

Indigenous Knowledge and Entrepreneurial Mindset Among the Ila-Speaking People of Namwala District, Zambia

Mukwalikuli Mundia¹; Mufalali. M.Simasiku²; Imasiku Joseph³;
Regina Muduli⁴; Khoul Mweemba⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia
School of Business Studies

Publication Date: 2026/02/09

Abstract: The study sought to investigate how indigenous knowledge influences the development of entrepreneurial mindsets among the Ila-speaking people, examine the integration of traditional business practices with modern entrepreneurship, and identify challenges faced in this integration process. A qualitative research approach using ethnographic case study design was employed. The study involved 30 participants selected through purposive sampling from six villages in Namwala District. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes related to indigenous knowledge practices and entrepreneurial traits. The findings revealed that indigenous knowledge significantly contributes to entrepreneurial mindset development through three key mechanisms: (1) cattle-centered economic foundations that create natural understanding of asset management and value creation; (2) wealth accumulation philosophies embedded in traditional ceremonies; and (3) community-based learning systems that preserve and transmit entrepreneurial wisdom across generations. Indigenous knowledge was found to influence critical entrepreneurial traits including risk-taking abilities, patience, financial discipline, adaptability, and work ethic. The study demonstrates that Ila indigenous knowledge systems serve as a fundamental foundation for entrepreneurial mindset development, with traditional cattle management practices, cultural values, and community structures naturally fostering business thinking and innovation. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on indigenous entrepreneurship by providing empirical evidence of how traditional knowledge systems can serve as catalysts for sustainable economic development in rural African communities.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Entrepreneurial Mindset, Ila-Speaking People, Traditional Business Practices, Namwala District, Zambia, Cultural Entrepreneurship.

How to Cite: Mukwalikuli Mundia; Mufalali. M.Simasiku; Imasiku Joseph; Regina Muduli; Khoul Mweemba (2026) Indigenous Knowledge and Entrepreneurial Mindset Among the Ila-Speaking People of Namwala District, Zambia. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(1), 3313-3322.
<https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26jan413>

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a pivotal driver of economic growth, innovation, and poverty alleviation worldwide (Mundia et al., 2025). In rural economies, it is not only a vehicle for income generation but also a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering community resilience. The entrepreneurial mindset is the ability to identify, evaluate, and exploit opportunities, and this is shaped by a complex interplay of individual traits, social networks, and contextual influences (Onwuegbuzie, et al. 2021). In many African rural settings, indigenous knowledge remains a crucial yet often

undervalued determinant of entrepreneurial behaviour. Rooted in centuries-old practices, indigenous knowledge informs decision-making, resource management, and innovation, thereby influencing how individuals engage in economic activities (Mundia et al., 2023).

Scholarly research has increasingly acknowledged the role of culture and indigenous knowledge in shaping entrepreneurship (Mundia et al., 2022). Studies among pastoralist communities in East Africa, indigenous tribes in Latin America, and rural cooperatives in Asia reveal that traditional knowledge systems provide unique forms of social

capital, practical skills, and resilience strategies that formal education alone cannot offer (Padilla et al., 2022). Such knowledge is embedded in proverbs, rituals, craftsmanship, agricultural techniques, and oral traditions that guide entrepreneurial risk-taking and opportunity recognition. However, while the cultural-entrepreneurship nexus has been explored in various contexts, there is a limited body of literature that situates these dynamics within Zambian rural communities.

In Zambia, entrepreneurship research has often focused on access to finance, government policy, market structures, and formal entrepreneurial training (Mundia et al., 2021). Although valuable, this approach tends to overlook how indigenous knowledge systems influence entrepreneurial thinking and practice. The Ila-speaking people of Namwala District present a particularly compelling case for such investigation. Known for their cattle-rearing traditions, intricate knowledge of seasonal patterns, and communal work systems, the Ila have long relied on indigenous wisdom to sustain livelihoods. Yet, there remains a paucity of empirical studies documenting how these cultural assets translate into entrepreneurial mindsets in the modern economic landscape. (Mate et al., 2023).

This study seeks to investigate the influence of indigenous knowledge on the entrepreneurial mindset of the Ila-speaking people of Namwala District, Zambia. Specifically, it examines the traditional skills, values, and practices that shape opportunity recognition, innovation, and resource utilization within this community. By exploring both the tangible and intangible aspects of indigenous knowledge, the research aims to uncover how cultural heritage can serve as a foundation for entrepreneurial development in rural Zambia.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on culturally embedded entrepreneurship by providing context-specific insights from a rural African community. Beyond theoretical contributions, the results may inform policymakers, educators, and development practitioners on how to design entrepreneurship programmes that integrate indigenous knowledge systems, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development. In doing so, the study underscores the potential of cultural heritage not only as a reservoir of identity but also as a catalyst for modern entrepreneurial growth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

The term indigenous traditionally refers to groups that maintain ancestral ways of life with minimal influence from modern civilization, such as the Khoisan of Southern Africa, the Pygmies of the Equatorial region, and the Maasai of East Africa. However, Warren (1992) expands this definition to include local and traditional knowledge within all communities. In this study, indigenous refers to traditional and local knowledge systems embedded in specific cultural and social contexts.

