INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS INTO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY: IDENTIFYING THE MAIN OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INDIGENOUS-LED VENTURES IN PERU

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Objectives
The main objective of this study was to explore ways in which Indigenous entrepreneurs can be incorporated into the global markets. Specifically, to identify the main barriers and opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru to expand their businesses domestically and globally.

Summary
Vulnerable economic agents, such as Indigenous peoples, present over 6% of the global population, yet often encounter numerous barriers that limit their socioeconomic development and integration into global trade. Thus, to leverage their untapped economic potential, it is essential for nations to develop resilient approaches that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the case of Peru, where nearly 25% of the population is Indigenous, the further inclusion of this vast sector of the population has the ability to generate a significant socioeconomic impact.

To explore this thesis topic, a combination of existing literature and empirical research was used. In addition to analyzing a collection of Peruvian public policies related to Indigenous peoples, qualitative interviews were conducted with experts in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Conclusions
The qualitative research concluded that the development of adequate public policies is fundamental for the socioeconomic development of Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, to achieve the necessary impact and further integrate Native entrepreneurs into the economy, it is essential to conduct research on Indigenous communities to better understand their particularities and thus pinpoint their areas of struggle. Moreover, by providing resources, training, and opportunities to Indigenous communities, Peru can not only uplift these marginalized groups but also benefit from their economic contribution.

Key words: Indigenous people, Indigenous entrepreneurship, inclusive trade, socioeconomic development, Peru.

Language: English
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The inequality present in economic opportunities is a worldwide issue preventing vulnerable sectors from thriving, both within their internal and external markets. Indigenous peoples around the world face unique challenges in achieving economic success. They often suffer from external cultural misunderstandings and lack networks with the larger community, leading to high rates of poverty and societal marginalization. Moreover, while they make up only 6.2% of the global population, they constitute nearly 19% of the extreme poor (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2019).

Entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool for Indigenous people to assert self-determination and preserve cultural heritage, as well as stimulate economic development in their communities. Although the enterprising culture may not be as promising for vulnerable economic actors, research suggests that they may, indeed, engage in entrepreneurial activities more frequently than other sectors of the population (Frederick, 2008). Nevertheless, their marginalized positions in society present significant barriers to expanding their businesses. Therefore, to leverage the full economic potential of Indigenous peoples, it is necessary for nations to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to meet the complex problems that inequality brings. Addressing the unique struggles faced by Indigenous communities is crucial to promote their socioeconomic development and breaking down cycles of poverty and inequality.

1.2. Research Problem

Peru is one of the countries where disadvantaged groups such as the youth, elderly, women, and Indigenous people represent a significant portion of the population that suffer from economic exclusion and marginalization. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that these sectors are the most vulnerable amidst global economic
uncertainties, thus stressing the urgent need to develop measures that contribute to the socioeconomic inclusivity of these groups (OECD, 2020b; United Nations, 2021).

In Peru, Indigenous people make up nearly 25% of the population (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru [INEI], 2017), thus offering a significant demographic sector to study for this matter. Given this, the economic inclusion of this vast sector of the population has the potential to generate a significant socioeconomic impact within Peru. Nevertheless, in order to achieve such an outcome, nations need to develop resilient approaches to break down the barriers to expansion and develop fair and equitable access to capital that will allow Native entrepreneurs and other vulnerable communities to prosper.

In this context, this thesis will explore the various facets of Indigenous entrepreneurship, including its potential benefits and challenges, and discuss ways in which it can be supported and encouraged. The main focus of this thesis is on how Indigenous entrepreneurs can be incorporated into the global markets. With that in mind, this research will analyze Indigenous-led enterprises in Peru in order to identify the main challenges they confront in expanding their businesses domestically and globally. Finally, based on the analysis, this paper will include recommendations of measures that could be valuable in encouraging the business development of Indigenous entrepreneurs within Peru.

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis will address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of public policies, and what are the key measures that Peru can adopt to promote the socioeconomic inclusivity of Indigenous entrepreneurs?
2. What are the main obstacles and opportunities of integrating Native entrepreneurs into the global economy?
3. What type of impact would it have on Peru to further incorporate Indigenous entrepreneurs into its economy?

1.4. Research Objectives

The key aims of this research are to:

1. Identify the key barriers and opportunities encountered by Indigenous entrepreneurs when expanding their businesses in both the domestic and global markets.
2. Analyze the different approaches and policies that have been undertaken in Peru to encourage the business development of Indigenous entrepreneurs and study their effectiveness.
3. Evaluate the role and responsibilities of governments in the socioeconomic inclusion of Indigenous entrepreneurs.
4. Examine the socioeconomic influence that adequate public policies to incorporate Indigenous entrepreneurs into the global economy could have in Peru.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

To obtain a more in-depth understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurship as a subfield of research on entrepreneurship, a collection of key and relevant works to this topic will be examined. This literature review aims to understand the context of Indigenous peoples in order to identify the main obstacles within their business environments. Additionally, it seeks to grasp an understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous peoples in Peru. Moreover, taking into account that Canada is considered
an active country in advancing the inclusion of Indigenous peoples, the literature review will conclude with an introduction to some strategies that they have implemented in an attempt to deal with this matter. This will be further analyzed in the latter parts of the thesis when examining possible ways for Peru to encourage the development of its Indigenous entrepreneurs.

2.2. Identifying Vulnerable Economic Agents

Vulnerable economic agents, such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, low-income workers, and other disadvantaged populations, often face significant challenges in today's globalized economy. These hardships include limited access to education and employment opportunities, discrimination in the job market, and a lack of financial resources and support (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC], 2020; Council of Europe, 2015). In addition, these disadvantaged groups may also be more susceptible to exploitation due to their marginalized positions in society (Njieassam, 2019). As a result, these individuals often struggle to achieve economic stability and security, leading to persistent income inequality and social injustice.

Research shows that global income and wealth disparities have been constantly increasing since the 1980s — with some nations presenting more significant differences than others. According to the 2022 World Inequality Report, 76% of the world’s wealth is captured by the richest 10% of people, while the bottom 50% of the global population holds merely 2% of the total amount. As can be seen in Figure 1, Latin America is the region that presents the largest wealth gap between the rich and the poor, where the bottom 50% holds only 1% of total household wealth, compared to the 77% of the top 10%.
In an attempt to comprehend the potential sources of inequality, a study conducted by the APEC Policy Support Unit (2020) revealed that between 1990 and 2018, all sectors of the APEC population, which belong to the Asia-Pacific region, experienced significant growth in their real income. Nonetheless, the data showed a lack of improvement in terms of inequality reduction within the region (ibid). Correspondingly, The World Inequality Report (2022) indicated that “national average income levels are poor predictors of inequality” (p. 11). What these studies highlight is that despite the growth in income that some vulnerable economic sectors have demonstrated, the presence of inequality within a nation appears to be an issue that goes beyond the monetary value that an individual is able to generate. Moreover, the persistent inequalities that these sectors face tend to be inherited, thus creating a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion that presents a threat to future generations; an aspect also referred to by many authors as “intergenerational inequality” (Christophers, 2018; Rice, Temple, and McDonald, 2021; Thaning, 2021).

The socioeconomic deprivation of this vast sector of the population has long been of deep concern, as it encompasses individuals that have the potential to generate a valuable contribution to the global economy; a phenomenon that is also described by Schulze and Riley (2021) as a group of people with “untapped economic potential” (p.1).
In fact, the economic activity of disadvantaged entrepreneurs is essential, as it contributes to a significant portion of the GDP in many countries (Manta et al., 2021; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2017). Along these lines, Heath and Cheung (2007), interpret the inequality that these individuals face due to predetermined factors, such as sex or ethnicity, as being “a source of economic inefficiency and waste” (p. 1). This is an aspect that is particularly impacting developing countries (Manta, et al., 2021), which are losing out on economic opportunities due to the marginalization of these agents (Schulze and Riley, 2021).

