions. There were certain aspects that women most often mentioned when asked about their definition of empowerment, namely: freedom, independence, making your own decisions, confidence, strength, encouraging others and collective groups.

Table 13: Aspects of empowerment in women's own definitions

Aspect of empowerment mentioned	Frequencies	Valid %
Freedom, independence, control over decisions	21	43,8
Confidence, strength, believing in yourself	14	29,2
Encouraging others, community	13	27,0
Other	19	39,6

Note: Survey results. n=48, no data for one woman. Some answers included multiple aspects mentioned in the table. Valid % calculated without missing value.

Freedom, independence and the ability to make your own decisions were most often mentioned by women, in 43,8% of the cases. One respondent described empowerment as "the freedom to do whatever we want to", and another defined it as: "being able to decide the course of your life" (Survey results). Diana also emphasized decision making in her definition: "Empowerment means to be able to make your own decisions and to put those decisions in practice" (Interview Diana, November 2018). Alisson defined empowerment as: "to have control over your life and to be independent: it means you have and make more choices for yourself" (Interview Alisson, November 2018). Lastly, Aadhya said: "Empowerment means that you feel free to grow and to do what you want without fear. You will do it and not back down and you will overcome obstacles" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). The emphasis in these answers highlight freedom, independence and the ability to make decisions and choices. These are aspects that were previously not well examined through the dimensional framework, because they are not necessarily limited to one dimension but are rather overarching empowering elements.

Confidence and belief in yourself and strength were also often mentioned by women, in 29,2% of the cases. One respondent defined empowerment as "having the opportunity to become stronger and believe in yourself" (Survey results). Another described it as "giving confidence to strive and reach your goals" (Survey results). Daksha says: "Empowerment is about self-love, respect, having confidence in yourself" (Interview Daksha, November 2018). These definitions emphasize a growth and belief in yourself and increased confidence and strength. They relate closely to the psychological empowerment indicators, in which the focus lied on feeling self-confident and a sense of personal development.

Empowerment was also defined by some women as encouraging other women, in 27,0% of the cases. One respondent explained: "Empowerment to me means setting people up to have the freedom and the choice to do what they want and building confidence in themselves and their

decisions" (Survey results). Another respondent defined empowerment as: "Being independent and loving my choices and decisions while helping other women to promote their small business" (Survey results). Clara mentions: "Providing help for other women means a lot to me personally. I get my empowerment from empowering other women" (Interview Clara, November 2018). Navya says: "Empowerment is to encourage other women and to have a space where you can discuss ideas and support each other" (Interview Navya, November 2018). Empowerment through empowering others was initially overlooked in this research. Nevertheless, it often came up during the interviews and in the survey results. When asked in the survey what women needed the most to start a business, support from other women entrepreneurs was mentioned in 26,5% of the cases.

Communities of women entrepreneurs supporting each other would come up time and time again during the interviews. These communities could be online, such as Facebook groups, but also through CSR projects and government training programmes women found a community of fellow women entrepreneurs. These communities often transcended religious-ethnic and class boundaries. Juliette participated in a government training programme and she mentioned that she has become friends with the other women in the course, which has influenced her plans for the business: "My future goal is to set up a shop with some of my friends from the NWEC. I would like this because then I would work together with friends and we can help each other out" (Interview Juliette, October 2018). Aadhya is currently involved in a project that she arranged with other artisans: "For me, I think it is important to thrive through collaboration with other artisans" (Interview Aadhya, October 2018). With four or five other women artisans they made a Christmas basket and actively promoted each other's brand and the basket on their Instagram feeds. Aadhya said that this was the first time that she had tried something like this, but that it felt empowering because they were doing something together and it turned out to be a success. These collective women groups transcend dimensional boundaries of empowerment, since they have the ability to empower women psychologically, socially, economically and potentially politically. Clara explained why these communities are so empowering: "It is not just about work, it is social. We can talk about our problems and give each other advice. We have become friends and we have fun. We also support each other (economically) when someone is in need" (Interview Clara, November 2018).

One larger collective group worth mentioning is the online Facebook group Fam dan Biz, which is a platform for and by women entrepreneurs. It is non-hierarchical, although there are two moderators who give permission to include new members. You can become a member based on a couple of criteria: one, you have to be a woman; two, you have to have a small business or aspire to have one; and three, you have to be a citizen or resident of Mauritius. Fam dan Biz states that: "our primary aim is to empower women on their entrepreneurial journey. We want to see each woman thrive boldly as they grow their business, and also have a sense of community, a safe space where we can live our values: Embody, Empower, and Evolve" (Interview Fam dan Biz, December 2018). They define empowerment as follows: "Fam Dan Biz embodies the persona of a strong woman: She is perseverant even through doubtful moments. She is strong and bold but at the same time delicate and sensible. She is beautifully imperfect and authentic. Fam Dan Biz contributes to women's empowerment by sharing this message: You can honour your authentic self and still reach for your dreams and goals" (Interview Fam dan Biz, December 2018). Many interviewees said to be involved in the Facebook group and that it had helped for different reasons. For Diana, as an expat, the group allowed her to get in contact with local Mauritian women entrepreneurs and thus helped her to establish a local network. For Daksha, who did not get support from her family, the Facebook group was her support system where she could go to for questions related to her business. Although many interviewees mentioned Fam dan Biz, not many women in the surveys indicated that they use this platform for support.

These groups or communities bring women entrepreneurs together. They can share their experiences and thoughts and can ask for advice. Some communities also help each other financially, which empowers women economically. Some groups have grown to be collectives where women have started to organize themselves, which might evolve into grassroot trade unions and therefore bring

political empowerment, although a redefinition of political empowerment is necessary to include these grassroot collectives. It would be interesting to do more research on the empowerment potential of these collectives, since so many women indicated that they found support from other entrepreneurs important for their own empowerment. However, in this research the women in these groups did not emphasize the political potential, but rather that felt empowered by these groups because they had found a community of like-minded women.

Finally, the 'other' category was indicated by 39,6% of the women and includes various answers. Most of the answers were 'I don't know', which indicates that some women who did not know or understood the word 'empowerment'.[20] Others defined empowerment as 'difficult' or as 'women in need'. These answers will be further explored in the next chapter, which focuses on the personal background of women and how they give certain answers based on this background.

Apart from women's own definitions of empowerment, this research also asked women whether they feel empowerment by their business, according to their own given definition. The survey results can be found in table 14. Overall, the majority of the women (72,1%) felt empowered by their business.

Table 14: Frequencies 'do you feel empowered by your business?'

Do you feel empowered by your business?	Frequency	Valid %
Yes	31	72,1
No	3	7,0
I don't know	4	9,3
No difference	5	11,6
Total	43	

Note: Survey results. n=43. Missing values: no data on empowerment for 6 women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Respondents in the surveys often mentioned that they feel empowered because they learned a lot of new things and they feel like they are in control. One respondent says: "Working on my own and doing everything from scratch by myself gave me a strong sense of feeling empowered. Connecting with other within the same field and working with them makes me appreciate my business and what I have achieved so far even more" (Survey results). Another respondent says: "I feel lucky to be able to own this business where I can achieve my goals, help my family grow, and indirectly other people too" (Survey results). Alisson says: "I feel empowered by my business, because I feel like I have more freedom being my own boss" (Interview Alisson, November 2018). Michèle explains why she feels empowered: "It was my own decision to start and I did it. I am passionate about it, this business is my baby" (Interview Michèle, November 2018). Krisha also feels empowered: "I feel much stronger and know now what I can do. I feel more confident. If I can do this, I can also do other things" (Interview Krisha, November 2018). There are also women, however, who indicated that they do not feel empowered or that they do not feel a difference. One respondent said: "I don't really feel empowered by my business, men set up businesses all the time too" (Survey results). Also one woman said: "No I do not feel empowered by my business, because it is hard to strive on our own. Even if there are a lot of organisations, you have to do it yourself and that is not easy" (Survey results). Another respondent explained: "On the one hand I feel empowered because when I am in my workshop I feel free and in control. But on the other hand I do not earn a lot of money out of it" (Survey results). Marie and Agathe mention that the CSR project in which they participate emphasizes empowerment and independence, however they find this difficult and they are actually also fine without feeling very empowered. They earn a bit more money and they are passionate about what they do and they both emphasize that that is enough for them for now. These answers will also be further explored in the next chapter, where we break down the different backgrounds of women and how this affects their sense of empowerment.

[20] 'Empowerment' was not translated in the interviews and surveys, because there is no precise translation in French or Creole.

4.6 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has researched dimensions of empowerment to explore whether women's sense of empowerment differs depending on certain areas in their lives. The dimensions considered here were: economic, political, social, and psychological empowerment. The analysis of dimensions showed that dimensions can overlap and interact. This section briefly summarizes the results and gives some concluding remarks.

Economic empowerment was found to be an important dimension that impacted the lives of women entrepreneurs significantly. Businesses provided women with higher incomes, which meant they have more money to spend on household needs or to reinvest in the business. Reinvesting and saving was not for everyone equally important, depending mainly on the future plans of growth for the business and on the amount of resources that women had. Many women indicated not to have a sustainable income per month. Many of them do seasonal work or commission-based work, which means that their sales really depend on the amount of orders and there is not always a high demand for handicraft products. Having a business can contribute to a more important role in household/income decision making, but in this research most women already contributed to this, thus it was not a changing factor because of the business. Most women try to avoid loans by official institutions, but rather use their own savings or ask family or friends. Resources were found to be an important pre-condition for women to start businesses.