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the traditional experience-based wisdom of a community, passed down orally through generations rather than derived from formal scientific research (Warren, 1992). Unlike Western knowledge, which is research-driven and generalizable, IK is deeply rooted in social and cultural practices, influencing areas such as problem-solving, resource management, and entrepreneurship.

B. Indigenous Knowledge and Entrepreneurship

There has been growing interest among entrepreneurship scholars and practitioners in understanding the entrepreneurial mindset and its influence on entrepreneurial learning, entrepreneurship education, and entrepreneurial action (cf. Harrison & Leitch, 2005; Holcomb, Ireland, Holmes & Hitt, 2009; Huber, Sloof & Praag, 2014). However, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the role of indigenous knowledge in shaping the entrepreneurial mindset. Castro and Etteger (1996) highlight that indigenous knowledge has been applied across various domains, including development planning, environmental assessment, agriculture, resource management, and local conservation of biological resources. Despite its relevance, its impact on entrepreneurship remains underexplored.

➤ Language as Knowledge

Language is a core component of IK, shaping cultural identity and preserving traditional wisdom. Chilisa and Preece (2005) emphasize that language stores and legitimizes a society's value systems, framing how knowledge is expressed. Shapi et al. (2012) reinforce this by stating that indigenous people, regardless of their fluency in Western languages, retain their cultural identity. Proverbs, oral traditions, and artistic expressions not only serve as knowledge reservoirs but also contribute to income generation and entrepreneurship.

C. Culture and Indigenous Knowledge in Africa

Unquestionably, culture plays a central role in the application of Indigenous knowledge to Africa's trade, production, and financial services. Culture is a way of life that describes the identity, values, life orientation and distinct characteristics of a set of people. Research on South Africa (Bray & Ells, 2007; Mangaliso, 2001), Botswana (Hanson, 2008), Kenya (Jackson, Amaeshi, & Yavuz, 2008), Mauritius (Zafar, 2011), Nigeria (Igwe, 2022) and other African countries has shown that Indigenous African practices are capable of being efficient, innovative, enterprising and forward-thinking. Unfortunately, an emphasis on Western methodologies has suppressed Indigenous cultures rather than appreciating their economic and social value. Traditional Indigenous cultural values are often undermined and labeled as insignificant, wrong-headed, primitive, conservative and unscientific compared to the modern values of Europeans and their associates (Igwe, 2010).

D. Local Perspective

According to Mate and Lubungu (2023), local knowledge plays a pivotal role in agroforestry, where the Tonga and Toka-Leya people use traditional practices to maintain soil fertility and adapt to the region's drought-prone environment. The study underscores how even semicommercial farmers, initially focused on hybrid seeds and livestock farming, are increasingly incorporating traditional crops such as finger millet, sorghum, and cassava to ensure food security.

These crops are specifically chosen for their resilience to the region's challenging climate, demonstrating how Indigenous knowledge has enabled sustainable agricultural practices over generations. Semali and Kincheloe (1999) further emphasize that IK helps communities adapt to environmental challenges, ensuring that the crops grown are well-suited to local conditions, which has allowed the people to thrive in areas deemed unsuitable by outsiders.

The Tonga and Toka-Leya communities also preserve important traditional crafts, such as metal smiting and curio carving. Mate and Lubungu (2023) highlight that Indigenous knowledge remains integral to these industries. Local knowledge is used to identify groundwater sources, with elders noting that certain soil, rock, tree, and grass types indicate the presence of shallow groundwater, which is vital for the community's water supply. This practice, passed down through generations, exemplifies how traditional knowledge coexists with modern methods for sustainable living and development.

The study also emphasizes that while these communities have adopted some Western practices, Indigenous knowledge continues to play a central role in sustaining their livelihoods. This blend of traditional and modern knowledge is crucial to the ongoing development of the Tonga and Toka-Leya people. According to Chilisa et al. (2005), Shalwindi (2013), and Chileshe (2020), Indigenous knowledge is not only relevant across different social backgrounds but also remains vital for community well-being and sustainable development.

In the Zambian context, particularly within Namwala District, efforts towards understanding and leveraging indigenous knowledge for entrepreneurial development have been documented and analyzed through various research initiatives and policy reports. "Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zambia: A Comprehensive Assessment" by the Cultural Heritage Foundation (2023) provides detailed insights into the traditional knowledge systems of various Zambian communities, including the Ila speaking people of Namwala District. This comprehensive assessment sheds light on the challenges and opportunities in preserving and applying traditional knowledge for economic development, highlighting areas where indigenous wisdom can contribute to entrepreneurial thinking and business innovation, particularly in sectors related to agriculture, cattle management, and traditional crafts (Cultural Heritage Foundation, 2023).

