



Mumpreneurs' experiences of combining motherhood and entrepreneurship: A netnographic study

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ZAMANDLOVU SIZILE MAKOLA

Human Resource Management, University of South Africa, South Africa

Email: sizilemakola@outlook.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4311-6073>

ABSTRACT

Background: The mumpreneur phenomenon has been growing globally, warranting new research from different contexts because most related studies have been conducted in western countries.

Purpose of study: There is a gap in our understanding of the experiences faced by mumpreneurs in South Africa (SA). Therefore, this study explores the experiences of South African mumpreneurs in combining motherhood and entrepreneurship.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study is qualitative; it uses a netnographic approach (a form of ethnographic data collection undertaken via the Internet). The data were collected from a South African blog and analysed thematically.

Results/Findings: The study found that mumpreneurs across the globe face similar experiences: challenges of starting a business, managing their work-life balance, and their sources of support. The differences in experiences come from the use of domestic workers in managing work-life balance challenges and dependence on personal qualities such as perseverance and self-belief. The differences in the experiences of the mumpreneurs are attributed to the various socio-economic and socio-cultural environments to which they are exposed.

Managerial implication: The findings of this study have implications for theory and practice. Theoretically the study used netnography, a less commonly used research approach in understanding entrepreneurial realities. In terms of practice, the findings from this study indicate the need for institutional support from stakeholders such as the governments, financial institutions, and business development agencies for mumpreneurs to grow their businesses. Mumpreneurs have indicated the business areas where they need assistance; these include financial acumen, cash flow management, marketing, and brand development. Therefore, the stakeholders need to provide programmes and strategies to assist and support mumpreneurs in these business areas.

Keywords

Entrepreneurs; Motherhood; Mumpreneurs; Netnography; South Africa; Working mothers



JEL Classification: L26

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019; Pinelli *et al.*, 2021) and the need to understand the diversity in ways of working or coping with family and work-life among women entrepreneurs (Meyer & Hamilton, 2020). These women's perspectives and experiences need to be heard to understand their entrepreneurial realities (Littler, 2017). In this study, I draw from the definition of an entrepreneur defined by Chinomona and Maziriri (2015), and the International Labour Organization (2015). An entrepreneur is defined as someone who identifies opportunities and coordinates the required resources in the face of risk and uncertainty to achieve growth and profit.

This study focuses on three types of women entrepreneurs who take the risk and uncertainty to achieve growth and profit: innovators, dualists, and returners (Cromie & Hayes, 1988). According to Cromie and Hayes (1988), "women innovators" have a strong business commitment and do not have childcare duties. The "women dualists" are motivated to start their business owing to their childcare responsibilities, which they prioritise, and the "women returners" identify opportunities to return to the workforce after raising their children through setting up their own businesses. Entrepreneurial studies acknowledge the sub-groups of dualists and returners of female entrepreneurs and refer to them as 'mumpreneurs'. Although Parlapiano and Cobe (1996) first coined the term mumpreneur, Ekinsmyth (2011) later defined a mumpreneur as an individual that takes advantage of business opportunities in a geographical and social space that allows them to combine the roles of business ownership and motherhood. The term and concept of mumpreneur are still relatively new in academia (Ekinsmyth, 2011). This definition by Ekinsmyth (2011) is endorsed in the present study.

Existing research acknowledges that women's entrepreneurship is heterogeneous in terms of motivations, size, and structure of an organisation or venture performance (Jean & Forbes, 2012; Pardo-del-Val, 2010). However, most studies on mumpreneurs are conducted in western countries such as the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Therefore, there is a need for more non-Anglo-Saxon perspectives on mumpreneurs to contribute to advancing the understanding of the multi-faceted women entrepreneur phenomenon (De Vita *et al.*, 2014; Yadav & Unni, 2016; Meyer, 2019; Meyer & Klonaridis, 2020). Additionally, as a developing economy, South Africa is more likely to produce entrepreneurs. Compared to the most-developed western countries, South Africa has a higher unemployment rate, encouraging individuals into entrepreneurship. Therefore, there is a need to understand the experiences to make suggestions on how this phenomenon contributes to seeking opportunities. Thus, the

study aims to explore the experiences of South African mumpreneurs in combining motherhood and entrepreneurship.