Political empowerment was the dimensions that least impacted women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment. Most women indicated that they are not aware of government programmes for entrepreneurs. Some women also mentioned that the programmes were not relevant to them because they were not innovative. Trust in the government was generally low. Another possible explanation for the lack of political empowerment is that the women entrepreneurs worked on their own and were not organized in a trade union, therefore their political interests did not reach national politics.

Social empowerment is about women's improved social standing. Safety was perceived as an important social empowerment indicator, because it is essential for the mobility women need to run a business. While many women felt relatively safe during the day, there were also stories of sexual harassment or intimidation, and most women did not go out at night. Improving public safety would affect women's business enormously, since it would make it easier to get supplies and sell their products. Another indicator was the division of household tasks. The majority of women mentioned that the division of tasks did not change, many women combined the tasks with having a business. The majority of women felt that not everyone has the same opportunities to start a business. The availability of opportunities can depend on many things, including business-related skills and knowledge, as well as personal background and gender. Many women found support from their families of essential importance. Women think that Mauritians generally respect women who have a business, although they also feel that most people do not understand the value of hand-made products. Entrepreneurship is not yet perceived as a normal career path, it is rather unconventional. However, the women did believe this is slowly changing.

Psychological empowerment seemed to be an important dimension, particularly in the sense that women feel like their business has improved their life and their self-confidence. Many women would want their business to grow in the future, although it remains the question whether this is a wish or whether they can actually make practical steps to expand. Stress is an issue, but does not mean that women do not like the business anymore or that they cannot handle it. Most women accept that having a business means that you have to deal with order deadlines and a lot of responsibilities that might cause stress.

Most women emphasized in their own definitions of empowerment freedom, independence, confidence and community. Particularly this last aspect is interesting for further research. Many women mentioned that they feel empowered by empowering others and that collective groups contributed to their empowerment in ways that transcended dimensional boundaries. Nevertheless, empowerment remains a very personal individual process. Women do not see empowerment in the

same way and their business might not empower them in the same way. Some women might already feel empowered and therefore start a business, while others' sense of empowerment really changes after their first sales. Empowerment is thus a personal experience, that can differ depending on many factors. The next chapter looks at how this personal background affects women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment.

5. Heterogeneity

Women's empowerment is an inherent personal process. Therefore, it is hard to compare empowerment across a larger group of women entrepreneurs, because they came from different starting points when they started their businesses. Some women might have felt empowered already before starting a business, and therefore their business impacts their sense of empowerment in a different way compared to women who felt a lower level of empowerment when they started their business. This research recognizes the ambiguous relation that exists between empowerment and entrepreneurship: it remains uncertain whether entrepreneurship leads to empowerment or whether empowered women become an entrepreneur. Empowerment in this research is not measured, but rather explored: this chapter therefore examines women's backgrounds and tries to research how their backgrounds influence their sense of empowerment. Acknowledging that not all women entrepreneurs come from the same starting point and thus feel different about their businesses and empowerment is to apply a gender perspective on the concept of entrepreneurship, therefore including power relations and heterogeneity. Vossenberg (2012) states that applying a gender perspective onto the concept of entrepreneurship means that entrepreneurs are "socially-embedded human beings who have a gender, body, class, age, family, religion and ethnicity and live within specific historical, social, economic or geographical contexts" (12). Ramtohul (2010-2011:74) emphasizes that identities are complex and comprise of multiple intersections, including class, gender, race, nationality and sexuality, which causes individuals to react differently at different times. Intersectionality explains why women entrepreneurs have a different sense of empowerment depending on their backgrounds.

To examine empowerment on an intersectional level, this research distinguishes between certain personal characteristics to see what aspects affect women's sense of empowerment. First, an analysis will be made on how age and life phase influences empowerment.[21] Age categories were created that reflect life phases, including women's relationship status and children. The second characteristic for analysis is highest attained education level. Thirdly, an analysis will be made of how social class and ethnicity-religion influence empowerment. Traditionally, these two aspects were closely related, but nowadays Mauritian society is characterized by a large middle class transcending different religions and ethnicities.[22] Finally, this research looks into the entrepreneurial backgrounds of women. A couple of aspects are important here: first, the research looks at how long women have been in business and whether this affects the way they feel empowered. Second, the research focuses on the difference between women who work on their business fulltime and women who have another job next to the business. Finally, categories of entrepreneurs were made based on where women received support. Three different categories were created: independent entrepreneurs (who do not receive support from a specific organization), public programme entrepreneurs (who receive support from government programmes), and CSR project entrepreneurs (who are women who participate in a CSR project).

Based on these characteristics, we can gain a clearer understanding of how women's sense of empowerment differs based on their backgrounds. Based on these results it is possible to create a couple of profiles. These profiles are important for multiple reasons. As mentioned by Ramtohul (2010-2011), intersectionality examines how a combination of personal characteristics influence women's reactions. Often these characteristics relate to and influence each other in different ways. Secondly, in policy making, it is impossible to account for every single individual, therefore more generalizing

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[21] A more detailed description of how the age categories were constructed can be found in the general description of the data in chapter 3.

[22] A more detailed description of the variables religion-ethnicity and self-defined social class can be found in the general description of the data in chapter 3.

profiles can help to distinguish between the most important characteristics of women. Furthermore, by creating profiles, it becomes easier to get a clear picture of the different kind of businesses women have and based on the profiles further research can be done by policy makers on what different women need for their business.

To research the differences in empowerment, the dimensions of empowerment were used to show in what areas of life empowerment can differ for a diverse group of women. Average empowerment scores were created to be able to compare the dimensions for different groups of women. The scores were based on the empowerment statement section of the surveys. All statements have a score between 1-5 with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. The statements were divided into four categories that represent the four empowerment dimensions mentioned in this chapter.[23] The averages of all scores can be found in table 15. The scores correspond with the findings in the previous chapter. The average empowerment scores will be used in the rest of the chapter to show the differences in empowerment per selected group.

Table 15: Average empowerment scores per dimension

Dimension	Average empowerment score
Economic indicators	3,08
Political indicators	2,03
Social indicators	2,84
Psychological indicators	4,07
Overall empowerment	3,01

Note: Survey results. n=49.

These scores are based on empowerment indicators from theory, and therefore a second analysis was made that restores women's own voices. Women in the surveys were asked directly whether they feel empowered by their business (according to their own definition to empowerment). These results can be shown per selected group and will be compared to the average empowerment scores. Together, these survey results give a more comprehensive understanding of the empowerment of Mauritian women entrepreneurs. Although the quantitative data is able to demonstrate where differences between women lie, it is unable to explain underlying dynamics of these differences. The qualitative data from interviews then tries to explain the differences found in the quantitative data.

5.1 Age and life phase

Age and life phase can influence women's businesses. Mahmud et al. (2012) find in their research on women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh that women's decision making in the household increased significantly the older the women are. This would result in a high social empowerment score. However, when it comes to making business decisions, it can also be the case that younger women feel more empowered, because they have the ability to take risks when necessary and only have to take into account their own lives. Older women with children have other responsibilities to think about, they could therefore be less likely to take big risks for the business because they also have to take their families into account.

Table 16 shows the average empowerment scores for age categories. From the table we can draw several conclusions. First, younger women entrepreneurs (20-29 years) on average have a higher total average empowerment score, although there are no extreme differences between the age categories. There are, however, larger differences in the economic and political scores, with younger women feeling more empowered in these dimensions. Noticeable is that women's social score is

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[23] In the surveys: statements 1-6 represent psychological empowerment; statements 7-9 represent economic empowerment; statements 10-12 represent political empowerment and statements 13-20 represent social empowerment. A table with the results of all statements can be found in Appendix C.

highest for the oldest group women (40+ years). The social score includes women's social position and household decision making. These results are similar to the results of Mahmud et al. (2012) on the empowerment of rural women in Bangladesh. Psychological scores are similar for all age categories.

Table 16: Average empowerment scores based on age categories

Age category	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
20-29 years	9	3,56	2,56	2,49	4,15	3,19
30-39 years	17	3,18	1,94	2,85	4,10	3,02
40+ years	16	3,06	1,81	3,04	4,15	3,01
Total	42					

Note: Survey results. n=42. Missing values: no data on age for 7 women.

Women's own definitions of empowerment, however, vary and they might not include all indicators used from the literature. Therefore, to restore women's own voices, table 17 shows a crosstabulation of the age categories and whether women feel empowered by their business, according to their own understanding of empowerment. The table shows that all women within the age category 20-29 years feel empowered by their business, which corresponds to their higher total average empowerment score in table 16. What is interesting is that for the women aged 30-39 only 53,3% feels empowered by their business. For older women (40+ years) this percentage is a bit higher, 68,8%. These results do not correspond with the total average empowerment scores above, where the oldest age category has the lowest overall empowerment score.