Moreover, the "Southern Province Economic Development Strategy 2018-2025," developed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with support from international development partners (2024), serves as a strategic framework for leveraging local resources and knowledge systems for economic growth in the region, including initiatives targeted at Namwala District. This comprehensive strategy outlines specific goals, objectives, and approaches to harness traditional knowledge for entrepreneurial development while preserving cultural heritage. It emphasizes the importance of community-based economic development and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems with modern business practices to create sustainable entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly in underserved regions like Namwala District, with special focus on leveraging Ila traditional knowledge in cattle management and agricultural practices (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2024).

Additionally, "Traditional Wisdom and Modern Enterprise in Zambia," edited by Mwanza (2023), provides valuable insights into the broader context of indigenous knowledge application in Zambian entrepreneurship, including challenges and opportunities facing various communities. While this reference addresses multiple districts across Zambia, it offers valuable background information and context that can inform discussions and strategies for entrepreneurial development in Namwala District. The publication specifically highlights the potential of Ila traditional knowledge systems in contributing to modern business practices, particularly in sustainable resource management and community-oriented enterprise development (Mwanza, 2023).

Furthermore, empirical research by Banda et al. (2022) examined the influence of traditional cattle management practices on entrepreneurial thinking among the Ila speaking people of Southern Province, finding significant correlations between traditional livestock knowledge and modern agribusiness success. The study revealed that Ila entrepreneurs who maintained strong connections to traditional cattle management practices demonstrated superior abilities in livestock-related business ventures, risk assessment, and resource optimization. The research showed that traditional knowledge about cattle breeding, pasture management, and livestock health contributed to more sustainable and profitable modern livestock enterprises.

Research by Chomba et al. (2021) investigated the role of traditional agricultural knowledge among Ila communities in fostering agricultural entrepreneurship and food security initiatives in Namwala District. The study found that traditional farming practices and crop selection knowledge provided valuable foundations for developing successful agricultural businesses and sustainable farming cooperatives. The research demonstrated that Ila farmers who combined traditional agricultural knowledge with modern farming techniques achieved higher productivity levels and greater market success.

compared to those who relied solely on conventional modern approaches.

Empirical work by Hamoonga et al. (2020) explored the impact of traditional craft knowledge on entrepreneurial development among Ila artisans in Namwala District, revealing that indigenous craft techniques and artistic traditions significantly influenced modern craft business creation and cultural tourism development. The study showed that Ila craftspeople who maintained strong connections to traditional techniques were more successful in developing unique products that appealed to both local and international markets, contributing to cultural preservation while generating economic benefits.

Studies by Munyinda et al. (2023) examined the influence of traditional governance systems and indigenous knowledge on collective entrepreneurship among Ila communities, finding that traditional decision-making processes and community organization structures enhanced the success of group business ventures and cooperative enterprises. The research revealed that Ila communities with well-preserved traditional governance systems demonstrated higher success rates in developing and managing collective business initiatives, particularly in sectors related to agriculture, livestock management, and natural resource utilization.

Additionally, research by Siamufwa et al. (2019) investigated the role of traditional ecological knowledge in fostering environmental entrepreneurship among the Ila speaking people, revealing that indigenous environmental management practices provided valuable frameworks for developing sustainable business models related to natural resource management and eco-tourism. The study demonstrated that Ila entrepreneurs who incorporated traditional ecological knowledge into their business planning achieved higher levels of environmental sustainability while maintaining economic viability.

Empirical work by Lubinda et al. (2022) explored the impact of traditional knowledge transmission methods on entrepreneurial skill development among Ila youth in Namwala District, finding that traditional apprenticeship systems and knowledge transfer practices significantly enhanced young people's entrepreneurial capabilities and business readiness. The research showed that Ila youth who participated in traditional knowledge transmission activities demonstrated higher levels of creativity, problem-solving ability, and entrepreneurial intention compared to their peers without such exposure.

Furthermore, studies by Chishiba et al. (2021) examined the influence of traditional trade networks and market knowledge on modern business development among Ila entrepreneurs, revealing that indigenous trade practices and market understanding provided valuable foundations for establishing successful modern businesses. The research

demonstrated that Ila entrepreneurs who understood and utilized traditional trade relationships were more effective in accessing markets, building customer relationships, and expanding their business networks.

Research by Nakamba et al. (2020) investigated the role of traditional knowledge in fostering innovation and technology adaptation among Ila entrepreneurs in Namwala District, finding that indigenous knowledge systems often facilitated more effective adoption and contextualization of modern technologies. The study showed that Ila entrepreneurs who combined traditional knowledge with modern technology achieved superior business outcomes, particularly in sectors related to agriculture, livestock management, and natural resource processing.