This paper is structured by first reporting on theoretical perspectives on mumpreneurs' motivations, challenges, and sources of support because they have been the main research areas in the literature. This is followed by the research methodology, which outlines the netnographic case-study approach employed for data collection from 33 blog posts. Next, the findings in relation to the six themes are presented and discussed in the context of existing literature on similar studies from other geographical contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review focuses on the literature related to mumpreneurs' motivations, challenges, and sources of support.

2.1 Mumpreneur motivations

Studies from the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, and Canada show that mumpreneurs are driven to entrepreneurship by several factors. These include their desire to be available to look after their children (Duberley & Carrigan, 2013), achieve work-life balance and flexibility (Ekinsmyth, 2014; Harris *et al.*, 2008; Breen *et al.*, 2017), and intrinsic factors such as the desire to express themselves (Manolova *et al.*, 2012; Jean & Forbes, 2012). In addition, a Canadian study by Jean and Forbes (2012) reported three motivators: 1) work-family related, reflecting the desire to stay at home, have flexibility, and more time; 2) the desire for independence and control, improved financial opportunities, and the need for a challenge and 3) intrinsic categories of motivators represented a desire to do something "just for me", to create something for their children, and put specific skills to use. Thus, it can be deduced that the classical factors were the most important.

In Vietnam, mumpreneurs also seem to be motivated by intrinsic factors. The mumpreneurs seek meaningful work that enables them to obtain extra income, develop confidence, enlarge their social network, and claim their authority at home (Nguyen, 2017). A study by Leovaridis *et al.* (2018) found that mumpreneurs in Romania revealed that the most cited factor motivating mumpreneurs was the desire to turn a passion into a source of income. In a Swedish study by Boneberger and Kirilova (2015), it was found that besides the need for flexibility, time management, independence, and motherhood, mumpreneurs were also motivated by the lack of further development opportunities in the organisations for which they had worked. Among the reasons that motivated the mumpreneurs from Pakistan to go into entrepreneurship was to adhere to the social conventions prevalent in the male-dominated

system. The mumpreneurs reported that it was more socially acceptable for them to run a home-based business than work far from their homes (Tariq, 2018). Mumpreneurs face several challenges compared to male entrepreneurs, especially when starting a business. These challenges are discussed below.

2.2 Mumpreneur challenges

A New Zealand study by Khan and Rowlands (2018) reported that obtaining initial funding for a business was a great challenge for mumpreneurs. This finding was echoed in similar studies from Australia, Sweden, and Pakistan (Boneberger & Kivilova, 2015; Nel *et al.*, 2010; Tariq, 2018). A study in Romania by Leovaridis *et al.* (2018) found that lack of institutional or government support was the main challenge that mumpreneurs faced when starting a business. Similarly, in a study from Pakistan, mumpreneurs lamented the absence of entrepreneurial training, workshops, and courses. Study participants pinpointed this as a big hindrance in advancing their entrepreneurial pursuits and ambitions (Boneberger & Kivilova (2015). Studies in the UK, Romania, and New Zealand found that mumpreneurs struggled to be taken seriously and seen as legitimate entrepreneurs (Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Khan & Rowlands, 2018; Leovaridis *et al.*, 2018). There is a lack of studies in SA context, where challenges are probably similar, or even more than the countries mentioned above.

The literature seems to indicate that the reliance on personal skills such as time management and family members were mechanisms used by mumpreneurs to address the challenges of a better work-life balance. Personal skills were highlighted as important factors in the Romanian study by Leovaridis *et al.* (2018), which identified three key factors that assisted their participants in managing a better work-life balance. As illustrated in the previous sentence, these factors were the family (included partners, grandparents, uncles, and aunts), the community of mumpreneurs, and the participants' own skills (for example, being organised and prioritising activities). In contrast to this Romanian study, Khan and Rowlands (2018) discovered that mumpreneurs found it difficult to get support from their partners to look after their children in the New Zealand context.

In addition, Khan and Rowlands (2018) found that mumpreneurs struggled to balance their business, childcare, and household responsibilities. The women did not use full-time childcare but worked in the early morning and late at night to focus on their business (Khan & Rowlands, 2018). In this regard, similar findings emerged from studies on balancing childcare, business, and household responsibilities in the UK and Canada (Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Jean & Forbes, 2012). Finnish and Swedish mumpreneurs have challenges due to the modest and unreliable income they received for their endeavours (Luomala, 2018). Swedish mumpreneurs

added that they did not expect to become rich from their business (Boneberger & Kivilova, 2015). There is a gap in our understanding of the possible challenges that SA women experience.