Although the enterprising culture may seem as favorable for vulnerable economic actors, studies suggests that they may, indeed, engage in entrepreneurial activities more frequently than other sectors of the population (Frederick, 2008). Their participation generally tends to be in the form of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, an important percentage of these individuals are part of the informal economic sectors where they are deprived of receiving additional social benefits and labor rights (OECD and ILO, 2019); thus, limiting their progression up the career ladder.

Aside from economic growth benefits, studies from the OECD, APEC, and World Bank, among others, have highlighted that the further inclusion of disadvantaged groups could have significant social impacts; including better access to opportunities and enhanced living standards. Although inclusive growth remains a recurring subject in policy interventions, it still remains essential to guarantee the effective implementation of these policies in order to allow disadvantaged actors to fully participate in their country's economic and social development. Recognizing the vulnerable state of these agents is essential for policymakers, businesses, and citizens around the world to enable transformative change toward inclusivity.

Therefore, considering that “inequality is not inevitable, it is a political choice” (Chancel et al., 2022, p. 11), it is an urgent need for nations to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to meet the complex problems that inequality brings so that current and next generations may have a better future.
2.2.1. Indigenous People’s Reality and Economic Environment

Indigenous peoples, also referred to as First Nations or Aboriginal peoples, are the original occupants of a country or region. A 2019 ILO report estimates that there are 476.6 million Indigenous peoples, who are spread across all regions of the world in over 90 countries. Though they represent only 6.2% of the global population, they constitute nearly 19% of the extreme poor (ibid.). These ethnic minorities possess a unique culture, language, and history that have often been marginalized or suppressed by dominant societies. In many parts of the world, Indigenous peoples have been subject to exploitation, violence, and discrimination, which a great majority of researchers (APEC, 2020; Heath and Cheung, 2007; Njieassam 2019; UN, 2021) suggest has led to widespread poverty and disadvantaged living conditions within their Indigenous communities.

The ongoing prejudicial treatments have presented huge obstacles for Indigenous peoples to successfully insert themselves into the local and external markets. Many authors (OECD, 2020a; Peredo et al., 2004; The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs [IWGIA], 2022) claim that the persistent inequalities Indigenous peoples face arise mainly from colonialism. Thus, contending that the takeover of the dominant elites led way to the exclusion and socioeconomic disempowerment of these ethnic minorities. Within this context, United Nations [UN] (2022) states that leaders should pay particular focus on establishing measures to better the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples. It may well be that the design of redistributive public policies could help tackle these drastic disparities, however, in many countries such as Peru and Canada, where there are over 40 kinds of Indigenous groups, it seems essential for policymakers to first comprehend the unique contexts of the different Indigenous communities before proceeding to implement generalized approaches.

In order to perceive the vulnerable nature of these ethnic groups, it is relevant to examine the context in which they reside and how this may impact their socioeconomic conditions. As of 2016, 60% of the Indigenous people were said to reside mainly in rural
areas, where employment and economic development opportunities are scarce (Jordan, K., Markham, F. and Altman, J., 2020). Rural poverty is a well-known fact; studies state that people living in rural areas are more likely to suffer from poverty and deprivation, which is sustained by statistics that reveal that the poverty rate in rural areas is more than three times higher than in urban sectors (Dercon, 2009; Suttie, 2019; World Bank Group, 2015). Unsurprisingly, the latter is a fact that applies to the socioeconomic circumstances of the majority of Indigenous people.

Following that, the lack of networks with the larger community places Indigenous people with limited options to withstand their high poverty (Frederick, 2008). To endure financial scarcity, Hindle and Lanswone (2005) indicate that individuals must engage in innovative development strategies. Besides, the limited opportunities for people in rural areas have caused a strong emigration to urban areas, whose markets offer more alternatives for livelihoods (Dercon, 2015). Given this, possible ways to mitigate migration to urban centers could be by facilitating access to adequate resources within rural locations and strengthening rural-urban linkage (UN, 2007). This could potentially prevent the problem of overcrowding in city centers and rather promote a favorable environment that encourages the proper development of Indigenous businesses within their locations. Not only would this aspect be advantageous for the Indigenous peoples living in remote areas, but also for their national economies.

Furthermore, the legacy of marginalization of, both Indigenous men and women, has shown them to be more vulnerable to unforeseen events (Zavaleta-Cortijo et al., 2020). More recently, their susceptibilities were accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Namely, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2021) reported that, amidst this global epidemic, “Indigenous women and girls (...) have not only been left behind, but have been left even further behind” (p. 10). As a result, the latter forum has adapted its 2030 Agenda for it to include a human-rights-based approach. In that regard, this unexpected matter has served as an instance to highlight the existing vulnerabilities and inequalities faced, particularly, by Indigenous women, and the urgent need for increased assistance and protection of the overall Indigenous community to make them more resilient.
In line with the latter, a noteworthy sector to examine within the Indigenous population are Indigenous women, who face additional challenges in enhancing their livelihoods (APEC, 2020). In this context, Njieassam (2019) points out that “they face triple discrimination on the basis of their gender (as women), their ethnicity (as Indigenous peoples), and their economic class.” (p. 1) Traditional gender roles and poor laws regarding the protection of Indigenous rights are aspects that have played a huge part in halting Indigenous women’s access to education, land, and employment opportunities, among others (Suttie, 2009). Additionally, they suffer high rates of violence, including sexual violence, and are often denied justice when they seek help.

Research into Indigenous communities in the Americas has revealed the prevalence of distinct gender roles, which are perceived through their traditional division of labor. For instance, it is Indigenous men who predominantly occupy leadership positions within organizations (Redpath and Nielsen, 1997). As Indigenous women still have high participation rates in the economy, some may suggest this to be merely due to gender preferences in labor positions. In other words, arguing that they perform different but complementary roles. Nevertheless, “this characterization ignores the fact that many indigenous women do participate equally in productive community activities, but without receiving any of the benefits.” (Pan-American Health Organization, 2004) This denotes that, it is not only policymakers who should pay extra attention to supporting Indigenous women, but Indigenous men must also cooperate in eradicating the power imbalance and existing biases towards their women counterparts.

Despite these challenges, Indigenous people have also demonstrated remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in preserving their cultures and advocating for their rights. In terms of Indigenous knowledge and its relation to other members of the population, McGregor (cited in Dana, 2007b) states that it “is still highly relevant not just to indigenous peoples but to larger society as well” (p. 5). In this regard, he considers that non-Indigenous individuals could benefit from the values that Indigenous communities have preserved, such as “respect, coexistence, cooperation, honour, thanksgiving, reciprocity, balance and harmony, and recognition of relationships” (ibid.).
Another valuable aspect of Indigenous knowledge relates to their proximity to nature, which is a prevalent factor among Indigenous businesses, as their ancient practices tend to honor environmental sustainability (Dana, 2015). Indigenous peoples have a close relationship with nature, thus they possess a vast amount of knowledge regarding aspects such as the properties of plants and climate fluctuations. Given this, the UN (2021) points out that their knowledge and close relationship with the environment are fundamental in dealing with global challenges, such as climate change and food security. For instance, some Indigenous women in the Peruvian Amazon are using their ancient ways of farming and forest restoration to mitigate the effects of climate change (The International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2022).