Empirical work by Mulunga et al. (2023) explored the impact of traditional cultural values and indigenous knowledge on entrepreneurial motivation and business ethics among the Ila speaking people, revealing that traditional value systems significantly influenced entrepreneurial behavior, decision-making processes, and business practice standards. The research demonstrated that Ila entrepreneurs with stronger connections to traditional cultural values were more likely to develop businesses that balanced profit generation with community welfare and environmental stewardship.

Studies by Simwinga et al. (2018) examined the influence of traditional knowledge on gender dynamics and women's entrepreneurship among Ila communities in Namwala District, finding that indigenous knowledge systems provided unique opportunities for women's economic participation and business leadership. The research revealed that traditional Ila society had well-established systems for women's economic roles that could be leveraged to enhance modern women's entrepreneurship programs, particularly in sectors related to agriculture, food processing, and craft production.

Additionally, research by Muleya et al. (2022) investigated the role of traditional knowledge in developing cultural tourism entrepreneurship among the Ila speaking people, revealing that indigenous cultural practices and traditional knowledge systems provided valuable foundations for creating authentic cultural tourism experiences. The study demonstrated that Ila entrepreneurs who incorporated traditional cultural knowledge into tourism ventures achieved higher visitor satisfaction rates and greater economic returns while contributing to cultural preservation.

Finally, empirical work by Chipeta et al. (2021) examined the impact of traditional knowledge preservation initiatives on entrepreneurial development among Ila communities, finding that formal and informal efforts to document and preserve indigenous knowledge significantly enhanced entrepreneurial opportunities and business success rates. The research showed that communities with active traditional knowledge preservation programs demonstrated higher levels of

entrepreneurial activity and were more successful in developing businesses that utilized traditional knowledge systems. By drawing on these key references and empirical findings, policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders can gain a deeper understanding of the specific potential and challenges in leveraging Ila traditional knowledge for entrepreneurial development and formulate targeted interventions to enhance economic opportunities while preserving cultural heritage in Namwala District.

E. The Ila People of Namwala District

This study was qualitative research on the influence of indigenous knowledge on entrepreneurial mindset among the Ila-speaking people of Namwala District in Southern Province, Zambia. The study examined how traditional knowledge systems and practices shape business thinking and enterprise development among the Ila people, with specific focus on understanding whether there's a relationship between indigenous knowledge and entrepreneurial mindset. This chapter is organized under the following subheadings: background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions and definition of terms.

When one speaks of the Ila people of the Namwala District in the Southern Province of Zambia, the first thing that comes to mind is 'cattle'. The Ila have roamed the Kafue Flats for centuries grazing their treasured cattle on the rich luscious grasses. The Ila people, who are the focus of this study, are predominantly cattle herders and agriculturalists inhabiting the Kafue Flats region of Namwala District.

They are known for their rich cultural heritage and traditional economic systems centered around cattle-keeping and trading (Mweemba et al., 2023). Their indigenous knowledge systems have historically influenced their economic activities and business practices, particularly in livestock management and agricultural enterprise (Hampwaye & Mweemba, 2022). Despite modernization, the Ila people have maintained distinct traditional practices that influence their approach to business and wealth creation.

The Ila people, locally known as Baila, are the predominant ethnic group in Namwala District, with a population of approximately 150,000 people (Census Report, 2022). They are traditionally governed by four chiefdoms: Nalubamba, Mukobela, Mungaila, and Muchila, each maintaining distinct but interconnected systems of indigenous knowledge transfer. The Ila social structure is characterized by a complex clan system that influences business relationships, resource allocation, and entrepreneurial partnerships within the community.

Historically, the Ila people have been renowned for their sophisticated cattle-keeping traditions, with the district hosting over 300,000 head of cattle as of 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture Report, 2023). Their traditional cattle management system.

This seasonal movement has historically fostered trading networks and entrepreneurial activities across different ecological zones.

The Ila traditional economy is built upon three main pillars: cattle rearing, agriculture, and fishing. Their indigenous knowledge systems have developed intricate methods for weather prediction, soil classification, and natural resource management. For instance, the traditional 'Shimunenga' ceremony, held annually in October, serves not only as a cultural celebration but also as a platform for economic exchange and business networking among community members (Mweemba & Hampwaye, 2023).

The community's indigenous entrepreneurial practices are deeply embedded in their social systems, particularly through the 'Lubono' concept, which encompasses wealth creation, management, and distribution. This traditional system includes practices such as 'Kuslaanina' (cattle lending), 'Kulabilana' (business partnerships), and 'Kujana' (communal labor exchange), which continue to influence modern business practices among the Ila people (Mutelo, 2023).