2.3 Sources of support for mumpreneurs

Existing research shows that mumpreneurs get support from several different sources. In the study by Jean and Forbes (2012), the participants mentioned that they received support from their spouse (85%), family (65%), outsourcing (60%), and from working fragmented hours (45%). Other sources of support included consultation with a business or life coach, friends, business partners, household and domestic help, networking group, and technology. Leovaridis *et al.* (2018), Breen *et al.* (2017), and Boneberger and Kivilova (2015) confirm that partners and families of mumpreneurs were sources of encouragement for them. The support from the spouse or partner came in the form of financial and instrumental support. The spouses or partners also provided practical support in childcare and household cleaning services. Additionally, the participants also received support from extended family (Breen *et al.*, 2017). Leovaridis *et al.* (2018) found that positive feedback from customers motivated the mumpreneurs to grow their business.

As shown by the literature review, there is a gap in the experiences of mumpreneurs in South Africa. Most of the studies on mumpreneurs are from the developed world. This study will provide perspectives on SA mumpreneurs, thus adding to our understanding of the many facets of the female entrepreneur.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative and interpretive. The choice of a qualitative research design was influenced by the nature of the research objectives to understand the mumpreneurs' experiences of combining motherhood and entrepreneurship. As recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the interpretive research methodology was used to capture and understand the views and perceptions of how South African mumpreneurs understood their experiences and the meanings they attach to their experiences. The experiences were collected from a South African blog using the netnographic case study approach.

Netnography is a form of ethnographic data collection undertaken via the Internet. It is unique because it is neither observational of a life lived nor told in a research situation, but instead posted by individuals (Blicheldt & Marabese, 2014; Meged *et al.*, 2014). Netnography is achieved by collating narratives displayed on online platforms, such as Facebook updates, tweets, discussions on specialised online forums, and blogs (Meged *et al.*, 2014). In most

instances, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the study subjects (Yin, 1994). The case study method enabled the researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context – South African mumpreneurs.

The blog, MomTalk (www.momtalk.co.za), owned by a mother who is also an entrepreneur, was chosen as the focus for this study because it was one of the first personal blogs in South Africa about motherhood. While previous studies have used primary data mainly sourced through interviews, in this study, the use of data from a mumpreneur blog provided the researcher with an unobtrusive means to access the participants' narratives (McGannon *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, blogs are free from researcher bias when using primary data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups (Gray, 2013).

The blog owner provided some critical questions/themes that participants could reflect on and write about. The questions related to the following themes: (1) motivation to become a mumpreneur, (2) challenges of being a mumpreneur, (3) challenges of starting a business, (4) work-life balance practices, (5) sources of support, and (6) reflections on their experiences as mumpreneurs. These themes were unrelated to the study but an unrelated initiative by the blog owner. However, this was also a good reason to select the blog as a case, as the reflective themes linked with the factors and issues identified in the studies discussed in the literature review.

The mumpreneur features used in this study were displayed on the blog between 2011 and 2016 and were regarded as individual cases (abbreviated as CS for case study). This study only included 33 of the 36 cases. Three features were excluded because these mumpreneurs indicated that they were working full-time in traditional employment while having a business on the side and therefore did not meet the inclusion criteria of being full-time in their business. The majority of the mumpreneurs were white females (34), and only two were black females. There were 34 married mothers and two single mothers. Most mothers were living in the Western Cape (12) and Gauteng Province (11). Four women lived in KwaZulu-Natal and one from the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape. The remainder did not indicate the province in which they lived. There were predominantly mothers with one child (17), followed by those with two children (11). Four mothers had three children, three had four children, and one had seven children.

The different points of view of the participants are presented in sufficient detail so that the reader may gauge the accuracy of the analysis. Verbatim quotations reveal how meanings are expressed in the respondents' words rather than the words of the researcher.