2.3. Understanding Indigenous Entrepreneurship

Although Indigenous people have long engaged in entrepreneurial activities, the concept of ‘Indigenous entrepreneurship’ remains a relatively new term within research fields. In fact, it is common practice for conventional entrepreneurship literature to disregard certain particularities of ethnic minorities or to classify them as the exotic ‘other’ entrepreneur (Bendl et al., 2015). Similarly, while there tends to be an established understanding of entrepreneurship strategies and motivation, it remains uncertain whether these assumptions are applicable to forms of Indigenous entrepreneurship (Peredo et al., 2004). In this regard, Dana (2007 b) argues that: “the culture of Indigenous people is often incompatible with the basic assumptions of mainstream theories of entrepreneurship.” (p.3) Given this, the entrepreneurial attitude of Indigenous-led ventures should be distinctively analyzed before categorizing them under the same attributes as other non-Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Numerous researchers within this field (Dana, 2007 b; Gouvea, Lehneman, and Terra, 2022; Padilla-Meléndez et al.) coincide with the definition that Hindle and Lansdowne provide on ‘Indigenous entrepreneurship’; interpreting it as “the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous
people.” (2005, p.132) Several attributes that Indigenous peoples associate with entrepreneurship and risk are different than that of outsiders, according to a comparative study on Native and non-Native entrepreneurs in the Canadian sub-Arctic (Dana, 1996). Moreover, some studies (Foley, 2008; Fredrick, 2008; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008) have identified culture and geographic location as having a strong influence on entrepreneurial traits; thus presenting two distinct attributes of indigenous entrepreneurs that may, in fact, distinguish them from non-indigenous entrepreneurs. Following that, this section aims to highlight the importance of understanding Indigenous entrepreneurship and identify some of its most prominent particularities.

2.3.1. Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage and entrepreneurial activities are interlinked, from Indigenous people’s perspective. “Indigenous-owned businesses are embedded in a unique cultural context, often shaped by traditional knowledge and connected with natural resources.” (OECD, 2020a, p. 28). Contrary to contemporary entrepreneurship, which is mainly driven by the commercialization of innovation, Lindsay (2005) and Hindle and Landsdowne (2005) point out self-determination and conservation of cultural heritage to be among the primary objectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Indigenous businesses are often associated with traditional cultural practices and motifs and are closely connected with land-based activities, such as fishing, harvesting, and hunting (Dana, 1996; Toombs, 2022). Indeed, their traditional knowledge of land and natural resources is used as a basis for sustainable development and conservation efforts, which also leads them to economic opportunities (Njieassam, 2019). In this vein, Dana (2007b) mentions that the traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities has been a foundation for their survival throughout generations. Moreover, a common goal for Indigenous people is regaining access to their ancestral lands, as they include resources that are valuable for their engagement in the business field and the conservation of their Indigenous patrimony (Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008). Accordingly, the preservation of cultural heritage is important for Indigenous entrepreneurs not only
for cultural and identity reasons but also for their economic and sustainable development.

2.3.2. Kinship Ties within Indigenous Ventures

Indigenous entrepreneurship has particularities in terms of social capital, as the networks and relationships that Indigenous peoples rely on may be different from those of outsiders. Indigenous entrepreneurs tend to place a greater emphasis on building relationships with family members, community members, and other Indigenous business owners, as these relationships may be more closely tied to their culture and values.

According to Dana (2015), social organization among Indigenous people is often based on “kinship ties” rather than on meeting market demands. In fact, Indigenous businesses tend to include “not only the entrepreneur and the business’ entrepreneurial team but also the entrepreneur’s family, extended family, and/or the community.“ (Lindsay, 2005, p.2) Particularly for Indigenous entrepreneurs, the extended family appears to be the source of motivation and support in pursuing entrepreneurial activities (Morrison, 2008). Similarly, engaging a large number of family members as stakeholders can be an essential tool for helping Indigenous peoples overcome some of the challenges they face, such as the limited access to funding and lack of representation within the business world. They often have a holistic view of the world that encompasses interconnected relationships between the physical, spiritual and social realms (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Cull et al., 2018). Similarly, and in regards to the previous section, kinship ties can also help Indigenous entrepreneurs maintain a connection with their culture and community, which can be important in both preserving Indigenous heritage and their business success.
2.3.3. Collectivism in Economic Gains

As can be perceived from the previously analyzed aspect of kinship ties, Indigenous cultures tend to be more collectivist, meaning that they value the collective goals and interests of the community over that of the individual (Dalton, 2019; Dana, 1996). The great majority of authors (April and Itenge, 2020; George, 2019; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008) argue that among the key differential aspects of Indigenous entrepreneurship is that its main priority shifts from economic gain. In this line, some suggest their entrepreneurship motives are associated with "community-based economic development" (Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008; Peredo et al., 2004).

The distinguished research professor and Indigenous woman, Larissa Behrendt (2019), asserts that the values that guide Indigenous enterprises are more similar to those of value-driven social enterprise business models, which have a clear balance between profit and purpose. This can shape the way Indigenous entrepreneurs approach business, as they may be more focused on the collective benefits of their business, such as creating jobs and promoting economic development in their community, rather than maximizing their own profits. Such a perspective contrasts the Western view, which often prioritizes individualism and economic development.

On the other hand, as Indigenous peoples operate in a larger economic system that is generally controlled by non-Indigenous people and organizations, their collectivistic nature is a factor that may limit their interaction with dominant cultures and thus stagnate their career development. Accordingly, an article by Foley (2008) touches on the connection between culture and social networking and examines how different levels of social capital can influence Indigenous entrepreneurs and their business strategies. The key findings of the comparative case study analysis revealed that, in networking events, entrepreneurs from minority cultures need to consider two cultures simultaneously; they need to bear in mind the expectations of dominant cultures as well as that of their own minority cultures (ibid). Unsurprisingly, finding a balance between their cultural values and the Western-oriented market results challenging for many Indigenous entrepreneurs (Barr et al., 2018).
Difficulties arise as there tends to be a lack of understanding and representation of Indigenous peoples and cultures within the business world, which leads to their discrimination within these contexts. In this sense, and considering that the presence or absence of social capital can be a crucial factor in determining entrepreneurial success (Foley, 2008), it seems essential for Indigenous entrepreneurs to be more proactive and strategic in building relationships and in simultaneously promoting their cultural values.

2.3.4. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory

Numerous theories have been developed with the goal of understanding and comparing different cultural values and practices across societies. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory is among the most prominent of these constructs, which proposes a unique perspective that explains organizational behavior through the most prevailing cultural traits. Despite the existence of alternative frameworks that measure culture, such as Denison (1990), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), and Trompenaars (1997), Hofstede’s indices remain compelling in linking business practices with culture (Baskerville, 2003; Kirkman et al., 2006).

Hofstede’s (1980) original study encompasses four dimensions that he believes are key to comprehending cultural differences: individualism vs. collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance and masculinity vs. femininity. Moreover, based on research with Michael Bond, in 1991 Hofstede included the Confucian Dynamism as an additional dimension that measures short vs. long-term orientation. The latter are defined as follows:

- **Power distance** — The degree to which a society accepts that power is distributed unequally. A low score implies a strong belief in an egalitarian distribution of power and decision-making (ibid).
- **Individualism vs. collectivism** – In an individualistic culture, people tend to look out for themselves and prioritize their own needs and interests, whereas in
collectivistic cultures, individuals often prioritize the needs and interests of the group they belong to. A low score indicates cultural tendency towards collectivism (ibid).

- **Masculinity vs. femininity**— Is a measure of how strongly a society upholds traditional gender norms. In masculine cultures, differences between gender roles are evident; this type of society values accomplishment, bravery, assertiveness, and financial rewards for success. On the contrary, gender roles overlap in feminine cultures; there a preference for collaboration, humility, helping the vulnerable, and a high standard of living. A low score suggests a more feminine culture (ibid).

- **Uncertainty avoidance**— measures the degree to which individuals accept unexpected circumstances. A low score reflects a society that is tolerant to change and ambiguity (ibid).

- **Short vs. long-term orientation (Confucian Dynamism)** – Associated with the choice of focus of a culture on either the past, present, or future. A culture with a long-term orientation prioritizes planning for the future while a society with a short-term orientation honors tradition and upholding social duties. (Franke, Hofstede, and Bond, 1991; Minkov and Hofstede, 2012)

While Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory is widely used within the field of cross-cultural research and management, it is also subject to criticism for aspects such as its generalizability, lack of attention to historical and political contexts, and lack of attention to the complexity and variability of cultural values and practices. To cite an instance, McSweeney’s (2002) argues that to understand a culture, it is vital to recognize the richness and diversity of organizations and national customs, instead of assuming its uniformity as portrayed by Hofstede. Moreover, Hofstede’s framework is commonly used to compare ‘national cultures’ between countries. As pertinently argued by Foley (2008), the problem with the latter is that dominant societal cultures may have the potential to condition the entrepreneurship characteristics within a nation, thus disregarding minority groups, such as indigenous entrepreneurs, who might rather be more influenced by their own sub-cultures. In this sense, it is essential to look beyond a
country’s predominant culture, and separately examine minority cultures, such as Indigenous peoples.