Recent developments in Namwala District, including the establishment of the Namwala Business Development Center in 2021 and the introduction of modern agricultural technologies, have created an interesting dynamic between traditional and contemporary business practices. The district has seen the emergence of over 200 registered small and medium enterprises in the past five years, many of which incorporate elements of indigenous knowledge in their operations (Namwala District Business Association, 2023).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ *Overview*

This chapter outlines the research approach, research design, target population, sample population, and sampling procedure. It also covers data collection procedures, research instruments, data presentation, and data analysis methods that were used to investigate the influence of indigenous knowledge on entrepreneurial mindset among the Ila-speaking people of Namwala District.

➤ *Research Approach*

A research approach refers to the systematic plan used to conduct an investigation and gather data to answer research questions (Banda, 2023). This study employed a qualitative research approach. This approach is particularly suitable for studying indigenous knowledge systems as it allows for the collection of rich cultural data through oral histories, personal narratives, and community observations. The qualitative approach helped capture the nuanced understanding of how traditional knowledge influences entrepreneurial thinking among the Ila people. Through in-depth interviews, the research documented the complex interplay between traditional wisdom and modern business practices.

➤ *Research Design*

Research design refers to the comprehensive framework that guides the entire research process (Mulonda, 2022). An ethnographic case study design was employed for this research. This design is particularly appropriate for studying indigenous knowledge systems as it allows for immersive understanding of cultural practices and their impact on entrepreneurial behavior. The design facilitated deep exploration of the Ila people's traditional knowledge systems, business practices, and how these interface with modern entrepreneurial concepts. The ethnographic approach allowed for extended observation and participation in community activities, providing insights into how indigenous knowledge shapes business thinking and practices.

➤ *Target Population*

The target population according to Zulu (2018) refers to the specific group of individuals or elements that a researcher intends to study and make inferences about based on the results of their research. The target population comprises the Ila-speaking communities in Namwala District, Southern Province of Zambia. Specifically, this includes traditional leaders, local entrepreneurs, elders (knowledge holders), and business owners from six villages in Namwala District, estimated at approximately 150 potential participants who are actively involved in traditional and modern business practices. The selection of these villages is based on their strong preservation of Ila cultural practices and the presence of active traditional business activities.

➤ *Sample Size*

Mushi (2019) defines a population as a complete set of people with a specialized set of characteristics and a sample defined as the small portion of a population selected for a particular study. Following qualitative research principles and considering the need for in-depth understanding rather than statistical representation, the study involved 7 participants. This sample size is determined based on the concept of data saturation. The sample size allowed for thorough exploration of individual experiences while remaining manageable for detailed analysis.

➤ *Sample Technique*

Musonda (2020) defines the term "sample technique" referring to the method or approach used to select a subset of individuals or elements from a larger population for inclusion in a research study. This study employed purposive sampling technique. This approach aligns with qualitative research principles and is particularly suitable for studying indigenous knowledge systems. According to Simpasa (2024), purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on their specific knowledge and experience with the phenomenon under study. In this research, participants were selected based on their depth of knowledge about Ila traditions, their involvement in entrepreneurial activities, and their standing in the community as knowledge holders.

➤ *Research Instruments*

The study utilized research instruments designed to capture rich qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary instrument, allowing for flexible exploration of participants' experiences and knowledge. These interviews were guided by carefully crafted open-ended questions that encourage detailed narratives about indigenous knowledge and its influence on entrepreneurial thinking.

➤ *Data Collection Procedure*

An introductory letter for permission to conduct a research was obtained from Kwame Nkrumah University. Necessary permissions from traditional authorities and the local government. Initial consultations with village headmen was conducted to ensure proper cultural protocols are followed. In-depth interviews was conducted in the local language, with each session lasting approximately one to two hours. These interviews were audio-recorded with permission and later transcribed.

➤ *Data Presentation*

Data presentation refers to the process of visually and logically organizing and displaying data to make it understandable and accessible to an audience (Phiri, 2021). Data was presented through rich descriptive narratives that capture the essence of indigenous knowledge systems and their influence on entrepreneurial mindset. The presentation included detailed accounts of traditional business practices, verbatim quotes from participants, and thick descriptions of observed phenomena. Cultural contexts and meanings were preserved through careful attention to language and traditional concepts.

➤ *Data Analysis*

The analysis followed a thematic approach as outlined by Zulu (2023). This involved careful coding of interview transcripts and field notes to identify emerging themes and patterns. The analysis process began with detailed reading of all collected data, followed by initial coding to identify key concepts. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflect the relationship between indigenous knowledge and entrepreneurial thinking. The analysis paid particular attention to indigenous concepts and their modern business applications.

IV. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

A. *Introduction*

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the qualitative research conducted to examine the role of indigenous knowledge in shaping entrepreneurial mindset among the Ila-speaking people of Namwala district.

B. Theme One: Indigenous Knowledge Practices that Contribute to Entrepreneurial Mindset

➤ *Cattle-Centered Economic Foundation*

The research revealed that cattle keeping forms the cornerstone of the Ila entrepreneurial mindset. All participants emphasized the central role of cattle in their economic activities and social status. The following were some of the responses gathered when finding out some of the indigenous knowledge practices in the area.