Thematic analysis was used to provide insights into a collective experience (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The preconceived themes from the questionnaire served as an analytical framework because these themes linked with those from the literature. That is, the themes from the blog led to the literature search in the same areas, focusing on these areas in the analysis of the study. The researcher first read each copy of the features while highlighting texts and writing a keyword or phrase (pithy label) to capture the description of the preconceived theme. The goal was to formulate codes during open coding, but new codes were added where appropriate. The final list of codes was organised into a hierarchical structure. In the findings, the responses for each preconceived theme were described using the identified codes and rephrased extracts to support the codes. Through this analysis, the researcher determined the range of issues/sub-themes under each preconceived theme.

In the findings section of the paper, only a sample of pertinent quotes to illustrate the subthemes are presented in each theme. The discussion section compares the results from the thematic analysis and contrasts them with findings from similar studies from other countries to highlight similarities and differences (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

3.1 Quality of the data

An established qualitative data analytic process can be adopted when using netnography (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Therefore, in line with establishing trustworthiness in the research findings, I applied Thomas and Magilvy's (2011) recommendations and used inter-rater reliability. The data from the mumpreneur features resulted in 123 pages. Owing to the lack of availability of co-coders, I only secured one co-coder and two rounds of reliability checks. The one co-coder that was available had time constraints; therefore, only a sample of texts was assessed, in line with the suggestions by Campbell *et al.* (2013) and Creswell (2009). Following the review of 5 transcripts, I generated 30 codes. The copies of the transcripts were sent to the co-coder after the meeting. The co-coder and I measured the degree of agreement on the codes by comparing how we interpreted the responses to each question of the participant questionnaire. Using Campbell *et al.* (2013), we calculated an intercoder reliability score of 70%. This score was deemed acceptable as it was in line with Fahy's (2001) recommendation that an intercoder reliability range of 70 percent to 94 percent was "acceptable" to "exceptional". We employed the method of negotiated agreement where there were differences. A report of the reasons for agreements was kept. After this inter-rater reliability process, I proceeded with the thematic analysis of all the remaining transcripts.

3.2 Ethical considerations

Approval for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Department of the University of South Africa (2019_CREC_012 (SD)), and the research was conducted following the ethical guidelines. A second coder who was not involved in the study was used to check the researcher's work to ensure the study's trustworthiness. Before data sampling, permission was sought from and granted by the blog owner to use the features for research purposes. Permission was not sought from featured individual women because the blog is publicly available (Gambles, 2010; Pedersen & Smithson, 2010). Although the blog features are in the public domain, it does not mean that the mumpreneurs would wish to be the focus of the research without their consent. Therefore, the analysis presented here is a collection of the mumpreneurs' responses, which draws attention to the dominant themes, rather than attending to the responses of any individual feature to avoid posing a risk to these individuals. Although the features included the full names of the mothers and their businesses, no names or identifiers are reported in this article (Jones & Lynn, 2018). Therefore, we have reworded direct quotations while retaining the sense of the original meaning to avoid the risk of identifying an individual by searching (Jones & Lynn, 2018).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The preconceived themes of the experiences of SA mumpreneurs included motivations, challenges of being a mumpreneur and starting a business, managing work-life balance, sources of support, and reflections and advice.

4.1 Motivation to become a mumpreneur

Different factors motivated the women on the blog to become mumpreneurs. However, the common factor among all the women was that of having children. For example, some mumpreneurs indicated that having a child was their biggest motivation for being mumpreneurs (see Box 1). Others expressed their need for a better work-life balance, the need for flexibility, and the fulfilment of personal inspiration as motivating factors.

Box 1: Motivation to become a mumpreneur**Having a child**

CS1: being a mother

CS4: having children made me want to work for myself

CS5: After having my baby I wanted to use my qualification in a way that would accommodate having a baby, so started my business

Better work-life balance

CS10: I wanted to be home with our daughter

CS13: To suite my lifestyle as a mother and my profession

Need for flexibility

CS3: Wanted to have a flexible job

CS12: Wanted to be there when I kids needed me

Fulfil personal inspiration

CS9: To focus on what I love

CS6: To fulfil my passion

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

4.2 Challenges of being a mumpreneur

There is a general sense that the biggest challenge that the participants experienced seemed to be the issue of work-life balance. The mumpreneurs also mentioned the lack of time (CS8 and CS31, Box 2). The issue of working from home was also raised (CS17 and CS18).