Following that, applying Hofstede’s theory to Indigenous peoples is complex, as their cultures are diverse and have their own unique ways of understanding and expressing beliefs. However, Hofstede’s dimensions can be a useful tool to understand some of the most prominent Indigenous cultural values and practices that can shape their behaviors and interactions within their business environments (Foley, 2008; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2009; Redpath and Nielsen, 1997). Therefore, it could be useful in developing a holistic approach on this matter.

Recurring patterns have been found among Indigenous entrepreneurs that seem to go in hand with their cultural values and can be contrasted with that of non-Native (Dalton, 2019; Dana, 1996; Foley, 2008). The latter is displayed in Figure 2 by the comparison that Lindsay (2005) makes between the prevalent cultural values of Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs regarding Hofstede’s cultural dimensions framework.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Individualism/Collectivism</td>
<td>High Collectivism/Low Individualism</td>
<td>Low Collectivism/High Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>Low Power Distance</td>
<td>High Power Distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity/Femininity</td>
<td>High Femininity/Low Masculinity</td>
<td>Low Femininity/High Masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucian Dynamism</td>
<td>Difficult to apply – Distinctions between the two ends of the scale are unclear and can be contradictory</td>
<td>Did not include in their analysis</td>
</tr>
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*Figure 2: ‘Comparison of Redpath and Nielsen (1997) Common Indigenous Cultural Values with McGrath, MacMillan, and Scheinberg’s (1992) Common Entrepreneurial Cultural Values’, (Lindsay, 2005, p. 3)*

Regarding Figure 2, it can be clearly perceived that there are unique aspects that distinguish Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures from each other, except for the low uncertainty avoidance that seems to prevail in both cases. Redpath and Nielsen (1997) concluded their analysis of Indigenous cultures by describing them as “collectivist, egalitarian, adaptive, and tolerant”. These traits are not exclusive to Redpath and Nielsen’s study as they have been widely reflected in several empirical studies involving
Indigenous communities from all over the world. Nevertheless, as there is heterogeneity among Indigenous cultures, Hofstede’s theory is a general framework that cannot be applied to all Indigenous cultures or entrepreneurs.

2.3.5. Importance of Understanding Indigenous Entrepreneurship

An essential step towards helping Indigenous entrepreneurs overcome the challenges they face in the business environment is understanding their particularities. Various studies have revealed that Indigenous peoples’ entrepreneurial habits are strongly influenced by culture, hence playing an important role in distinguishing them from many aspects of the general society. Therefore, in an attempt to foster the socioeconomic inclusion of Indigenous peoples, governments must acknowledge the impact that culture has on enterprises (Dana, 1996). This is essential to avoid generalizing this sector of the population to mainstream entrepreneurship features. Within this line, Lee-Ross and Lashley (2008, p. 26) explain that mainstream entrepreneurship models:

- *Fail to adequately consider some key cultural characteristics likely to impact on associated traits, characteristics and behaviour;*
- *Do not value preservation of heritage, self-determination and the community (Hindle and Lansdowne, 2005); and*  
- *Do not embrace a whole economic development perspective nor consider the position of indigenous self-determination.*

Therefore, studying the Indigenous reality and its economic environment may contribute to a better understanding of not only the challenges they face but also their untapped economic potential (APEC, 2021). In line with this idea, global organizations recognize the importance of doing research on Indigenous economies as part of the process of setting goals to achieve inclusive economic growth within their member nations. For instance, in its Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2022), the UN requested the World Trade Organization (WTO) to “prepare an analysis of the ways in which
indigenous peoples are affected by and included in international trade agreements and treaties, and to present it to the Permanent Forum (…) in 2024." (p. 6)

Moreover, Schulze et al. identify that studying Indigenous economies could: “empower Indigenous Peoples; provide further insight into the socioeconomic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; enable Indigenous communities to leverage economic opportunities; [and] enable public policies that have a greater impact” (2021, p.13). To complement the latter, Foley (2008) states that a deeper understanding of this type of entrepreneurship would also allow for the identification of distinct features that should be considered in the business context analysis of policymakers, NGOs, business support organizations, as well as indigenous entrepreneurs themselves. Given this, further research on the reality of Indigenous communities could serve as a guide for nations to develop more refined policies to incentivize the socioeconomic integration of this sector of the population.

Consequently, understanding this sector of the economy could help in providing adequate training and tools for emerging entrepreneurs, all of which could enhance their incorporation into domestic and international trade (Foley, 2008; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008). By supporting and promoting indigenous entrepreneurship, governments and other stakeholders can help to create more inclusive and equitable societies, and contribute to the sustainable development of Indigenous communities around the world.

2.4. Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Peru

Peru’s National Institute of Statistics and Informatics stated the population that self-identified as being part of an Indigenous or Native community of the Andes is close to 6 million people, which is equivalent to 24.9% of the census population aged 12 and over (INEI, 2017). These statistics include an estimated 55 Indigenous communities that speak 48 different native tongues (Peruvian Ministry of Culture, 2021a, 2021b).

Despite being a significant portion of the population, Indigenous peoples in Peru are disproportionately affected by various forms of exclusion and discrimination, which are
expressed in the limited exercise of their rights and duties as well as their lack of involvement in decision-making—even when addressing issues that have an impact on their own development. IFAD states that among the major challenges that Native communities in Peru still face is the lack of “access to land, markets, technology and knowledge, and thus are more vulnerable in terms of poverty and climate variability and suffer from high food insecurity.” (2018, p.2) For instance, many indigenous communities have been displaced or otherwise dispossessed of their traditional lands, and have limited ability to engage in the exploitation of natural resources on their remaining lands (ibid). This has interfered with their ability to participate in agriculture and other forms of economic activity and has contributed to their marginalization and poverty.

Within this context, it is convenient to mention that the years preceding 2018 marked a significant economic growth period for Peru, which contributed to enhancing its employment, production, and revenues. This situation allowed the Peruvian government to develop sound social policies in favor of its poor population. As a result of the latter, there was an important poverty reduction. However, the rural poverty rate remained considerably high in relation to urban poverty, which impacted Indigenous communities, among other vulnerable economic agents (ibid). Accordingly, the development of rural populations is constrained by the lack of connections to markets and the infrastructure of rural areas.

The difficulties Indigenous peoples face in Peru are multi-faceted and interrelated, making it necessary to address them in a holistic way to bring about sustainable change.

2.5. Government Roles and Responsibilities on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples

Studies from authors such as Alza and Zambrano (2015), Frederick (2008), and UN (2022), pinpoint the inadequate public policies as a basis of Indigenous marginalization;
thus, emphasizing the development of appropriate policies focused on incentivizing inclusive economic growth as a fundamental tool for breaking down Indigenous barriers to business success. In this sense, several organizations have put a focal point on ethnic minorities, such as the UN, which, through its annual Forum on Indigenous Issues, advocates for its member states to adopt measures that encourage an adequate and effective engagement of Indigenous peoples within their economies. From another perspective, it is noteworthy to highlight that free trade agreements (FTAs) can be tools to provide Indigenous peoples with access to new markets, technologies, investment opportunities, and legal protections, which may lead to sustainable and economic growth for Indigenous communities (Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2017).

As can be seen, inequality and the marginalization of Indigenous peoples are primarily a lack of appropriate policies to promote social and economic inclusion. Therefore, contending that governments hold responsibility for understanding the challenges these groups face and for approving adequate measures to tackle these issues.