Table 17: Crosstabulation age categories and whether women feel empowered by their business

	Do you feel empowered by your business?					
Age category	Yes	No	I don't know	No difference	Total	Valid % feels empowered (yes/total)
20-29 years	9	0	0	0	9	100,0
30-39 years	8	1	3	3	15	53,3
40+ years	11	2	1	2	16	68,8
Total	28	3	4	5	40	70,0

Note: Survey results. n=40. Missing values: 9, of which no data on both empowerment and age for 4 women; no data on empowerment for 2 women age category 30-39 years and no data on age for 3 women who feel 'yes' empowered. Valid % calculated without missing values.

The survey results demonstrate that there are differences in empowerment based on age. To understand these differences, we break down the dimensions in the survey to see where exactly the differences occur. Furthermore, additional information from the interviews is used to further explain the differences in empowerment between age categories.

Differences in economic scores can be understood by the aspect of saving and reinvesting. The majority of women in the youngest age category (20-29 years) agreed that saving and reinvesting profits back into the business, while for the older age categories the answers were more mixed. There is a group of women entrepreneurs within the older age categories that does agree that saving and reinvesting is a priority, but there is also an equally large group of women that disagrees. Marie (50 years old) and Agathe (47 years old) mentioned that they do not feel the need to let their business grow: "Because of our age, we will keep doing what we are doing and we are fine with that" (Interview Marie & Agathe, October 2018). The large differences within the oldest age category indicate that there might still be important differences between women within this category.

Differences in political scores can for a large part be explained by whether women are interested in politics. A larger group younger women are interested in politics and they are more neutral about whether the government represents their interests as business women, whereas the

older women indicate that they are not interested in politics and are unsatisfied with government representation. Aadhya (22 years old) said that she is very politically active and advocates for a young political part that cares about climate change and sustainability, which is very important to her. On the other hand, Camille (30 years old) said that she has never voted in her whole life, because she feels that the established parties are corrupt and lost confidence in the current system. Krisha (26 years old) gave as possible explanation why young people are more into politics that they discuss it at University or with friends. Climate change and sustainability are important topics in Mauritius right now and she feels that there are new upcoming political parties who emphasize this and who attract the attention of younger people.

The higher social score for older women can be understood through a couple of aspects. Older women agreed more often that they feel safe on the streets and public transport, while younger women disagreed. However, answers regarding safety within the older age categories are again mixed, which would again confirm that there are still important differences within these categories. When it comes to the household, Clara (41 years old) indicated that she feels more empowered by her business because she is working closer to home and it has become easier to take care of the children and the household. Her children and husband also help more with the household tasks when she is tired. Diana (35 years old), however, mentioned working from home as a challenge, because she always feels like she needs a balance between spending time with family and working on her business. Age and life phase thus do not explain empowerment fully here, there might be other aspects (such as what kind of business women have) that are important. On the statement that religion or your cultural background matters for the success of your business, women in the older age category disagreed more strongly than younger women, which led to an increase of their social score. Older women also tended to agree more that Mauritians respect women who have their own business, while younger women were more negatively about this. In the interviews, Navya (25 years old) mentioned that she had had a negative experience with a customer that she felt was based on her age. The customer started speaking to her in French, but she didn't hear it at first, to which the customer went on in Creole. She felt insulted that the customer assumed that she didn't speak French. She said that she felt that people easier look down on her because she is younger. Finally, many older women agree that Mauritians generally think that entrepreneurship is a good career. In the age category 30-39 years there are large differences in answers, which could mean that there are other characteristics of women within this age category that impact how empowered they feel.

5.2 Education level

Highest attained education level is the second personal characteristic influencing empowerment researched here. Jayaweera (1997) has researched the relation between education and women empowerment in the Asian context and examined whether a higher education level could lead to women feel more empowered, for the reason that they acquire more skills and knowledge and therefore increase their options and possibilities. She found that the relation between education and empowerment is nuanced. While access to education improved women's quality of life and status in society, she argued that education does not always "counter the economic and social constraints that perpetuate poverty and social class differentiation or the social construction of gender that reinforces gender inequality in the family, labour market and society" (Jayaweera 2010: 422). Gokulsing and Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014) have researched gender, education and the labour market in Mauritius and note that although access to education for boys and girls is equal, and girls tend to outperform boys in school, women's access to job opportunities are limited. Female unemployment rates are higher than men's and many women remain in low-occupation jobs. They give several explanations for this phenomenon: first, they emphasize that women form the majority of students in the arts, humanities and education (84% in 2011[24]). After graduation it becomes hard for them to enter a saturated labour market segment. Wages are also relatively lower for these sectors, which ultimately

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[24] Data from Gokulsing & Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014).

explains gender differences in employment, productivity and earnings. Second, Gokulsing and Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2014) emphasize that the ending of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) and the closing down of many EPZ textile factories led to an increase in female unemployment. The EPZ industry was based on cheap, low-skilled labour, therefore these retrenched women were not easily transferred to other sectors. The government encouraged women to set up their own small businesses, however many entrepreneurs are involved in low-value added activities such as the production and sale of souvenirs, handicrafts and food. Finally, they argue that Mauritius has failed in making it possible for parents to combine work and family, particularly due to a lack of facilities such as day care. Women who are married and have children thus find it more difficult to enter the job market.

Although access to education in Mauritius is almost equal, a girl's background does impact the quality of education you will get. Clara mentions that when her father passed away, she dropped out of school at CPE level to help her mother with the household. She wants her own children to have a good education because she believes it contributes to the options that you have in the future. Your parents' income and social class might have an impact on whether you will go to a public or private school or university.[25] There are more girls in Mauritian public universities, because parents more often send their sons to study abroad (Gokulsing & Tandrayen-Ragoobur 2014). Furthermore, when you are in a traditional family, you might not have many choices for career paths after graduation due to familial and social constraints. Although education level in Mauritius thus does not automatically lead to jobs or higher wages for women, this research does look at the relation between education and empowerment for women entrepreneurs, because it is useful to understand how differences in skills and knowledge affect women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment.

To demonstrate differences in empowerment scores based on highest attained education level, this research distinguishes between CPE, SC/HSC and University. SC/HSC is a combined category because it counts as secondary education. Also, university is a broad category, accounting for public and private universities in Mauritius, as well as universities abroad. Therefore, it is not the most reliable category, but nevertheless tells us something about the women who follow up until tertiary level. Table 18 shows the empowerment scores based on education level. Overall, economic and political scores are higher the higher the education level. Interesting is that the opposite counts for social score: the lower the education level, the higher the score. Psychological score also seems to be the lowest for women in University, although the differences are minimal. The total empowerment score is highest for women in SC/HSC level and lowest for women at CPE level. Nevertheless, it is too easy to say that the lower the education level, the lower the empowerment score, since the social score for CPE women is the highest of all.

Table 18: Empowerment scores based on education level

Highest attained education level	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
CPE	15	2,29	1,51	3,16	4,13	2,77
SC/HSC	11	3,42	2,03	2,82	4,20	3,12
University	21	3,43	2,29	2,58	4,01	3,07
Total	47					

Notes: Survey results. n=47. Missing values: no data on education for 2 women.

To research these differences further, we look at what women themselves feel empowered by their business or not. Table 19 shows these results based on education levels. The results correspond to the total average empowerment scores. Interesting is that quite a few CPE women (33,3%) indicated that they felt no difference in empowerment with their business. Also interesting is the relatively high

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[25] Although enrolment rates are high, this does not mean the quality of all education is good. From informal talks, many Mauritians said that in public schools the emphasis is on passing certificates, therefore lessons consist only of listening and no critical thinking, also in University.

percentage of university women (30,0%) who do not feel empowered or don't know if they feel empowered by their business.

Table 19: Crosstabulation education level and whether women feel empowered by their business

Highest attained education level	Do you feel empowered by your business?				Total	Valid % feels empowered (yes/total)
	Yes	No	I don't know	No difference		
CPE	7	0	1	4	12	58,3
SC/HSC	8	0	0	1	9	88,9
University	14	3	3	0	20	70
Total	29	3	4	5	41	72,5

Note: Survey results. n=41. Missing values: 8, of which no data on both empowerment and education level for 2 women and no data on empowerment for 3 CPE women, 2 SC/HSC women and 1 University woman. Valid % calculated without missing values.

The survey results show that women's sense of empowerment indeed differs depending on education level. The economic score of CPE level women is relatively low. The majority of these women indicated that they have an unstable income per month and that they do not perceive saving and reinvesting as a priority. While many SC/HSC level and university level women also indicate that they do not have a sustainable income per month, they do agree that saving and reinvesting is a priority.

The political score of CPE women is also relatively low, mainly because they strongly disagree that the government represents their interests as business women and they all indicate not to be interested in politics. Although most SC/HSC and university women also indicate not to be interested in politics, they are more neutral about whether the government represents their interests as business women.

Interesting is that CPE level women have a relatively higher social score than SC/HSC and university women. This is partly explained by safety, CPE women strongly agree that they feel safe as a woman on the street and in public transport, while the other women tend to disagree more. Also, CPE women do not feel that men and women entrepreneurs face different obstacles and strongly disagree that the success of your business depends on your religious or cultural background. Diana (university level) disagrees with this: "Some Mauritian families are quite traditional. As soon as a woman is married and has children, she will take care of the household and will not have the chance to find a job or start a business" (Interview Diana, November 2018). Daksha (university level) agrees partly with this. She comes from a traditional family and her parents do not support her having a business, but she also says that being in university encouraged her to pursue her business, therefore her education level overpowered her traditional background. CPE women also feel that Mauritians respect women who have their own business, while many university women disagree with this. Camille (university level) says: "Not everyone treats women in a supportive way, a lack of education can create huge disrespect for women. Not every woman has the same opportunities to start a business, education is key" (Interview Camille, November 2018). The same accounts for whether women think that entrepreneurship is perceived by society as a good career: the majority of CPE women agrees, while university women tend to disagree. Alisson (university level) notes that entrepreneurship is not perceived as a conventional career path, and when you are from a traditional family, your family might not be supportive.