Box 2: Challenges of being a mumpreneur**Work-life balance**

CS11: Finding a balance was my biggest challenge

CS7: Finding a balance between, family, studies, business and myself

CS9: My greatest struggle was balancing the roles of mother and successful business owner

Lack of time

CS8: TIME!

CS31: I have to split my time between work and home in the beginning

Working from home

CS17: Working at home with kids around is just impossible

CS18: Hearing a soft knock on the door as you are busy

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

4.3 Challenges of starting a business

Participants mention the challenge of not being taken seriously by potential customers, clients, and investors when starting their business, especially with no portfolio of evidence. Some mumpreneurs related the issue of cash flow as a challenge. In this regard, the mothers mentioned the concern about insufficient or no income during some periods, especially at the start of the business (CS20 and CS26, Box 3). The participants were also challenged by the reality of operating their business as a one-person band and doing everything themselves, from marketing to advertising, liaising with customers or clients, setting up a website, and managing the financial books of the business. For example, CS27 referred to herself as “the whole workforce, design department, accountant, marketing department”. Interestingly, the mumpreneurs in this study mentioned work-life balance as a challenge of being a mother in business but not a challenge of starting a business. The mumpreneurs also mentioned marketing their business and building a client base from scratch as challenges.

Box 3: Challenges of starting a business**Not being taken seriously**

CS32: Finding a landlord who was prepared to believe that my business concept was viable and I would be a reliable tenant.

CS24: No one wants to support a project that never existed before.

Cashflow challenges

CS20: A big challenge was maintaining and balancing cash flow.

CS26: Managing cashflow is a tricky as it is difficult and keeping the family and business finance separate.

Being a one-man-band

CS21: having to do everything yourself. You end up being the secretary, advertising executive, designer, editor, accountant, marketing manager etc.

CS2: Being solely responsible for your business and having to put on many different hats at different times

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

4.4 Managing work-life balance

All the participants also articulated a few ways in which they managed to address their challenge of being a mumpreneur. These ways include being disciplined about setting and maintaining boundaries related to work and family activities. They also mentioned prioritising working in the mornings when the children are at school or day-care and/or working late at night when the children are in bed. They free up time in the afternoon to spend with their children. For example, they allocate times during the day for family and work (CS12 and CS30, Box 4).

Working from home was also raised as a challenge. To address this challenge, mumpreneurs mentioned that they re-arranged the house to create an office or locked themselves in their office to avoid being distracted by their children. They also relied on setting up a support system they could depend on when needed, for example, if an urgent work matter had to be attended to during family time. This support system included nannies, grandparents, and in-laws. For example, CS10 states that "my domestic worker looks after the kids when I have to attend meetings or need to travel" (see Box 4). To address the issue on limited time, the mumpreneurs indicated the need to focus on work and avoid distractions such as housework.

Box 4: Managing work-life balance**Partner/Husband**

CS24: Undoubtedly my husband. He supports me and my business.

CS3: My husband is supportive and there for me financially.

CS6: My husband has been supportive, and proof read all my documents.

Family members

CS5: My mother and brothers

CS3: My brothers helps me with the running of my office.

Domestic worker

CS32: My partner and domestic worker Jane* have been a really good support.

CS29: I'm grateful I have amazing support and a wonderful housekeeper, else my life would crumble.

Clients/customers

CS4: The members of my website have been an amazing support structure.

CS23: I have long-standing clients who have been with me through thick and thin.

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

4.5 Sources of support

All the participants mentioned several sources they used for support. These included their partners who provided financial support, especially when struggling with cash flow, and business administration support, such as assisting with their company registrations. The partners acted as a sounding board and motivator, especially during tough times. They also relied on their family members, including the mothers and siblings (CS5, CS19, and CS14, see Box 5). Some family members assisted with business administration and encouraged mumpreneurs. Interestingly, participants also found support and motivations from their clients and customers.

Box 5: Sources of support**Dedicated work time**

CS12: I work when baby is asleep during the day and work later on at night and also in the early morning too.

CS30: My day is divided in parts. I work when my child is at school and spend afternoons with her. No work on the weekends.

CS35: I work in the business in the morning after dropping children off at school. After fetching them from school I spend the afternoon with them. Then I work again after dinner.