2.5.1. Strategies to Integrate Indigenous Peoples into the Local and Global Markets

When studying successful cases on how to deal with Indigenous incorporation into the global market, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are clear cases in point. They are among the countries that have not only recognized Indigenous communities in their Constitutions but have also been active in advancing their rights (Gover, 2011). Among these, a special mention has been made to Canada, which has been considered a leader in developing sound policies to promote their socioeconomic inclusivity (Hindle and Lansdowne, 2005).

An important initiative that the Canadian government has implemented is The Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB), which has a set of guidelines that aims to increase the participation of Indigenous businesses in the acquisition of goods, products or services from government agencies. The policy is intended to
provide Indigenous enterprises with greater access to government contracts, which in turn will help to create jobs and promote economic growth in Indigenous communities (Global Affairs Canada, 2022). Alongside this, the Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) advocates this initiative by informing federal procurement officers about the key benefits, opportunities, and importance of supporting Native enterprises (ibid.). Moreover, this procurement policy has also been adopted by the government of Australia with successful outcomes; it has provided contracting opportunities of over $5 billion to Indigenous-led ventures (National Indigenous Australian Agency, 2022).

Another measure that Canada has implemented is the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program (AEP), which provides funding to Indigenous entrepreneurs in their initial business stages. This program grants support in the following areas: institutional development, including training, development and business support to business development organizations; business advisory services and training; commercial ventures including business innovation and growth; market development; business development and advocacy activities (Global Affairs Canada, 2021).

An additional strategy that Canada has used to further advance the incorporation of Indigenous peoples into international trade is its FTAs. For instance, the Canada-United States-Mexico- Agreement (CUSMA)—signed in 2018— includes a chapter focused on the promotion of Indigenous people’s international trade participation. The latter was one of the main priorities of the Canadian government in negotiating the CUSMA, and with that goal, it engaged in prior dialogues with Indigenous associations in order to develop a negotiation strategy that considers their interests (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). Canada has developed similar strategies to modify the chapter on SMEs of The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) to add broader protection for the benefit of Indigenous entrepreneurs, in areas such as intellectual property and environmental rights (Harrison and Asgari, 2020).

Canada’s efforts in favor of its Indigenous communities are reflected in the active development of the above-mentioned policies and programs. Given the impact that these types of measures have achieved, they can be used as guidelines by countries
that have similar challenges in order to improve the participation of this sector in the global economy. Even though there is no one-size fits all approach on this matter, they can be adapted to each nation's reality.

2.6. Conclusion

This literature review provided a foundation for my thesis through the variety of concepts, studies, and theories relevant to this research field. Several key themes are highlighted in the analysis of literary works on Indigenous peoples and their barriers to further participate in the domestic and global economy. Due to their cultural and historical backgrounds, Indigenous peoples face unique challenges that directly impact their socioeconomic status. Their marginalized positions in society have limited their access to capital, education, and political power, among other essential resources. Given this, it is extremely necessary to enhance public policies to help them achieve better livelihoods. With that purpose, a preliminary step in designing these measures is understanding their unique contexts and characteristics.

Indigenous cultural values and traditions are reflected in their entrepreneurial attitudes, which come out as distinct from mainstream entrepreneurship. This literature review identified some of the prominent particularities of their entrepreneurial practices to be the preservation of cultural heritage, kinship ties within enterprises, and collectivism. Additionally, Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory can be essential in providing insights into the way Indigenous societies approach business, leadership, and management. Yet, it is important to note that their cultures are diverse, hence the values and practices within them may also vary.

The advantages of further integrating Indigenous entrepreneurs into local and global economies flow both ways. On one hand, the latter has the potential to significantly contribute to domestic and global economic growth. On the other hand, as they are vulnerable economic actors, it will make them more resilient to economic challenges and help them improve their socioeconomic conditions. Considering the large
Indigenous population in Peru, these factors may also contribute to mitigating poverty within the country. Nevertheless, while Indigenous entrepreneurs can play a vital role in economic development and cultural preservation, it is governments who should put a focal point on developing adequate public policies to ensure that these entrepreneurs are able to fully participate in their domestic markets, and thereupon in the global economy.

Likewise, countries such as Canada and Australia are exemplary cases in recognizing the needs of their Indigenous populations, which is reflected in their variety of policies and treaties aimed at enhancing the economic participation of this ethnic group. They can serve as models for further encouraging the economic participation of Indigenous peoples, and therefore could be essential for Peru to consider in developing inclusive growth strategies for its Native population.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

The following diagram chosen for the conceptual framework is a flowchart (Figure 3) that illustrates my research plan. It begins with the focus of my thesis, which is Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru and their further integration into the local and global markets. Moreover, the right side of the flowchart reflects the dual benefits of encouraging the economic participation of Indigenous-led ventures. Their economic engagement can positively impact local and global economies, as well as improve the socioeconomic state of Indigenous communities.
The bottom section of the diagram displays the recommended approach of adopting appropriate policies that encourage the business development of Indigenous entrepreneurs. In this context, three main aspects are proposed to be considered in the process of designing these types of measures. First, understanding the reality surrounding Indigenous peoples. Second, identifying their particularities in doing business. The latter with the goal for public policies to properly respond to the needs that these communities have. Lastly, the successful approaches that countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have implemented to deal with this matter could be used as a reference, however, with the adaptation to the circumstances of Peru’s Indigenous groups. The experience of these countries could provide lessons learned and best practices.
3. METHODOLOGY

The information retrieved from the literature review and showcased in the conceptual framework serves as a basis to identify essential areas that require further examination. The reality of Indigenous peoples, particularities of Indigenous entrepreneurs, and lessons learned from other nations were identified as the key aspects to consider in the development of adequate public policies. Thus, the main focus of the research is to analyze these three key elements.

3.1. Choice of Method

For this thesis, a qualitative research method was chosen with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the environment and the main barriers that Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru face when expanding their businesses. The aim of this research is not solely to identify the challenges that these entrepreneurs face, but also to provide insights into potential solutions that can contribute to overcoming these barriers. In light of this, the study also took into account the experience of external organizations as a valuable source of information. The latter is due to the fact that strategies and policies employed by such organizations can provide valuable lessons learned for countries like Peru in the area of economic incorporation of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

A multi-faceted approach was adopted in order to fulfill the research goals and objectives. The research relied on secondary data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context in which Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru operate. Moreover, the latter was complemented by methods of empirical research in the form of interviews. The interviews were conducted with Indigenous entrepreneurs from Peru, as well as with members of external organizations who have experience in working with Indigenous communities.

According to Black (1994), qualitative research is a suitable method for investigating complex situations where the relevant variables associated with an outcome are not
directly obvious. The aim of qualitative research is to increase understanding of a given area, which is achieved by exploring concepts, opinions, or experiences, rather than just gathering data. Interviews are a key aspect of qualitative research, as they provide a context for the interviewee to expand on the given topics, potentially leading to more detailed and comprehensive information (Alsaawi, 2014). Among the benefits of interviews are that they often enable the interviewer to pick up on non-verbal language, which may not be conveyed through written surveys. Besides, this can help provide a more complete understanding of the interviewee's perspective and opinions (ibid.). Moreover, interviews can help establish a personal connection between the interviewer and interviewee, potentially creating a welcoming environment that encourages open communication.

While interviews can be an effective way to gather information, there are some limitations that should be taken into account (Alshenqeeti, 2014). First, the process of interviews may be time-consuming, as it involves recruiting, contacting, conducting, transcribing, and possibly translating. Second, they may be subject to bias as interviewees have the power to shape the interview to a certain extent through the questions they ask. Finally, using interviews as the sole research instrument may be insufficient, and therefore should be supplemented with other methods such as observations, experiments, or secondary data (Affleck, Glass, and Macdonald, 2012).

To address most of these limitations, secondary data will be used to complement the information gathered from interviews, and also provide a more objective perspective on the thesis topic.