5.3 Social class and religion-ethnicity

Social class is defined by Thompson (2016) as: "divisions in society based on economic and social status. People in the same social class typically share a similar level of wealth, educational achievement, type of job and income". The stratification of society is reflected in unequal access to resources, rights and power. Social class thus has a strong effect on the access an individual has to education and other

resources, but also to who one knows socially and the extent to which those people can provide advantageous economic and employment opportunities. On the one hand, social class refers to economic status and prestige. On the other hand, it can refer to socio-cultural aspects of one's life, namely the traits, behaviours, knowledge, and lifestyle that one is socialized into by one's family, which can be hard to change (Cole 2019). Social class can thus significantly impact empowerment, because it can determine women's access to resources, education, networks and overall opportunities. In Mauritius, traditionally, religion-ethnicity was strongly related to social class and economic status (1998)[26]. Therefore, religion-ethnicity is also explored here to see whether this has an impact on women's sense of empowerment.

Table 20 shows the empowerment scores for self-defined social class[27] and table 21 shows the empowerment score for religion-ethnicity. Overall, for social class, the results show that the higher the class, the higher the empowerment score. There is a large difference in economic scores between the lower and higher classes. These large differences are also reflected in the political score. The social score is highest for lower class women, but the differences are relatively small. Interesting is that the psychological score of women in upper middle class is the lowest, although differences are also minimal here. For religion-ethnicity, the total empowerment scores do not differ that much from each other, although the women without religion have a slightly higher score. The Muslim category is not representative, since only one woman responded. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that her social score is the lowest of them all. The psychological score is high for everyone, but again slightly higher for women without religion. Their economic and political scores are also higher compared to the other religions. The Catholic/Christian and Hindu women have relatively high social scores.

Table 20: Empowerment scores based on self-defined social class

Self-defined social class	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
Lower class	4	2,67	1,08	2,94	4,13	2,70
Middle class	33	2,99	1,96	2,80	4,13	2,97
Upper middle class*	9	3,52	2,37	2,86	3,96	3,18
Total	46					

* Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: no data on self-defined social class for 3 women.

Table 21: Empowerment scores based on religion-ethnicity

Religion-ethnicity	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
No religion	5	3,73	2,20	2,68	4,23	3,21
Catholic / Christian*	32	2,92	1,90	2,91	4,08	2,95
Hindu	8	3,17	1,92	2,72	4,02	2,96
Muslim	1	3,67	3,33	1,75	4,33	3,27
	46					

* Including Creole-Catholic, Franco-Mauritian, Christian Indo-Mauritian, Protestant/Anglican, Sino-Catholic.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: no data on religion-ethnicity for 3 women.

Table 22 shows a crosstabulation of whether women feel empowered by their business based on self-defined social class. It was expected that the lower class women feel less empowered, which is what these results also show, only 50,0% feels empowered by their business. For the middle and upper middle class women these numbers are almost the same (respectively 71,4% and 75,0%). Within the

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[26] A more detailed description of how religion-ethnicity traditionally related to social class can be found in the research context written in chapter 3.

[27] To research social class, this research used the variable self-defined social class. More information and the reasons for this choice can be found in the general description of the data in chapter 3.

middle class category the answers are more mixed, because this group of respondents is relatively larger and there are additional characteristics at play not accounted for by social class.

Table 22: Crosstabulation self-defined social class and whether women feel empowered by their business

Self-defined social class	Do you feel empowered by your business?				Total	Valid % feels empowered (yes/total)
	Yes	No	I don't know	No difference		
Lower class	2	0	2	0	4	50,0
Middle class	20	2	1	5	28	71,4
Upper middle class*	6	1	1	0	8	75,0
Total	28	3	4	5	40	70,0

* Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=40. Missing values: 9, of which no data on both empowerment and self-defined social class for 3 women and no data on empowerment for 5 middle class women and 1 upper middle class woman. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table 23 shows the same results but based on religion-ethnicity. Interesting is that here the women without religion are the group that feels least empowered by their business (60,0% feels empowered). This contradicts the total empowerment scores in table 21. Also, the percentage Hindu women that feels empowered (80,0%) is relatively high, although this group consists of a smaller amount of respondents. The majority of respondents are Christian/Catholic and 69,0% of these women feels empowered, which has a significant impact on the results, as their percentage almost equals the total percentage women who feel empowered (70,0%). There are large differences within this group that suggest that there are other characteristics that play a role that were not accounted for in religion-ethnicity.

Table 23: Crosstabulation religion-ethnicity and whether women feel empowered by their business

Religion-ethnicity	Do you feel empowered by your business?				Total	Valid % feels empowered (yes/total)
	Yes	No	I don't know	No difference		
No religion	3	0	2	0	5	60,0
Catholic / Christian*	20	2	2	5	29	69,0
Hindu	4	1	0	0	5	80,0
Muslim	1	0	0	0	1	100,0
Total	28	3	4	5	40	70,0

* Including Creole-Catholic, Franco-Mauritian, Christian Indo-Mauritian, Protestant/Anglican, Sino-Catholic.

Note: Survey results. n=40. Missing values: 9, of which no data on both empowerment and religion-ethnicity for 3 women and no data on empowerment for 3 Christian / Catholic women and 3 Hindu women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

The survey data show that two groups of women were overrepresented in the survey: the middle class and Christian/Catholic women. Therefore the results are biased and it is hard to determine the influence of social class and religion-ethnicity on empowerment. Additional survey data shows that within these two large groups there are still large differences, which indicates that there are other personal characteristics that may have a larger influence on empowerment.

For social class, the psychological empowerment scores of lower class women were higher than upper middle class women, which is interesting. One factor contributing to this could be stress: the majority of lower class women indicated that they do not feel a lot of stress from their business, while (upper) middle class women do agree that they can feel stressed by their business. The low economic score for lower class women can be explained by saving and reinvesting. Lower class women

agree that this is not a priority. Middle class women are divided on this matter and there are large differences in answers within this group. The low political score of lower class women is because all these women disagree that the government represents them. Again, the middle class women are divided over this matter and relatively more neutral. Interesting is that the social score of lower class women is highest. This was caused by several things. First, lower class women indicated that they feel safer on the streets and the public transport, whereas answers from middle class women differ a lot again. Lower class women also disagree that men and women entrepreneurs face different obstacles, while the (upper) middle class women agree. Lower class women all disagree that religion matters for the success of your business, while the middle class women are again very divided. When it comes to respect for women entrepreneurs, there is a big divide within the middle class category between women who disagree and women who strongly agree. All lower class women indicate that entrepreneurship is perceived as a good career, while (upper) middle class women are more neutral about this or disagree.

For religion-ethnicity, the differences that really stand out are within economic empowerment. Many Christian / Catholic women disagreed that they have a sustainable income per month, although there are slightly dividing answers within this group. Whether or not saving and reinvesting a priority also creates large differences within this group, which indicates that religion-ethnicity is not a characteristic that influences women's economic empowerment the most. Political, psychological and social scores were relatively similar, although again we see a lot of division in answers for the Christian / Catholic group of women. Noticeable is also that Hindu and Muslim women tended to disagree that they thing entrepreneurship is perceived as a good career, while Christian / Catholic women were more nuanced and divided.

Religion-ethnicity and social class were often mentioned in the in-depth interviews as well. Camille says that for some women it might be extra hard to start a business, because of their cultural background. She mentions for example that in traditional Indian culture women stay at home and might not get the support they need. Diana mentions how important cultural background still is: "If you're not in the right community, you won't have certain opportunities. If you know the right people, your life is easy. If you have the right last name, your life is sorted" (Interview Diana, November 2018). Camille also noticed that women entrepreneurs are more often Christian / Catholic: "Almost all designers that I know are expats, Creole or Sino-Mauritian. I know of a couple of Hindu women, but I do not know any Muslim women entrepreneur. It might be because Muslim entrepreneurs are more often involved in family businesses and the women help here" (Interview Camille, November 2018).

5.4 Entrepreneurial background

Apart from personal characteristics, empowerment might also differ based on different entrepreneurial backgrounds of women. This research will examine three different entrepreneurial characteristics. First, it will be researched whether empowerment is influenced by how long women have had their business. It is expected that the longer women have a business, the less risky investments they have to do and the more sustainable the business becomes, therefore women might feel more empowered by their business, particularly because they feel more secure. The second entrepreneurial characteristic that will be looked at is whether women have another job (part-time or full-time) next to their business. For women who have another job, their business might not be priority and therefore they might feel less empowered by it. However, they also have a safety net in contrary to women whose business is their only source of income. Lastly, women were divided into types of entrepreneurs based on where they get their support from. The first group of women are independent entrepreneurs, who set up and maintain their business without any external help. The second group are women who receive government support, such as trainings, courses, but also market stands. The final group are women entrepreneurs within CSR projects. These women are part of a project that provides them with a workshop, trainings, often materials and do their marketing and sales for them. These categories are very important to understand empowerment, because the differences between

the categories of women are very large, while the differences within the categories are relatively small. Table 24 shows the empowerment scores based on the type of entrepreneur. There are some noticeable differences from these results. First, women in CSR projects have the lowest total, economic and political scores, but the highest social score. Psychological scores are relatively the same. There are no large differences between independent and public programme entrepreneurs, although public programme entrepreneurs have a slightly lower political score, which is interesting since they receive government support.