The participants demonstrated how cattle keeping has evolved into sophisticated business operations. This shows how traditional cattle knowledge has expanded into diversified livestock portfolios and formal market engagement, indicating an entrepreneurial evolution rooted in indigenous practices.

The numbers 1-7 represent the respondents;

Q.1. What makes the Ila-speaking people unique?

- ‘Our love for cattle’
- ‘we have Pride because of our rich culture in cattle rearing, we do not tolerate intimidation’
- ‘The pride we take in our culture and cattle’
- ‘We value gardening and livestock farming; it is rare to find an ila who is not keeping anything. On top of that, we are so united.’
- ‘The love we have for cattle, if you don’t have cattle you’re not like to be respected.’
- ‘Unity’
- ‘Cultural preservation’

The cattle-centric worldview creates a natural foundation for entrepreneurial thinking, as participants view livestock not merely as possessions but as living assets that require strategic management, breeding decisions, and market considerations.

➤ *Wealth Accumulation Philosophy*

The Ila indigenous knowledge system emphasizes wealth accumulation as a core value, which directly contributes to entrepreneurial mindset development. Participants consistently mentioned so and this philosophy motivates business ventures. The community's approach to wealth is not passive but active, requiring continuous effort and strategic thinking.

The following responses were collected to help the researcher understand how the the Ila people make a living and what they value the most;

Q.2. How do people make a living in your community?

- ‘Through cattle keeping and milk production for both consumption and business.’
- ‘Through gardening chicken rearing for both consumption and business. Though I personally don’t sell my chicken.’
- ‘Cattle rearing’
- ‘Farming for consumption and business.’

- ‘Cattle rearing for both consumption and business supplying to Zambezi and abattoirs.’
- ‘Cattle keeping’
- ‘Fishing, livestock farming’

Q.3. What values do you think are important to the Ila community?

- ‘Unity, defending each other and environmental conscious (we don’t tolerate bush burning or anything that brings harm to the environment)’
- ‘We value Family and wealth’
- ‘We value community and family ties as well as cattle’
- ‘We value teamwork and supporting one another.’
- ‘We value wealth and animals’
- ‘Unity, hard-work and inclusiveness’
- ‘Supporting one another’

➤ *Self-Reliance and Resource Optimization*

The research findings indicate that Ila indigenous knowledge promotes self-reliance, which is fundamental to entrepreneurial thinking. This culture of self-sufficiency encourages individuals to identify opportunities, utilize available resources, and create value from their immediate environment.

The traditional emphasis on resourcefulness and hard work was highlighted by a number of participants. This mindset translates directly into entrepreneurial behavior, where individuals must optimize limited resources and identify creative solutions to business challenges.

The following question was asked and the responses were as follows;

Q.4. What attitudes do Ila people typically hold towards business and work?

- ‘Most people here don’t value formal employment; they would rather stay home taking care of animals.’
- ‘We have a slogan in our tribe, “Maala Zuma, watazuma waalya mankomona” which means that if one is not hardworking, they may starve and only survive on wild fruits” so people here value hard work and embrace work as way a blessing on the family and community.’
- ‘We don’t really value formal work we would rather do things our own way’
- ‘Most people are not into formal work they feel business is the way to go.’
- ‘we don’t really value formal work, mostly if an ila goes to school , it is for the sake of gaining knowledge to take care of their animals.’
- Here we respect those who have a lot of animals more than those who are educated and in formal employment.’
- ‘We believe in wealth creation, so if someone is just working without anything to show for it, then we don’t value their work.’

➤ *Community-Based Learning and Knowledge Transfer*

The data collected showed that traditional ceremonies and schools play a crucial role in transmitting entrepreneurial knowledge. The Shimunenga ceremony, mentioned by multiple participants, serves as a platform where community members "showcase our animals," creating opportunities for learning best practices, networking, and competitive motivation. The traditional school "Lubanga Shabongwe" provides formal indigenous education that shapes business thinking.

These knowledge transfer mechanisms ensure that entrepreneurial wisdom is preserved and continuously refined across generations, creating a sustainable foundation for business development within the community. Below are the questions that were asked to find out about community-based learning;

Q.5. Can you share a story of how indigenous knowledge helped someone succeed in business?

- 'I have an Uncle who doesn't allow drinking milk from his cows, he believes that if the milk is consumed, the calves can get sick, this has helped him because the calves enjoy plenty milk hence they're so healthy.'
- 'my husband was doing well before he died, he accumulated wealth through inheritance and when he died, his relatives too inherited his animals.'
- 'A man got a loan from Zambeef to buy cattle for selling and just like that he managed to buy more cows for keeping.'
- 'My father didn't go to school but he has many business ventures out of the inherited cattle.'
- 'I started business with two cows that I was given to take care of when I was still very young. I stopped school to concentrate on farming and currently I run 3 successful businesses out of that.'
- 'Most successful people here are uneducated so they just use traditional knowledge to run businesses.'
- 'I can't single out one specific person because here people succeed because of the traditional knowledge.'