3.2. Data Collection

To provide an overview of the sociopolitical and economic context of Indigenous peoples in Peru, a collection of secondary data was used. This includes relevant public policy elements such as Peru's 1993 Constitution, governmental entities, and specific
programs that have incentivized the socioeconomic integration of Indigenous communities.

On the other hand, a total of four interviews were conducted. Two interviews used the same question template (Appendix A: Interview Questions to Blanca Paz and John Cliver), while the remaining two had a different focus, resulting in different questions being asked (Appendix B: Interview Questions to Hilda Amasinfuen and Appendix C: Interview Questions to Angela Wright). The type of interviews that were conducted is referred to as semi-structured interviews, which is a widely used research method, especially in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in that they allow for flexibility in the order of the questions, the way they are asked, and the response given (Alsaawi, 2014). The interviewer has a pre-planned set of questions that may be complemented by open-ended questions that arise during the interview. This allows the interviewee to ask spontaneous questions, which can help clarify or gain more insight into a certain topic. The use of open-ended questions is particularly important in semi-structured interviews, as it allows the interviewee to express their thoughts and ideas freely without being constrained by the interviewer's questions. Besides, semi-structured interviews are valuable as they provide more detailed responses from the interviewees, who have the opportunity to elaborate on their answers.

Additionally, all interviewees were provided with a set of questions in advance. The interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru were conducted in Spanish, while English was used with the Australian interviewee. The interviews took place on video conference platforms (Zoom or Microsoft Teams), where both the interviewer and interviewees had their cameras turned on.

3.3. Interviewees

The primary method used for data collection was purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique that aims to recruit a specific group of participants who
can provide valuable insights into the research topic (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016; Rai and Thapa, 2015). The topic’s unique focus required participants to have experience in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Moreover, a diverse set of experts was necessary to gain different perspectives on the topic.

The interviewees consisted of three Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru and an Australian professional who organizes training programs for Indigenous enterprises. The Indigenous-led enterprises from Peru were identified from a list of potential nominees for the ‘Growing Indigenous Businesses Through Trade’ (GRIT) training program hosted in 2022. In this context, convenience sampling was used to select participants, as the limited time constraints of the research led to some individuals being excluded. Additionally, when selecting Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru, one criterion used was to have a mix of enterprises that are currently exporting and those that are not yet exporting but have expressed interest in doing so. The latter with the goal of evaluating business at different growth stages. On the other hand, the fourth interviewee was incorporated only after conducting the initial three interviews with the Peruvian Indigenous-led enterprises—as a recurring topic among the interviewees was the need to access training programs, it was valuable to integrate an expert in this area.

Overall, the set of experienced interviewees provided valuable contributions to a better understanding of the Indigenous entrepreneurship field. The specialists that were interviewed were:

- **Hilda Amasinfuen** is a member of the Shipibo Konibo community and founder and manager of the micro-enterprise Artesania Sanken Jisbe Eirl, which has been operating in the textile industry since 2018. While her business aims to engage in export, she has not yet been able to do so. During the interview, she was asked both general questions about her business and more specific questions about the impact of Indigenous culture on her business practices, her intentions to engage in exports, and the type of support her enterprise has received, among other similar topics. Lastly, she was asked to share experiences
or recommendations for other Native entrepreneurs who desire to grow their businesses locally and/or internationally.

- **Blanca Paz** is a Native of the Quechua People and is responsible for coordinating training opportunities and running workshops for the Sempa Association. The goal of the association is to provide Indigenous women entrepreneurs in the Quechua region of Peru with access to training and reinvest the earnings in social work within their Indigenous communities. Also, with the support of foreign NGOs, the Sempa Association has been able to export products of Indigenous businesses to Australia and the United States. Her experience offered a deeper understanding of the type of support that associations offer for Indigenous-led enterprises. In light of this, most of the interview questions focused on how the Sempa Association operates and its impact on Indigenous communities. Finally, she was asked about the main barriers observed regarding the business expansion of Indigenous ventures, as well as the type of assistance needed to overcome them.

- **John Cliver** is native to the Shipibo Konibo community and is the founder and manager of the Koshicoop Cooperative, which has been offering tailored support to Indigenous businesses operating in the agricultural sector since 2019. Due to his experience working and supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs through the Koshicoop Cooperative, the interview provided insight into how cooperatives function and the key benefits they provide for the members. Like Paz, Cliver was also asked about the main challenges observed regarding the business expansion of Indigenous enterprises, as well as the type of assistance needed to overcome them.

- **Angela Wright** is the Senior Manager for Trade and International Development of the Export Council of Australia. Given her experience in the area, the interview emphasized on the process and significance of organizing training programs for Indigenous entrepreneurs and their integration into global trade. More specifically, it focused on the GRIT initiative. The interview also touched on the particularities or struggles she has perceived among Indigenous-led ventures in
engaging in international trade. Finally, she was asked to share the lessons learned and best practices of her experience.

3.4. Data Analysis

The secondary data was selected by considering the most impactful public policies in Peru that focused on Indigenous peoples and their social, economic, and political integration. This was done by analyzing official government documents, such as laws, programs, and resolutions, that were related to Native peoples. For Peru's 1993 Constitution, only those sections that addressed the Indigenous population were considered. Additionally, this section included finding gaps in Peru's system of regulatory measures to shed light on areas where the Native population lacks representation.

On the other hand, since all interviews were conducted on video conference platforms, automatic transcripts were generated. These transcripts were then revised to verify their accuracy and account for any technical mistakes. Afterward, the analytical process took place on Microsoft Word. When conducting the first three interviews with the Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru, several recurring themes and insights were highlighted. As the latter interviews were in Spanish, the most relevant portions were summarized in English. The key themes were separated by color coding, which was categorized using the conceptual framework at the end of the literature review and the frequent topics discussed in the interviews. The color code allowed for the creation of appropriate subheadings for the findings section, and facilitated the process of locating each topic once merging all interviews together.

In addition to the interviews conducted in Spanish, the English interview was treated differently, as it was mainly placed into its own separate section. This section was specifically created to address the GRIT training program, and to highlight Angela Wright's experience in this field. Despite the different section, the same color coding
system was used for some areas of the interview, where the interviewee referenced topics related to previously highlighted themes.

After independently transcribing, analyzing, and coding the interviews, the portions of each interview relevant to a particular topic were merged into a single Microsoft Word document. Additionally, the sections were organized in a cohesive and comprehensive manner, with each topic being thoroughly explored and presented in a clear and concise manner. This not only helped to address the research questions, but also provided a more complete picture of the interviewees' perspectives and experiences on the subject.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Peruvian Public Policies on Indigenous Communities

Peru recognizes that it is a multicultural nation and seems to have taken it into account, as over the years it has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous communities. These have included programs focused on education, conservation of traditional knowledge, infrastructure, economic development, among others. The most relevant public policies concerning the topic of Indigenous peoples and their incorporation into local and global markets will be discussed.

Peru’s 1993 Constitution recognizes peasant and Indigenous communities. Among others, it states every person’s right to:

- their ethnic and cultural identity: establishes the duty of the State to protect the ethnic and cultural plurality of the Nation;
- use their language before any authority through an interpreter;
- communal ownership of their lands;
- the free disposal of their lands;
- their legal existence as legal persons; and
- Indigenous customary law;

There is no general law on Indigenous peoples, rather there are several norms that regulate their specific rights. To mention a few, there are legislations on prior consultation of Indigenous or Native peoples; intercultural bilingual education; health, education, and women, which recognize interculturality; protection of traditional knowledge linked to biological resources (ILO, 2020). Even though the Peruvian Constitution grants the right to work and have access to housing to all its citizens, there are no particular norms for Indigenous peoples addressing these matters (ibid).

Furthermore, within the Peruvian Ministry of Culture, there is a Vice Ministry of Interculturality, which is the governing body for the inclusion of Indigenous or Native populations. Additionally, it has the function of promoting and guaranteeing their national and international rights, such as those considered in the ILO Convention 169.