Table 24: Empowerment scores based on type of entrepreneur

Type of entrepreneur	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
Independent	24	3,50	2,40	2,52	4,03	3,11
Public programme	6	3,78	2,17	2,58	4,17	3,17
CSR project	19	2,33	1,51	3,17	4,10	2,78
	49					

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table 25 shows the scores based on how long women have had their business. The results show that the expected results are false. Women who have had their business for a shorter amount of time (0-4 years) have a higher empowerment score for all dimensions, except social. There are especially large differences between economic and political scores. The unexpected results can partly be explained by the type of entrepreneur. Table 26 shows that the majority of women in CSR projects have been in the project for 5 years or longer, while most independent entrepreneurs have had their business for a shorter amount of time. The differences in empowerment can thus better be explained by the type of entrepreneur, rather than the years that women have had their business.

Table 25: Empowerment scores based on how many years women have had their business

Years in business	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
0-4 years	25	3,45	2,37	2,61	4,09	3,13
5+ years	24	2,69	1,67	2,95	4,06	2,84
Total	49					

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table 26: Crosstabulation type of entrepreneur and how long women have had their business

	Type of entrepreneur			
Years in business	Independent	Public programme	CSR project	Total
0-4 years	19	4	2	25
5+ years	5	2	17	24
Total	24	6	19	49

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table 27 shows the empowerment scores based on whether women have another job next to their business. The total empowerment score hardly differ, as well as the political and psychological score. Economic scores are relatively higher for women with another job, as was expected. Social scores are relatively higher for women without another job. This cannot really be explained unless we take into account table 28 which is a crosstabulation of whether women have another job and the types of entrepreneurs. It shows from the table that the majority of women without another job are women from the CSR project. These women had a relatively higher social score compared to the other types.

Table 27: Empowerment scores based on whether women have another job next to their business

Other job	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
Yes	14	3,50	2,19	2,32	4,05	3,01
No	35	2,91	1,96	2,96	4,09	2,98
Total	49					

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table 28: Crosstabulation type of entrepreneur and whether women have another job next to their business

	Type of entrepreneur			
Other job	Independent	Public programme	CSR project	Total
Yes	11	1	2	14
No	13	5	17	35
Total	24	6	19	49

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Whether a woman has another job and how long she has had her business are important aspects of women's entrepreneurial background, but in these research differences in empowerment cannot be explained without taking into account types of entrepreneurs. Therefore it is suggested that the type of entrepreneur variable is the defining variable for women's entrepreneurial background in explaining differences in empowerment. Table 29 shows a crosstabulation of types of entrepreneurs and whether women feel empowered by their business. The results show that 79,2% of independent women feel empowered by their business. For public programme women this percentage was 75,0%, although there were not many respondents and missing values. For the CSR women 60,0% felt empowered by their business, but also 33,3% indicated that there was no difference.

Table 29: Crosstabulation type of entrepreneur and whether women feel empowered by their business

	Do you feel empowered by your business?					
Type of entrepreneur	Yes	No	I don't know	No difference	Total	Valid % feels empowered (yes/total)
Independent	19	2	3	0	24	79,2
Public programme	3	1	0	0	4	75,0
CSR project	9	0	1	5	15	60,0
Total	31	3	4	5	43	72,1

Note: Survey results. n=43. Missing values: 6, of which no data on empowerment for 2 public programme women and 4 CSR project women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

The differences in economic scores can be understood because of several aspects. CSR women strongly agree that they have a sustainable income per month and that saving and reinvesting in the business is a priority. They do feel more financially independent than the other groups of women. Marie and Agathe (both in a CSR project) mentioned this is in the interviews as well. They both felt that their extra income made them feel more financially independent and made them able to buy extra things for the household, Marie mentioned for example that they were able to construct a gate in front of their house. They also both said, however, that they do not earn the same income every month. They get their income based on how many products they sell to the manager of the CSR project, and therefore in the lower tourist season they sell less products. They do not have other projects or shops where they sell their products to and are therefore completely depended on this particular CSR project. They also do not save their money, because they do not see the need for it. They are happy with things are right now and both say they do not really need their business to grow, they earn enough income to make their lives a little bit more comfortable and are fine with that. What also plays a role is whether

women have another job next to their business. Independent entrepreneurs with another job have a higher economic score, because they have a stable income per month, but also because they find saving and reinvesting for the business a priority. On the contrary, many women without a job feel that saving and reinvesting is not a priority, mainly because these are CSR women and they receive a lot of support, materials and workshops from the project, therefore most women did not see the need to save or reinvest. We see the same results when looking at how long women have had their business. Women who've had the business for 5 years or longer feel less empowered, because the majority of these women are CSR women and they have lower empowerment scores.

There were also significant differences in political scores between the types of entrepreneurs. Interestingly, public programme entrepreneurs do not have the highest score despite their government support. This was also reflected in the interview with Juliette, who followed a leadership course at the NWEC. She was very happy with the course, and particularly with the group of women that she met and stays in touch with, but also said that she didn't feel that the government represented her as business woman. Possible explanations for these paradoxical answers could be that she does not realise that the NWEC is a government organizations or that it is relatively normal in Mauritius to not be satisfied with the government. Independent entrepreneurs have a relatively high political score, although answers are quite mixed here. One group within independent entrepreneurs are younger women in university, who more often indicated that they are interested in politics. Aadhya is such an entrepreneur and says that although she does not have trust in the established political parties, she support a new party that emphasizes sustainability and climate change.

The social score is relatively higher for CSR women. These women indicated that they feel more safe in public transport and on the streets and they do not feel that your gender or cultural background matters for the success of your business. They generally feel that Mauritians respect them and feel that everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to start a business. They also think that entrepreneurship is a good career, while the other women are more neutral about this.

5.5 Profiles

In the analysis of all characteristics separately, it often showed that there were still large differences within the created categories, indicating that other factors might have been influencing empowerment as well. Every woman in this research was unique and their identities were comprised of multiple intersecting personal and entrepreneurial characteristics. Education, life phase, social class, religion-ethnicity and type of entrepreneur relate to each other in complicated means that are far beyond this research. However, to incorporate the interplay of different characteristics, this research has identified three profiles in which women share certain defining characteristics that influence their sense of empowerment. These profiles thus include the intersection of women's characteristics. From here, a clearer picture can be created of the different types of businesses women have, which is important to policy makers who try to understand what different women need. As was mentioned before, a defining feature to explain differences in empowerment was entrepreneurial background, which was closely tied to the context in which women pursue their business and the support they receive from certain actors.

This is particularly so for women in CSR projects: their empowerment scores differ significantly compared to other types of entrepreneurs and at the same time there is minimal variation within this group of women when it comes to empowerment. Although there are some diverse personal characteristics within the CSR women group, the majority of these women is older, are married and have children. They also have lower educational classifications, define themselves as (lower) middle class. A large amount of these women are Christian or Catholic and religion is important to them. The first profile is therefore referred to as women in CSR projects.

For the second and third profile type of entrepreneur was also taken into account, but a distinction was made based on a different variable, namely whether women work fulltime on their business or have another job next to their business. Women who work full-time on their business are

referred to as fulltime independent entrepreneurs. These women are usually older, married and have children. They generally have a higher education level and self-identify as (upper) middle class. Most women are Catholic or Christian, although some of them also indicate that religion is not that important to them.[28]

The third and final profile includes part-time independent women. These women have another job next to their business. They are mainly younger women who are single or in a relationship. Some of them have children, but most of them do not. They generally have a high education level (university). They define themselves as (upper) middle class. The women have different religions, but most of them indicate that religion is not important to them anymore.

The majority of women fit into one of these profiles, only three women were left out in the analysis because they had too many different characteristics to fit into one of the profiles. Table 30 shows the empowerment scores per profile. We can draw several conclusions from this table. First, CSR women have the lowest total empowerment score, while independent fulltime women have the highest total score. Political and economic scores for the two profiles independent entrepreneurs are roughly equal. Social scores are highest for CSR women, which we already saw in earlier analysis. Psychological scores are relatively equal and the highest scores of all the dimensions. Taking into account the profiles created here and the personal characteristics analysed here, these scores best reflect the differences in empowerment for different women entrepreneurs. These scores can be important starting points for policy makers in designing policy formats that fit the needs of different types of women entrepreneurs.

Table 30: Empowerment scores based on profiles

Profiles	Frequency	Economic score	Political score	Social score	Psychological score	Total average empowerment score
CSR project	18	2,39	1,48	3,20	4,12	2,80
Independent fulltime	17	3,65	2,39	2,76	4,07	3,22
Independent part-time	11	3,58	2,45	2,17	4,08	3,07
Total	46					

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: 3 women no data.