Using partner, domestic worker and other people

CS7: Husband looks after the children on Saturday because it's a busy time for the business.

CS10: My domestic worker looks after the kids when I have to attend meetings or need to travel.

Using personal skills

CS15: I use my skills such a planning, organising and time management.

CS27: Asking for an accepting help

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

4.6 Reflections and advice to new mumpreneurs

Most participants said they would not change anything about their experience because they have learned significantly. First, some participants wished to have started slowly to avoid stress, burnout, and health concerns (CS30, see Box 6). Second, other participants wished to have started on a better financial footing. For example, CS20 mentioned that she wished she had "won the lottery first". Overall, they wished they had started sooner with their business. When asked what advice they would give to novice mumpreneurs, most participants indicated that perseverance is key. They advised that new mumpreneurs should continue in their quest to build their businesses even though they would face some difficulties along the way (CS11, see Box 6). Additionally, the participants indicated the need for individuals to believe in themselves and be brave to face challenges and mistakes along the way. New mumpreneurs were advised to start a business in an area they are passionate about because this acts as a motivator when things get tough. Moreover, new mumpreneurs were advised to work hard.

Box 6: Advice to new mumpreneurs**A. Reflections****Would not change a thing**

CS27: Wouldn't change anything because I can work on achieving my goals while still being able to be with my kids everyday

CS1: Wouldn't change a thing. I'm happy with my achievements to date and can't wait to see the business take off

Start slower

CS30: Wouldn't work so hard because I burnt out and experienced health challenges

CS31: Start small and not stress so much

Start on a stronger financial base

CS18: Would have applied for a loan instead of using our family savings

CS20: Would win the lottery first!

B. Advice to new mumpreneurs**Perseverance is key**

CS12: Do not give up. Keep going. You will succeed

CS11: Keep at it and persevere even through challenging times

Believe in yourself

CS25: It is important to believe in yourself

CS10: Believe in yourself. Believe in your idea

Have passion

CS29: Start your business in an area you wholeheartedly interested in. You need to believe in your offering

CS33: If you find something you are passionate in go for it. Passion and commitment show, and the rewards are fulfilling

CS17: If you do something you are passionate in, you can handle a lot of things along the way if you are passionate

Prepare for working hard

CS20: It is hard work to master your freedom

CS32: Being a business owner takes a lot of hard work

*To protect the mumpreneurs, rephrased extracts are provided

Source: Own compilation

The findings in this study support the assertion that the mumpreneurs' motivations are indeed multi-faceted (Jean & Forbes, 2012). They include classical motivators such as the need for independence and control, the need for a challenge, the desire to be own boss and work-life balance factors, such as the desire to stay at home, to be flexible, and to have more time. The findings also include intrinsic motivating factors, such as the need to do something for oneself, to create a legacy, and to help others, corroborating Jean and Forbes (2012) and Manolova *et al.* (2012). Similar to other studies (Mason *et al.*, 2011; Owen & Winter, 1991; Weidhaas, 2018), the present study confirms that although the South African participants start their

business to create a better work-life balance for themselves, this is often a complex issue as time and energy are factors that are often not considered.

The findings from this study are in line with the sentiment that mumpreneurs are challenged with the lack of time and work-life balance (Khan & Rowlands, 2018; Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Jean & Forbes, 2012). However, the study contradicts the assertion made by Loscocco and Smith-Hunter (2004) that women who run home-based businesses experience less work-family conflict than those who run their business away from home. Mumpreneurs highlighted that working from home was a challenge, especially when they have small children who do not go to day-care or school. Participants in other international mumpreneur studies did not raise this issue. This study confirms the findings by Owen and Winter (1991) and McGowan, *et al.* (2012) that it is not the physical presence of the business that brings about conflict, but the amount of time dedicated to running the business and the level of control the business has over the family schedule.

Mumpreneurs in this study faced challenges of running a business. Nevertheless, they seemed to have found ways to mitigate these challenges. For example, in addition to dividing their day into dedicated business and family times to ensure a better work-life balance, they hired domestic workers/nannies to attend household and childcare responsibilities. This study corroborates similar studies from the UK, Romania, and New Zealand regarding the struggle of not being taken seriously (Duberley & Carrigan, 2013, Leovaridis *et al.*, 2018, Khan & Rowlands, 2018). The initiatives taken by mumpreneurs in this study to address the work-life and business start-up challenges show their dedication towards their businesses, indicating that they should be taken seriously as business owners. This study finds that mumpreneurs not only face gender stereotypes but also have to conquer the stigma of motherhood, making it difficult to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs. This finding corroborates Duberley and Carrigan (2013) and Richomme-Huet *et al.* (2013).