Likewise, as part of the institutional Indigenous people’s framework in Peru, the Ombudsman’s Office has a role in promoting law enforcement on Indigenous matters, especially in the fields of health, education, participation, and consultation, which are instrumental in guaranteeing a fair dialog between them and the Peruvian government.

In addition to the legal framework, the Peruvian government has also implemented programs aimed at promoting economic development in Indigenous communities. These have included initiatives focused on microfinance, vocational training, and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. For instance, Peru created a fund to finance projects aimed at achieving the integral development of the Indigenous population (Law 27811, 2002). The Peruvian regulation on access to traditional knowledge requires a contractual agreement with Indigenous peoples in order to utilize their traditional knowledge for commercial purposes. Given this, a portion of the resources of this fund is required to come from the commercialization of products developed with the use of traditional knowledge (ibid.)

Another substantial fund to consider is the IFAD, a specialized agency of the United Nations and an international financial institution whose primary goal is to combat
poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing nations. More specifically, IFAD (2023) loans in Peru aim to meet the needs of small-scale farmers in the northern and southern highlands— the most impoverished areas of the country. IFAD has financed a total of USD 244.36 million towards 12 different agricultural development projects and programs in Peru since 1980 and intends to implement a new initiative in 2023 with additional financing (ibid.). These loans address significant hurdles such as managing natural resources, providing technical assistance, gaining access to financial services, and managing production. The IFAD and the Government of Peru have prepared a country strategic opportunities program (COSOP) which outlines three strategic objectives (SOs) to be achieved from 2019 to 2024, covering two financing cycles: (SO1) increase small-scale producers’ resilience and productivity; (SO2) sustainably improve small-scale producers’ access to markets; (SO3) strengthen institutions for rural and agricultural development. (IFAD, 2018, p. 4) Moreover, in regard to Peru’s Indigenous population, COSOP promotes:

(i) initiatives that are demand-driven and adapted to Indigenous peoples;
(ii) alternative and traditional farming systems;
(iii) capacity-building for Indigenous Peoples’ associations in productive and organizational activities and financial services;
(iv) and awareness among technical and governmental institutions (IFAD, 2018, pp. 6-7)

On the other hand, it is worth noting that Peru has not yet developed a regulation nor a strategy that specifically emphasizes the need to include, particularly Indigenous peoples, in its FTAs. Even though it signed an Understanding Regarding Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge (2006) in the context of the FTA between Peru and the United States, it has very limited scope in terms of Indigenous peoples’ rights— mainly acknowledging the importance of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. The only place in which it does recognize the importance of promoting the incorporation of Indigenous entrepreneurs into international trade is in documents approved by APEC that promote free trade.
4.2. Indigenous Culture as a Source of Income

Indigenous communities continue to hold their culture and art in high regard, as they were taught by their ancestors. They consider it a "living culture". “The intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, practices, and skills is essential to keep the Indigenous cultures alive”.

Following this, all interviewees mentioned that their business offerings were highly linked to their culture. For instance, in an interview Amasinfuen (2023) states that her entrepreneurial practices, such as the design and natural dyes used for their textiles, highly reflect her culture. Additionally, she explained that in the Shipibo community, they are used to working collaboratively and sharing profits (ibid.). Likewise, Paz (2023) claims that Indigenous communities in Peru prioritize working with individuals that belong to their community, thereby fostering a circular economy that operates independently of external actors. Correspondingly, their ambition to preserve their cultural heritage has also “become a fundamental source of economic income for Indigenous communities”.

4.2.1. Fusing Indigenous Culture with Western Culture

While cultural preservation is essential for Indigenous peoples, Paz (2023) suggests that artisans should not rely solely on their existing knowledge. Instead, “they should invest in training themselves to learn about modern technologies that can make their sales and production more efficient”. Similarly, Cliver (2023) acknowledges the value that traditional cultural practices have in the business world, yet also believes it is important for “Native communities to stay up to date with modern trends to better position themselves in the market”. Through the Koshicoop Cooperative, he attempts to open the minds of Indigenous community members and recognize the need to “blend modern practices with traditional Indigenous culture”. In this context, “ancestral
knowledge alone is no longer sufficient for survival”, thus emphasizing the need to acquire modern guidance to scale their ventures successfully.

4.3. Type of Support Received by Indigenous Entrepreneurs in Peru

“Support for Indigenous businesses is on the rise in both public and private sectors in Peru”. For instance, Paz’s Sempa Association has received support from local entities such as the Ministry of Production in Peru and the BanBif Bank, as well as from Australian and American NGOs. Indeed, Paz (2023) claims that the establishment of the Sempa Association was made possible thanks to the financial and mentorship support provided by NGOs. Although assistance from NGOs is often temporary, Paz explains that the American and Australian NGOs were able to extend their support by engaging in commercial negotiations with the Sempa Association. This created a sustainable form of support which enabled them to expand to international markets with ease. Additionally, the BanBif bank and the Peruvian Ministry of Production provided opportunities for them to participate in several business conferences and allowed them to expand their professional networks and create new sales points in the capital, Lima.

Along these lines, Cliver (2023) highlights the significance of having strategic alliances that are able to provide support in the form of financing, market targeting strategies, and accessibility to technical resources, among other key corporate elements. The Koshicooop Cooperative members received specialized training from the Agrarian Health Service in Peru, which enabled the up-and re-skilling of Native entrepreneurs, resulting in an increase in the quality of their products (ibid.).

Amasinfuen (2023), on the other hand, claims to “have received limited institutional support as an entrepreneur in Peru”. In line with this, she emphasizes her need for external support to be able to better insert her business in the market. However, the few national organizations that have supported her are Peru’s Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism, which has allowed her to participate in several fairs, and Peru’s National
Customs and Tax Administration Superintendence [SUNAT], which facilitated her business registration process (ibid.).

4.4. Barriers to Opportunities of Indigenous Entrepreneurs

When asked about the main struggles Indigenous entrepreneurs face when attempting to insert themselves into local and global markets, several consistent elements emerged among interviewees: poor education; traditional gender roles; remote living locations and lack of recognition of Indigenous enterprises; lack of financial assistance; vulnerability to unforeseen events; and arduous business formalization procedures.

4.4.1. Poor Education

“Limited access to education for Indigenous peoples in Peru is a significant barrier that has interrelated effects on several areas related to the development of Native communities”. In particular, Paz notes that a significant portion of women in her Quechua community has only had access to primary education. Cliver (2023) and Paz (2023) state that the latter has been passed down through generations, “perpetuating a cycle of uneducated individuals”. Cliver (2023) emphasizes the urgent need for external support to help Native entrepreneurs overcome this lack of education. He suggests that “cooperatives that focus on assisting Indigenous entrepreneurs in financing and training could provide the necessary support”. Cliver established his cooperative after recognizing a vast number of shortcomings and ignorance within his community. He found that the “lack of business perspective among members of Native communities made them vulnerable to exploitation during commercial exchanges” (ibid.). In addition, he observed significant commercial potential in the farms of several Indigenous communities in Peru, with “70% of their farms used for individual purposes and only 30% for commercial purposes” (ibid.). Given this, one of the main goals of the
Koshicoop Cooperative was to shift the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and help them recognize these resources as a means of financial support.

4.4.2. Female Labor Force Participation

“The prevalence of traditional gender roles among many Indigenous communities in Peru has created significant barriers, particularly for women to participate in the labor force”. The interviewees contend that cultural attitudes and stereotypes cause Indigenous women in Peru to experience occupational segregation and encounter several obstacles to engaging in the economy, including limited access to land, capital, employment, and education. They indicate that Indigenous men are often involved in sales and the overall economy, while women are expected to stay at home taking care of children and household chores (ibid.). As Indigenous women are traditionally submissive, Amasinfuen, Cliver, and Paz share a common goal of empowering Indigenous women and making them more visible in the labor force (ibid.). In this context, Cliver (2023) remarks that “women should also be given the opportunity to be architects of their own development”.