5.6 Summary and conclusions

It was acknowledged that women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment can differ based on their personal and entrepreneurial background, which ultimately meant that they had different starting points and a different level of empowerment when they started their business. This chapter tried to account for the complex identities of the individual women by researching how their sense of empowerment was influenced by different aspects of their backgrounds. Empowerment was researched based on age, education level, social class, religion-ethnicity and entrepreneurial background.

The results for age showed that there were large differences between women in different age categories or life phases. Differences were particularly profound for younger women who were not married and did not have children. These younger women often felt more empowered, particularly in economic and political dimensions. Older women had higher social scores, which is mainly due to how they felt about their position in society: they generally felt more respected as entrepreneur and they felt safer on the streets. They also felt more empowered in the household, because many women

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[28] A couple of these women indicated that they receive government support and they were previously categorized as 'public programme entrepreneurs'. It turned out, however, in previous results that there were no significant differences between public programme entrepreneurs and independent entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the number of respondents in this category was low, therefore these women are taken into this profile, because they resemble most with independent fulltime entrepreneurs in terms of personal characteristics.

worked from home and could now combine their job more easily with taking care of the children and the household.

A higher education level increases the skills and possibilities that women have, and generally women with a higher education level also felt more empowered. However, it is the combination of education with social class and religion-ethnicity that really explains why some women start working or become entrepreneurs and others do not. Women's social class can impact their sense of empowerment in multiple ways. It can affect them directly: when a woman is from a traditional family that respects traditional gender roles, it can be hard for them to find the resources and support to start a business. Their background can also influence their empowerment indirectly: their social class might impact the type of education they will follow or determines their social network and what they can achieve through their connections. The results in this research show that women are well-aware that cultural background might influence empowerment, but the majority does not feel that way in their own lives. Most of the women come from families of entrepreneurs or have family that supports them, and therefore for them it does not necessarily matter which religion-ethnicity they have or in which social class they are. Nevertheless, it is interesting that most women in this research were Christian or Catholic and not Muslim or Hindu.

Results showed that the variable types of entrepreneurs explained women's sense of empowerment best. There were large differences in empowerment between independent women entrepreneurs and women in CSR projects that were not accounted for in previous characteristics such as age or religion-ethnicity. Based on the types of entrepreneurs-variable, we can understand the results of other characteristics better. Entrepreneurial experiences are thus an important addition to personal characteristics to research women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment.

Although types of entrepreneurs explained the most important differences in empowerment between CSR women and independent entrepreneurs, there were still large differences within the independent entrepreneur category. Through the creation of profiles, this group was split in women who work fulltime on their business and women who have another job next to their business. The results showed that these characteristics showed the most profound differences within the independent entrepreneur category. Ultimately, it is the combination of personal and entrepreneurial background and context that influences women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment, and this complexity should be accounted for by policy makers trying to design policies targeting the (different) needs of women entrepreneurs.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings and concluding remarks

Mauritius' economic miracle occurred largely due to the mobilization of cheap, low-skilled female labour. After the phasing out of international preferential trade agreements that facilitated the development of an EPZ industry, the country's largest growth engine, many women were retrenched. Because of lower educational qualifications, these women were not easily transferred into new knowledge-intensive sectors, such as ICT and financial services. In line with international discourses on gender equality, women's empowerment and female entrepreneurship, the Mauritian government actively started to promote entrepreneurship as an alternative viable option for women to make a living and hence to become more empowered. This research has looked at how entrepreneurship influences Mauritian women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment. The aim was to critically analyse the gendered relationship between entrepreneurship and women's empowerment by taking a critical approach. Critical questions were raised such as: what kind of empowerment? Whose empowerment? Who is doing the 'empowering'? Therefore taking into account that entrepreneurship can influence different areas in women's lives (dimensions); that women are a heterogenous group with different personal and entrepreneurial backgrounds; and that context and actors are important in explaining the opportunities that women have to start a business. This research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relation between entrepreneurship and empowerment by emphasizing that women have different personal backgrounds and therefore their entrepreneurial experiences differ which in turn influences the way they feel empowered by their own business.

Empowerment was defined in this research as the process "by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer 1999:435). This implied that there is a process of change and a sense of agency, which means that women must be significant actors in the process of change and understand the availability of their options. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for this research, to try to both *demonstrate* (with quantitative data) the differences in empowerment and *explain* (with qualitative data) these differences. The sample consisted of women entrepreneurs living in Mauritius and working in the creative handicraft sector. For the qualitative data, selective sampling was used for the interviews in order to ensure diversity in women's backgrounds. The quantitative data was based on convenient sampling, therefore possible biases could not directly be accounted for.[29] Two separate datasets were created to safeguard the authenticity of women's voices.

To research the different areas of life (dimensions) that influenced women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment, this research identified several dimensions of empowerment, namely economic, political, social and psychological. It was recognized that empowerment is multi-faceted and complex, and that women might feel empowered in one dimension, while feeling disempowered in other areas of life. Economic empowerment was not the defining dimensions for women that influenced their sense of empowerment, but nevertheless women indicated that access and control over resources were important pre-conditions for them to start their business. Political empowerment was indicated as the dimensions that least influenced women's sense of empowerment. Most women indicated not to be interested in politics, nor did they have trust in the current government. Political empowerment focused in the interviews and surveys on the state, and therefore grassroots politics was initially overlooked. However, as analysis had shown, many women entrepreneurs created groups and collectives in which they supported each other. The organization of these grassroot groups might

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[29] Interestingly enough, not many women in the sample previously had worked in EPZ factories. A note on this was given in chapter three, the section on sample.

have the potential to negotiate women entrepreneurs' interests in national politics. However, in this research the women in these groups did not emphasize the political potential, but rather that felt empowered by these groups because they had a community of like-minded women that transcended class- and religious boundaries. This brings us to social empowerment, which included safety and women's social position. Results differed a lot for the large group of women, which suggested that women experienced social empowerment differently depending on their backgrounds. Finally, psychological empowerment was most strongly perceived as influencing women's sense of empowerment. Women emphasized their increased confidence and self-esteem. In women's own definition of empowerment freedom, independence, confidence and community were most often mentioned as aspects influencing their sense of empowerment. Community and collectiveness were thus defining aspects of empowerment for women in this research, and these phenomena transcend the dimensional boundaries of theory. When analysing the different dimensions of empowerment influencing women's lives, it is thus important to take into account that dimensions can overlap and interact.

In the analysis of dimensions, it was noticed that some results showed large differences between women. Empowerment is an inherent individual process, and because women do not experience empowerment in the same ways, their businesses can influence their sense of empowerment in different ways. It was recognized that women have different personal and entrepreneurial backgrounds, which ultimately meant that they came from different starting points and had a different level of empowerment when they started their business. It showed that age and life phase had a significant impact on differences in women's sense of empowerment. For education level, social class and religion-ethnicity, however, it turned out that it was the intersection of these elements that influenced women's sense of empowerment, which confirms that women's identities are complex and different elements interact. Entrepreneurial background was shown to be the defining feature influencing women's sense of empowerment. The types of entrepreneurs heavily depended on the context in which women move around and the actors that they receive support from. It turned out that many women within the different type of entrepreneur-categories shared certain personal characteristics as well, which made it possible to create profiles to best understand the differences in empowerment based on background.

An important consequence of the findings in this research for policy makers is that designing a singly strategy to promote entrepreneurship and women empowerment is rather meaningless. Women experience empowerment in different ways, depending on their backgrounds, and thus might have different needs for their businesses. Designing profiles that include women's heterogeneity and designing a couple of different strategies are a better alternative. Nevertheless, it must be noted that for women to become more empowered, they have to be active contributors in their own process of change and develop a sense of agency that allows them to understand and make choices.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Several suggestions for further research can be made. One of the major findings in this research was the importance of community for women to feel empowered. It was argued that these communities have the potential to empower women psychologically, socially, but also economically and politically. Not a lot of research has been done on this community or collectiveness aspect of women entrepreneurs, because most theories on entrepreneurship are still based on masculine individuality. A redefinition of what we understand as political empowerment is necessary, however, to include the political potential of these grassroots communities.

Furthermore, this research focused on how entrepreneurship influences the sense of empowerment of women who are already entrepreneurs, therefore women who did not pursue a career in entrepreneurship were not taken into account. Biases in the data showed that a certain type of woman had a larger chance to start a career in entrepreneurship and many interviewees also recognized that not every woman might have the opportunities that they had. A comparison in sense

of empowerment between women entrepreneurs and other women is an interesting additional analysis that enhances our understanding of the gendered relation between entrepreneurship and women's empowerment.

Also, the Mauritian context heavily influenced the results in this research, because there were many actors that support women entrepreneurs. It would be interesting to analyse dimensions of empowerment and heterogeneity in other contexts, to compare this to the Mauritian case. Then, it could be analysed exactly how big the impact of context and actors can be in improving women entrepreneurs' sense of empowerment.

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Appendix A: Interview template

Part I. The enterprise and being an entrepreneur
- Can you tell me about your business: what is it that you do?
- Who are your main customers?
- How many people work within your enterprise?
- How many hours do you normally work per week?
- How many minutes do you travel each day to get to the place of your enterprise?
    - Where do you buy the supplies that you need for your business? How long do you have to travel for this?