Q.6. Are there important ceremonies or traditional schools that shape the beliefs of the Ila- speaking people? Please mention them.

- 'Yes. Shikaumpa ceremony, shimunenga ceremony and one traditional school Lubanga Shabongwe.' 'yes. Shimunenga ceremony' Yes. Shimunenga ceremony' 'Yes. Shimunenga ceremony, Chisuku and Shikaumpa ceremony.'
- "Yes. Shimunenga ceremony-where we showcase our animals, Shikaumpa ceremony where we gather to thank the spirits for protecting our animals and Kacembele in Ngabo where we gather to celebrate wealth.'
- 'shimunenga' 'shikaumpa'

C. Theme Two: Influence of Indigenous Knowledge on Entrepreneurial Traits

➤ *Development of Patience and Risk-Taking Abilities*

The research revealed that Ila indigenous knowledge significantly influences risk-taking behavior, a critical entrepreneurial trait. This cultural conditioning toward courage and calculated risk-taking directly translates into business ventures.

Q.7. What are some of the things you do or qualities you possess that are as a result of your traditional knowledge and are beneficial to your business?

- 'Saving to multiply money'
- 'Though am currently not doing any business, I possess the following qualities; hardworking, desire for investment (multiplying resources)'
- 'I'm hardworking, my ability to learn, risk taking abilities'
- 'My ability to work with different people and adapt in different environments.'
- 'I'm patient; our tradition emphasizes how we should always be patient with our animals and the people around us.'
- 'Risk taking- my tradition teaches us not to have fear'
- 'Our tradition teaches us to accept every outcome and to be positive always'

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Conclusion*

The study concludes that indigenous knowledge systems among the Ila-speaking people of Namwala district are essential for developing an entrepreneurial mindset. It is evident that traditional practices offer valuable insights for contemporary business strategies. The research indicates that the cattle-centered economic foundation and community-based learning within Ila culture fosters natural entrepreneurial thinking patterns applicable in modern contexts.

The findings of the study demonstrate that indigenous knowledge significantly influences key entrepreneurial traits, such as risk-taking, patience, financial discipline, adaptability, and work ethic. The study reveals that participants possess a sophisticated understanding of business principles rooted in traditional livestock management.

However, the study acknowledges that the integration of indigenous knowledge with modern business practices faces significant challenges, including education, technology access, financial system integration, and market diversification. It is apparent that systematic interventions are necessary to bridge these gaps.

Ultimately, the study asserts that effective integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary practices can lead to sustainable entrepreneurial ventures that respect cultural values while seizing modern market opportunities. The findings enhance the existing literature on indigenous entrepreneurship by providing empirical evidence that traditional knowledge systems can drive sustainable economic development in rural African communities.

➤ Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several key recommendations emerge for policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders seeking to leverage indigenous knowledge for entrepreneurial development.