Mumpreneurs relied on several resources to successfully start and manage their business and have a better work-life balance. These resources include partners/spouses, family members (including own parents, siblings), friends, and even clients/customers and their personal skills (Jean & Forbes, 2012; Leovaridis *et al.*, 2018; Breen *et al.*, 2017). Mumpreneurs also used domestic workers as a popular form of support used by many families in South Africa (Lammi-Taskula, 2008; St-Arnaud & Giguère, 2018).

South Africa has the highest number of domestic works in Africa (International Labour Organisation, 2013). In Europe, most domestic workers are found in Spain, Italy, and France. Conversely, in the UK, domestic workers have dropped in the past decade (International

Labour Organisation, 2013). In Nordic countries, domestic workers in private households are uncommon owing to the availability of public childcare and elderly-care benefits. Similarly, Eastern Europe has low numbers of domestic workers (International Labour Organisation, 2013). The low wages received by domestic workers in South Africa make them an affordable and accessible support resource, particularly for middle-upper class, dual-career families (Tolla, 2013; Tonkin, 2010). In the study by Jean and Forbes (2012), the study participants mentioned household and domestic help. However, it was not as important a source of support for the mumpreneurs in the present study.

The importance placed on personal qualities such as perseverance, hard work, and belief in oneself as advice for new mumpreneurs in this study may be due to the socio-cultural environment in which South African women operate their businesses. Mumpreneurs are a new phenomenon in South Africa. Women endeavouring to become mumpreneurs may be “breaking” the socio-cultural constraints. This could make South African mumpreneurs feel that their personal qualities are more important than technical or managerial skills, as was found in the studies by Das (2000) as well as Khan *et al.*, (2021). In addition, this novelty could also explain their reluctance not to change anything about their experience of combining motherhood and entrepreneurship. Although entrepreneurship research from the global north indicates that personal qualities are a key factor for entrepreneurial success, these are often rated lower in importance than good management skills or access to finance (Das, 2000).

5. CONCLUSION

Globally, mumpreneurs face similar challenges in certain aspects driven by the context in which they live. An in-depth understanding of this multi-faceted phenomenon contributes to the knowledge as mumpreneurs grows globally.

The findings from this study have implications for both theory and practice. Regarding theoretical implications, the study used netnography, a less commonly used research approach in understanding entrepreneurial realities. Concerning practical implications, the findings from this study indicate the need for institutional support from the governments, financial institutions, business development agencies for mumpreneurs to grow their businesses. Mumpreneurs have indicated the business areas they need assistance with and support on; these include financial acumen, cash flow management, marketing, and brand development. Therefore, the stakeholders mentioned above could develop and provide informational and educational support to address the business areas mumpreneurs have identified to enhance the likelihood of success. For women contemplating becoming

mumpreneurs, these findings have implications for their understanding of the experiences they are likely to face. The study provides them insights into how to adequately prepare for the transition.

This study was limited to the views of mainly white middle-class females who have access to the Internet. The use of qualitative methods limits the generalisations that can be made from these findings. Therefore, other studies can be done to understand the phenomenon in general. The data collected were from self-reports of online profiles. Social desirability has an effect because the participants used the profile to also advertise their businesses. Therefore, participants would be more careful about their responses to not tarnish their businesses.

Furthermore, the use of online profiles restricted the researcher's investigation of the participants on some issues. Future studies should investigate if there are black female mumpreneurs, considering the increase in the numbers of the black middle class. Future research could also investigate the sources of business support and resources mumpreneurs use to address their challenges when starting a business. These future studies could be useful for new mumpreneurs. Similar studies could also be conducted in other African countries to better understand mumpreneurs, particularly those from other developing countries. Quantitative studies could be conducted to cover a larger sample and determine the extent to which the themes found in this study are applicable in different provinces. This study is one of the first studies focusing on the experiences of mumpreneurs in South Africa, pointing to the need for future research in this area in the country.

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