Part II. Life story approach
Starting a business
- Can you tell me a little bit about how you started your business?
    - Resources
        - How did you get the resources you needed?
    - Support / network / connections
        - Who contributed to setting up your business? How did you get the right contacts?
        - What did your family think about you starting a business?
    - Main obstacles
        - What were difficulties in starting the business?

Maintaining a business
- Can you tell me more about how you maintain your business? And what are the main obstacles to maintaining your business?
    - Resources
    - Support / network

Future goals for the business
- Can you tell me more about your hopes or goals for the future of your business? What would you like to achieve in the next years and what do you need for this? What are the main obstacles to achieve your goals?

Part III. Feelings towards being an entrepreneur
- How long have you had this enterprise?
- Is this your first enterprise?
    - What have been previous entrepreneurial projects? How long have you been an entrepreneur?
- Did you have any work experience/ jobs before this enterprise? What did you do?
- Why did you decide to become an entrepreneur?

- Do you like what you do?
    - What do you like the most about having your own business?
    - And what do you like the least?
- Does having a business give you stress? Why (not)? How do you deal with new responsibilities and risks?
- Do you feel like, overall, your life has improved since you've had your own business? In what ways?
    - What has changed since you had your business?
    - How has your life improved? What can you do now that you previously couldn't?
        - Feeling more financially independent?

Part IV. Being a women entrepreneur in Mauritian society
- Do you feel like everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to start a business? Please explain.
  - Based on which criteria do people have more or less opportunities? Have advantages or disadvantages? Social class? Age? Marital status? Ethnic-religious background?
  - With which group would you affiliate yourself with? How do you see yourself in Mauritian society?
- Do you feel like it is easy for a woman in Mauritius to have a business? Why (not)? Do women face different obstacles than men?
- What do people in Mauritian society/the people around you generally think about women who set up their own business?
- What do you think about women who would like to set up their own business?

Part V. Empowerment dimensions

Economic empowerment
- Do you have a sustainable income? Also in the low tourist season?
- Are you involved in the decision making of the income in your household? Where does the money that you earn with your business normally go?
- Is saving for investments in your business important for you?
- If you would need extra money to maintain your business, where would you go or who would you ask?
  - Formal credit loans or informal?

Political empowerment
- Are you registered at the National Women Entrepreneur Council?
- Are you aware of the training programmes offered by the Council and would you participate in it?
- Do you receive any social protection by the government?
- Do you feel like the government represents your interests as a business woman?
- Are you politically active? Did you vote in the latest elections?
- Do you participate in any social, religious or political organizations?

Social empowerment
- Do you generally feel safe as a woman when you have to travel to get your supplies?
  - Public transportation, market
  - Have you ever had a negative experience on the street because you were a woman?
- Did the division of household tasks change since you started a business?
- What do you do when you're not working? Do you have any free time and what do you do in your free time?

- What does 'empowerment' mean to you?
- Do you feel empowered by your business?

Part IV. Personal information
- What is your age?
- What is your marital status? Do you have children?
- What is your highest attained educational level?
- What is your religious affiliation and does religion play an important role in your life?
- How many people are currently living in the same house as you? (household size)
- Are you the main income provider of the household?
- What is your average income per month from the business? What is your total income and your total household income?

Do you have any questions or comments? Do you wish to change anything about your answers or are there answers that you do not want me to include after all?
Thank you so much, I can send you the results of the research when I'm done if you like (e-mail address).

Appendix B: Survey template

Part I. Business details

1. What is the name of your business? _____

2. What kind of products do you create within your business? _____

3. Who are your main customers? (Multiple answers possible)
O Tourists   O Locals   O Expats
Other (please specify): _____

4. Where do you sell your products? (Multiple answers possible)
O Online   O Via personal contacts   O In a shop   O On markets or festivals
O Other (please specify): _____

5. How many people work in your business (including yourself)? _____

6. How many hours do you work in a week? _____

7. How many minutes do you have to travel to get to your business (in case of working from home, write 'home'): _____

8. How long have you had this business? _____

9. Do you have a part-time/full-time job next to your business at this moment?
O Yes, namely: _____
O No

10. Do you have any other previous work experience?
O Yes, namely: _____
O No

Part II. Feelings and experiences of being an entrepreneur

11. What was the main reason for you to start a business?
O Passion for handicrafts   O Needed the (extra) money
O To be my own boss   O Other (please specify): _____

12. What did you need the most when you started your business? (Multiple answers possible)
O Resources / money   O Support from other women entrepreneurs
O Support from family   O Network and personal connections
O Knowledge about marketing / management
O Other (please specify): _____

13. What do you like the most about having your own business?
O Freedom and flexibility   O Doing something with passion
O Working from home   O Other (please specify): _____

14. What do you find most difficult in having your own business? (Multiple answers possible)
O Competition   O Balance between work and private life/family
O Marketing   O Pricing of the products
O Hard work   O Insecure income
O Other (please specify): _____

15. How do you spend the money you make with your business? (Multiple answers possible)
O Savings   O Reinvestments in the business

O Household needs   O Other (please specify): _____

16. If you need extra money for your business, where would you get it?
O Loan from a bank   O Parents
O Friends   O Other (please specify): _____

17. Please tick the boxes of the organizations you have received support from while setting up and maintaining your business (Multiple answers possible):
O National Women Entrepreneur Council   O SME/SMEDA
O Fam dan Biz   O Pop up Store Mauritius
O DesignBazar.mu   O Le Rendez-Vous concept store
O Other (please specify): _____

18. What does 'empowerment' mean to you?
_____

19. Do you feel 'empowered' by your business? Please explain.
_____

Part III. Empowerment statements

The following 20 statements go into depth about your experiences as a woman entrepreneur in Mauritius. For the following statements: please put an 'X' in one box from 1-5 where the numbers indicate the following: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel like my life has improved since I've had my business					
2. I feel more confident about myself and my abilities because of my business					
3. I know how to plan and deal with responsibilities and deadlines					
4. I like having my own business					
5. I would like my business to grow more in the future					
6. Having a business can give me a lot of stress					
7. I feel more financially independent since I started the business					
8. I have a sustainable income per month					
9. Saving money and reinvesting it back into the business is a priority for me					
10. The government of Mauritius represents my interests as a business woman					
11. I am interested in politics and politically active					
12. I am satisfied with the services that the government offers for women entrepreneurs					
13. I feel safe as a woman on the street and in public transport					
14. I feel safe as a woman travelling at night					
15. Men and women entrepreneurs face different obstacles					
16. Everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to have a business					
17. Your religious/cultural background matters for the success of your business					
18. People in Mauritius understand the value of local and hand-made products					
19. People in Mauritius respect women who have their own business					
20. People in Mauritius generally think that being an entrepreneur is a good career.					

Part IV. Personal details

20. What is your age? _____

21. What is your relationship status?
O Single   O In a relationship   O Married   O Divorced
O Other (please specify): _____

22. How many children do you have? _____

23. How many people live in total in your house? _____

24. What is your highest attained educational level?

O Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) O Lower Secondary Level

O Upper Secondary Level   O University

O Other (please specify): _____

25. How would you define your social class?

O Lower class   O Middle class

O Upper middle class   O High class

O Other (please specify): _____

26. What is your religion?

O No religion   O Hindu O Muslim   O Catholic

O Other (please specify): _____

27. What is your average income per month from your business? (in RS) _____

28. What is your total household income per month? (in RS) _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix C: General results surveys

Part I. Personal details

Table C1: Frequencies age categories

Age categories	Frequency	Valid %
20-29 years	9	21,4
30-39 years	17	40,5
40+ years	16	38,1
Total	42	

Note: Survey results. n=42. Missing values: 7 women no data on age. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C2: Frequencies (no) children

Children	Frequency	Valid %
No children	17	36,2
Children	30	63,8
Total	47	

Note: Survey results. n=47. Missing values: 2 women no data on children. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C3: Frequencies number of children

Number of children	Frequency	%
1 child	11	36.7
2 children	11	36.7
3 children	5	16.7
4 children	3	10.0
Total	30	

Note: Survey results. n=30, which is the total amount of women with children.

Table C4: Frequencies total household size

Household size	Frequency	Valid %
1 person	3	6,5
2 persons	4	8,7
3 persons	13	28,3
4 persons	18	39,1
5 persons or more	8	17,4
Total	46	

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: 3 women no data on total household size. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C5: Frequencies relationship status

Relationship status	Frequency	Valid %
Single*	8	17,0
In a relationship	9	19,1
Married	30	63,8
Total	47	

* Including one divorced woman.
Note: Survey results. n=47. Missing values: 2 women no data on relationship status. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C6: Frequencies highest attained education level

Highest attained education level	Frequency	Valid %
CPE	15	31,9
SC/HSC	11	23,4
University	21	44,7
Total	47	

Note: Survey results. n=47. Missing values: 2 women no data on education level. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C7: Frequencies self-defined social class

Self-defined social class	Frequency	Valid %
Lower class	4	8,7
Middle class	33	71,7
Upper middle class*	9	19,6
Total	46	

*Including 1 high class.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: 3 women no data on self-defined social class. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C8: Frequencies religion-ethnicity

Religion-ethnicity	Frequency	Valid %
No religion	5	10,9
Christian / Catholic*	32	69,6
Hindu	8	17,4
Muslim	1	2,2
Total	46	

* Including Creole-Catholic, Franco-Mauritian, Christian Indo-Mauritian, Protestant/Anglican, Sino-Catholic.