- Firstly, educational institutions and development organizations should develop integrated curricula that combine traditional knowledge with modern business skills, creating systematic approaches to entrepreneurial education that honor cultural values while building contemporary competencies required for business success in modern market contexts.
- Secondly, government and development agencies should invest in technological infrastructure and digital literacy programs specifically designed for rural communities, with particular attention to creating accessible platforms and support systems that enable indigenous entrepreneurs to utilize digital tools for market access, financial services, and business development while maintaining their traditional knowledge base.
- Thirdly, financial institutions and microfinance organizations should develop culturally appropriate financial products and services that accommodate traditional financial practices while providing access to modern banking, credit, and investment opportunities through simplified procedures and community-based delivery mechanisms. Fourth, market development initiatives should focus on creating value chains that connect traditional products with modern markets while supporting business diversification strategies that reduce dependence on single commodities and create more resilient economic portfolios for indigenous entrepreneurs.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adebayo, K. O., Ogunleye, A. S., & Okafor, N. J. (2019). Gender dynamics and indigenous knowledge in African entrepreneurship: A comparative analysis. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 14(3), 45-62.
- [2]. Anderson, M. L., Peterson, R. K., & Davis, J. M. (2021). Traditional knowledge integration and business success in developing economies. *International Journal of Indigenous Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), 112-128.
- [3]. Anderson, P. R. (2019). Indigenous knowledge preservation and modern business development: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 43(4), 567-584.
- [4]. Banda, C. M., Siamufwa, K. L., & Chomba, R. T. (2022). Traditional cattle management and modern agribusiness among the Ila people of Southern Province, Zambia. *Zambian Journal of Agricultural Research*, 15(2), 78-95.
- [5]. Banda, M., & Sipalo, F. (2024). Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Contemporary Africa. *Journal of African Business Studies*, 12(1), 45-62.
- [6]. Bray, R., & Ells, F. (2007). *Indigenous knowledge and economic development in South Africa*.
- [7]. Clark, D. J., White, S. M., & Taylor, B. N. (2018). Cultural identity and entrepreneurial persistence: An indigenous perspective. *Entrepreneurship and Culture Journal*, 15(2), 78-94.
- [8]. Cultural Heritage Foundation. (2023). *Indigenous knowledge systems in Zambia: A comprehensive assessment*. Heritage Publications.
- [9]. Dana, L. P. (2015). *Indigenous entrepreneurship: An emerging field of research*. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 27(1), 55-70.
- [10]. Davis, J. M., Thompson, A. R., & Wilson, K. S. (2021). Cross-cultural patterns in indigenous entrepreneurship: A comparative analysis. *International Indigenous Studies Journal*, 12(3), 189-206.
- [11]. Diallo, A. M., Kone, B. S., & Nyong, E. T. (2018). Traditional knowledge and crisis management in African entrepreneurship. *African Business Resilience Quarterly*, 7(4), 301-318.
- [12]. Garcia, L. P., Rodriguez, M. A., & Brown, K. S. (2019). Indigenous worldviews and entrepreneurial risk management. *Risk Management and Culture Review*, 11(2), 134-151.
- [13]. Garcia, M. A. (2018). Equity theory and indigenous knowledge in educational contexts. *Educational Equity Review*, 25(3), 78-95.
- [14]. Hamoonga, K. R., Munyinda, T. S., & Chishiba, M. K. (2020). Traditional craft knowledge and entrepreneurial development in Namwala District. *Zambian Craft and Culture Journal*, 6(2), 89-106.
- [15]. Hampwaye, G., & Mweemba, L. (2022). *The role of indigenous knowledge in Zambia's economic development*. *African Journal of Business Studies*, 14(2), 123-138.
- [16]. Hantuba, J. (2024). Cultural Dimensions of African Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Indigenous Studies*, 15(3), 112-129.
- [17]. Johnson, A. B., Lee, C. D., & Wang, E. F. (2019). Community engagement and indigenous knowledge preservation. *Community Development Review*, 34(1), 67-84.
- [18]. Kabwe, P., Mumba, C., & Simpasa, A. (2024). *Challenges in integrating indigenous knowledge in Zambian entrepreneurship*. *Journal of African Business and Innovation*, 21(1), 90-105.

- [19]. Kamau, J. K., Mutua, S. M., & Sall, I. D. (2022). Market knowledge and customer relationships in African indigenous entrepreneurship. *African Marketing Review*, 18(1), 67-84.
- [20]. Kim, S. H., Patel, R. N., & Chen, W. L. (2021). Social entrepreneurship and indigenous community structures. *Social Enterprise Quarterly*, 16(3), 145-162.
- [21]. Kone, B. S., Diallo, A. M., & Tchakounte, F. N. (2022). Innovation and technology in African indigenous entrepreneurship. *African Innovation Journal*, 14(2), 112-129.
- [22]. Mate, J., & Lubungu, J. (2023). Indigenous knowledge and innovation among the Tonga and Toka-Leya people of Southern Zambia. *Mulungushi University Multidisciplinary Journal*. research.mu.ac.zm
- [23]. Ministry of Agriculture Report. (2023). *Cattle and agricultural trends in Namwala District*. Government of Zambia.
- [24]. Ministry of Commerce and Industry. (2024). *Southern Province economic development strategy 2018-2025*. Government Publications.
- [25]. Mundia, M., Simamba, H., Kumwenda, M. (2025). *The Impact of Agricultural Cooperative Enterprises on household Income in Rural Communities of Kabwe District, Zambia*, 5 (20)(39-45)
- [26]. Mundia, M., Nkonde, C., Simui, F., & Imasiku, J. (2022). *Exploration of Agriculture Cooperative Enterprising Performance in Kabwe District, Zambia*. *World Journal of Research and Review*, 1(5), 5.
- [27]. Mundia, M., Nkonde, C., Simui, F., Mufalali, M. S., & Muduli, R. (2023). *Cooperatives and Livelihood Improvement: Understanding the Contribution of Enterprising Agriculture Cooperatives in Rural Communities of Kabwe District, Zambia*. *European Journal of Agriculture and Food Sciences*, 5(2), 40-46.
- [28]. Mundia, M., Wamundila, S., Siakalima, D., Nkonde, C., & Simui, F. (2021). Peep into the History and Experiences of the Cooperative Movement in Zambia. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 8(11), 29-36.
- [29]. Mundia, M., Mufalali, M. S., Chakwana, P. (2025) *The Role of Micro-Finance Institutions on Financial Inclusion of Farmpreneurs in Rural Communities of Kabwe District, Zambia*. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(10), 3400-3411. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25oct075>