Note: Survey results. n=46. Missing values: 3 women no data on religion-ethnicity. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C9: Frequencies types of entrepreneur

Type of entrepreneur	Frequency	%
Independent	24	49,0
Public programme	6	12,2
CSR project	19	38,8
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Part II. Business details

Table C10: Frequencies main customers

Main customers	Frequency	% of total women indicated this type of customer (frequency/n)
Tourists	35	71,4
Locals	37	75,5
Expats	27	55,1
Other*	4	8,2

* Other include international clients.

Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C11: Frequencies places of sales

Places of sales	Frequency	% of total women indicated this place of sales (frequency/n)
Online	22	44,9
Personal connections	27	55,1
In a shop	35	71,4
On markets or festivals	33	67,3
Hotels	22	44,9

Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C12: Frequencies number of employees

Number of employees	Frequency	%
Self-employed	17	34,7
Two or more employees	13	26,5
CSR project*	19	38,8
Total	49	

* There are between 20-35 women in the CSR projects in this research. These women are not employees of each other, but are also not self-employed as they usually work together in smaller teams.

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C13: Frequencies hours of work per week

Hours of work per week	Frequency	%
Depends on orders	7	14,3
Max. 25 hours per week	20	40,8
More than 25 hours per week	22	44,9
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C14: Frequencies travel distance to the business (in mins)

Travel distance to the business	Frequency	Valid %
Working from home	24	61,5
Less than 60 mins	8	20,5
60 mins or more	7	17,9
Total	39	

Note: Survey results. n=39. Missing values: 10 women no data. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C15: Frequencies total years in business

Years in business	Frequency	%
0-4 years	25	51,0
5 years or more	24	49,0
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C16: Frequencies of women with (no) other job

Other job	Frequency	%
Yes	14	28,6
No	35	71,4
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C17: Frequencies of previous work experience (or not)

Previous work experience	Frequency	%
Yes	34	69,4
No	15	30,6
Total	49	

Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C18: Frequencies income of the business per month (in Rs)

Income of the business per month	Frequency	Valid %
< Rs10.000	14	34,1
Rs10.000 +	9	22,0
Insecure	18	43,9
Total	41	

Note: Survey results. n=41. Missing values: no data on income of the business per month for 8 women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C19: Frequencies total household income per month (in Rs)

Total household income per month	Frequency	Valid %
< Rs15.000	13	35,1
Rs15.000-100.000	9	24,3
Rs100.000 +	7	18,9
Insecure	8	21,6
Total	37	

Note: Survey results. n=37. Missing values: no data in total household income per month for 12 women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Part III. Feelings about being an entrepreneur

Table C20: Frequencies 'what was the main reason to start a business?'

Main reason to start a business	Frequency	%
Passion for handicrafts	22	44,9
Needed the (extra) money	6	12,2
To be my own boss	16	32,7
Other*	5	10,2
Total	49	

* Other include: to get a job again
Note: Survey results. n=49.

Table C21: Frequencies 'what did you need the most to start your business?'

Needed the most	Frequency	% of women indicated this as most needed (frequency/n)
Resources / money	31	63,3
Support from other women entrepreneurs	13	26,5
Network and personal connections	21	42,9
Support from family	19	38,8
Knowledge about marketing / management	13	26,5
Other*	5	10,2

* Other include: learn how to make handicraft products and knowledge of the market segment. Note: Survey results.
Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C22: Frequencies 'what do you like the most about having a business?'

Like most	Frequency	Valid %
Freedom and flexibility	16	33,3
Doing something with passion	24	50,0
Working from home	6	12,5
Other*	2	4,2
Total	48	

* Other include: social link with other women and possibility to spend more time with family
Note: Survey results. n=48. Missing values: no data for 1 woman. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C23: Frequencies 'what do you find most difficult in having a business?'

Most difficult	Frequency	% of women indicated this as most difficult (frequency/n)
Competition	12	25,0
Balance between work and private life/family	19	39,6
Marketing	24	50,0
Pricing of the products	23	47,9
Hard work	8	16,7
Insecure income	30	62,5
Other*	4	8,3

* Other include: the small artisan market in Mauritius; locals copying each other; visibility to an audience; and learning every aspect of running a business (multi-tasking)
Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C24: Frequencies 'how do you spend the money you earn with your business?'

Spendings	Frequency	% of women indicated this as spendings (frequency/n)
Savings	14	28,6
Reinvestments in the business	22	44,9
Household needs	32	65,3
Other*	4	8,2

* Other include: personal money for leisure. Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C25: Frequencies 'where would you get extra money if you needed it?'

Where to get a loan	Frequency	Valid %
Loan from a bank	9	20,0
Family	11	24,4
Friends	5	11,1
Partner	5	11,1
Own savings	10	22,2
Not applicable	4	8,9
Other*	1	2,2
Total	45	

* Other include an investor.
Note: Survey results. n=45. Missing values: data missing for 4 women. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Table C26: Frequencies organizations where women go to for support

Organizations for support	Frequency	% of total women uses this organization (frequency/n)
No support from an organization	9	18,4
NWEC	3	6,1
SME/SMEDA	5	10,2
Fam dan Biz	3	6,1
Pop up Store Mauritius	23	46,9
DesignBazar.mu online concept store	6	12,2
Le Rendez-Vous concept store	15	30,6
Other concept stores	6	12,2
CSR Projects	19	38,8

Note: Survey results. Multiple answers were possible. n=49.

Table C27: Frequencies 'do you feel empowered by your business?'

Do you feel empowered by your business?	Frequency	Valid %
Yes	31	72,1
No	3	7,0
I don't know	4	9,3
No difference	5	11,6
Total	43	

Note: Survey results. n=43. Missing values: for 6 women no data on empowerment. Valid % calculated without missing values.

Part IV. Empowerment statements

Table C28: Frequencies of empowerment statements

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	n
1. I feel like my life has improved since I've had my business	0	0	14 (28,6%)	18 (36,7%)	17 (34,7%)	49
2. I feel more confident about myself and my abilities because of my business	0	0	0	23 (46,9%)	26 (53,1%)	49
3. I know how to plan and deal with responsibilities and deadlines	1 (2,0%)	1 (2,0%)	4 (8,2%)	24 (49,0%)	19 (38,8%)	49
4. I like having my own business	0	1 (2,0%)	1 (2,0%)	10 (20,4%)	37 (75,5%)	49
5. I would like my business to grow more in the future	0	0	3 (6,1%)	7 (14,3%)	39 (79,6%)	49
6. Having a business can give me a lot of stress	3 (6,1%)	4 (8,2%)	6 (12,2%)	20 (40,8%)	16 (32,7%)	49

Statement						
7. I feel more financially independent since I started the business	4 (8,2%)	2 (4,1%)	11 (22,4%)	13 (26,5%)	19 (38,8%)	49
8. I have a sustainable income per month	20 (40,8%)	6 (12,2%)	12 (24,5%)	7 (14,3%)	4 (8,2%)	49
9. Saving money and reinvesting it back into the business is a priority for me	11 (22,4%)	4 (8,2%)	11 (22,4%)	18 (36,7%)	5 (10,2%)	49
10. The government of Mauritius represents my interests as a business woman	20 (41,7%)	4 (8,3%)	22 (45,8%)	2 (4,2%)	0	48
11. I am interested in politics and politically active	29 (60,4%)	7 (14,6%)	11 (22,9%)	1 (2,1%)	0	48
12. I am satisfied with the services that the government offers for women entrepreneurs	15 (31,3%)	5 (10,4%)	28 (58,3%)	0	0	48
13. I feel safe as a woman on the street and in public transport	11 (22,9%)	9 (18,8%)	13 (27,1%)	7 (14,6%)	8 (16,7%)	48
14. I feel safe as a woman travelling at night	24 (53,3%)	10 (22,2%)	9 (20,0%)	2 (4,4%)	0	45
15. Men and women entrepreneurs face different obstacles	7 (14,6%)	0	20 (41,7%)	19 (39,6%)	2 (4,2%)	48
16. Everyone in Mauritius has the same opportunities to have a business	21 (43,8%)	13 (27,1%)	10 (20,8%)	2 (4,2%)	2 (4,2%)	48
17. Your religious/cultural background matters for the success of your business	21 (43,8%)	5 (10,4%)	10 (20,8%)	5 (10,4%)	7 (14,6%)	48
18. People in Mauritius understand the value of local and hand-made products	4 (8,5%)	21 (44,7%)	11 (23,4%)	9 (19,1%)	2 (4,3%)	47
19. People in Mauritius respect women who have their own business	0	4 (8,5%)	18 (38,3%)	15 (31,9%)	10 (21,3%)	47
20. People in Mauritius generally think that being an entrepreneur is a good career	6 (12,8%)	4 (8,5%)	14 (29,8%)	14 (29,8%)	9 (19,1%)	47

Note: Survey results. n varies per statement. Percentages are valid percentages calculated with n and without missing values. Statements 1-6 are used as psychological indicators. Statements 7-9 are used as economic indicators. Statements 10-12 are used as political indicators. Statements 13-20 are used as social indicators.