4.4.3. Remote Living Locations and Lack of Recognition in the General Consumer Market

“Aboriginal entrepreneurs mostly face similar issues to non-Indigenous SMEs, such as a lack of access to finance and an understanding of contracts and market intelligence”. Nevertheless, some of the unique barriers they face are associated with aspects such as their remote living locations. Wright (2023) notes that “rural locations challenge logistics within Indigenous businesses”, presenting an additional challenge when distributing products in different markets. She also adds that remote areas tend to be linked with poor infrastructure, which can lead to a lack of internet connectivity, a fundamental tool in today’s economy. Besides, Cliver (2023) claims that remote living
contexts tend to isolate Indigenous entrepreneurs from receiving information from outsiders, “limiting important business growth features such as keeping up with market trends and networking”. Given this, Cliver’s Koshicoop Cooperative provides assistance to Aboriginal entrepreneurs that struggle with access to digital connectivity by acting as an intermediary between a client and the entrepreneur (ibid.).

Additionally, Amasinfuen (2023) mentions that the remoteness of her community limits accessibility to essential manufacturing materials required for her products. This is associated with the challenges Paz (2023) identifies in terms of competition with industrial producers, who tend to have more favorable costs of production and distribution. As the products sold by the Sempa Association are hand manufactured by Indigenous entrepreneurs living in remote areas, this elevates the costs and time of production and distribution (ibid.).

In this regard, “there is a lack of recognition of Indigenous products and services in the general consumer market”. Wright (2023) states that Indigenous entrepreneurs may face difficulties in accessing assistance for international trade, particularly from governments. Moreover, as the process of integrating into international trade can be tedious, she suggests the establishment of “a centralized point that can provide guidance on these matters to Native entrepreneurs”. More diffusion of Indigenous art is needed in order to increase sales and expand to different national and global markets. Amasinfuen (2023) claims it is difficult to stand out among a large pool of industry competitors and the lack of networking opportunities also hinders them. Besides, Cliver (2023) mentioned that it would be highly valuable to receive support from international agents to increase the visibility of their products across different markets. Nevertheless, this possibility is often limited by their remote living conditions and weak connections with the larger community.

In this context, “a significant challenge commonly encountered by Indigenous entrepreneurs is the ability to identify strategies that enable differentiation against competitors”. Although their enterprises typically have attractive stories related to their cultures and the motivation behind their involvement in business, to stand out against
the growing competition it is fundamental for them to emphasize their business pitch. In other words, highlight their point of difference. Along these lines, Cliver (2023) suggests that obtaining product certification would help increase the value of their products, as well as contribute to expanding their channels both in the international and domestic markets.

4.4.4. Lack of Financial Assistance

“The lack of financial resources is one of the main barriers to business growth within Indigenous-led ventures in Peru.” Within these lines, Amasinfuen (2023) mentions that her sales rely solely on trade fairs, as she does not have sufficient resources to purchase or rent a sales stand. Given this, she constantly seeks opportunities to sell her products and tries to coordinate with institutions that hold trade fairs. However, her financial resources limit her from attending several trade fairs as traveling to different regions of the country is often required to participate in them. In this vein, she points out that financial support would allow her to expand her professional network beyond her current region (ibid.). On the other hand, Cliver (2023) and Paz (2023) were both able to receive financial assistance from organizations, which they mentioned has been crucial in helping develop and scale their businesses. They mention that “this type of extra support is highly needed among Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Peru to allow them to access more opportunities within local and international markets”.

4.4.5. Vulnerability to Unforeseen Events

In recent times, unforeseen events have presented unfavorable conditions that have significantly impacted Indigenous entrepreneurial practices. Paz (2023) remarks that the COVID-19 pandemic has considerably reduced the Sempa Association’s income and therefore their ability to develop social works for their community. She claims that the severe economic impact of this phenomenon caused them to start everything from
scratch and thus take their focus off market expansion. In the same way, the pandemic brought Amasinfuen’s (2023) economic activity to a near-standstill, as she states that it caused her to go almost 2 years without participating in commercial events. Cliver (2023) also mentions that the number of partners in his cooperative reduced from 28 to 26 members due to the harsh socio-economic conditions.

From another perspective, “despite the significant drawbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of business growth, it has also showcased new opportunities and ways to promote products”. Paz (2023) believes that the pandemic has raised consumer awareness and opened a gate towards online sales platforms, where they are now able to reach customers more efficiently.

Another contemporary phenomenon that has impacted Indigenous communities in Peru and their enterprises has been the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. The latter has placed a threat to several plants and tree species on which several Indigenous business heavily rely on for product manufacturing.

4.4.6. Arduous Business Registration Processes

“It is common for Indigenous enterprises in Peru to not register their businesses, and thus remain in the informal sector”. Amasinfuen (2023) and Paz (2023) stress the importance of formalizing businesses to achieve growth, but acknowledge that the registration process can be complicated for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Paz contends that the arduous registration procedures in Peru typically hinder the transition towards formality among Indigenous entrepreneurs (ibid.). Similarly, “the abundance of misinformation regarding business incorporation processes is the main cause for the prevalence of informality among Indigenous enterprises”. Indeed, Amasinfuen (2023) shared that the complex registration procedures were initially a drawback for her to formalize her enterprise. Despite the challenges, she was able to receive assistance from government agencies, such as Peru's National Customs and Tax Administration
Superintendence [SUNAT], to facilitate the business registration process. She emphasizes that it would not have been successful without external guidance (ibid.).

Furthermore, Amasinfuen shared that the main reason she desired to register her business was to be able to participate in national trade fairs, which require formalization as a prerequisite to participation. Formalization also facilitated her company’s sales to public institutions, as they were then able to provide invoices to customers (ibid.). Additionally, Paz (2023) registered her brand under the name Sempa Association as a means of entering new markets. Another benefit of business formalization that Paz highlighted was the ability to access bank loans and training programs (ibid.). Along the same line, Wright (2023) mentions that one of the requirements for Indigenous-led ventures to participate in the training programs she has conducted is to have a registered business operating domestically.

4.5. Targeted Training as a Key Driver of Market Growth for Indigenous Businesses

“Training is an essential aspect of growing Indigenous entrepreneurship and increasing economic prosperity”. To meet the goal of further incorporating Indigenous entrepreneurs into the economy, “it is important to find programs or strategic alliances that provide mentorship in the areas of business development”. Paz (2023) shared that having access to mentorship has been reassuring for entrepreneurs in her community as it guarantees progressive improvement in their business fields. Meanwhile, by receiving training, Cliver (2023) stated that the members of the Koshicoop Cooperative were able to achieve prosperous results such as demanding higher prices for their products, expanding to markets, and acknowledging the value of their products.

Furthermore, through the support of the Peruvian Agrarian Health Service, the Indigenous entrepreneurs of the Koshicoop Cooperative were able to receive targeted training in their farmlands, allowing them to apply the theory directly to their crops. In this line, “it is essential for Native entrepreneurs to have access to training within their
territories, as it prevents the need to migrate to other areas to receive coaching”. Likewise, Cliver (2023) explained that the mentoring provided to Indigenous entrepreneurs in his cooperative has given them the expertise needed to maintain their farmlands in healthier conditions—making them more resistant to common natural disasters in the region.

On the other hand, Amasinfuen (2023), who has yet to access business training, believes that it is essential to improving quality assurance. She claims that a fundamental condition to sell and offer their products outside their regions—nationally and internationally—is to improve quality performance (ibid.). “Through the up-and-reskilling provided by training programs, Indigenous entrepreneurs can meet market demands for quality and other essential specifications”. Following this, Amasinfuen (2023); Cliver (2023); and Paz (2023) argue that increasing the value of their products is crucial as it allows them to better price their products and build a more loyal customer base, ultimately leading to better economic profitability for the entrepreneurs.


‘The Growing Indigenous Businesses Through Trade’ (GRIT) initiative is a training program aimed at export readiness capacity building for Indigenous entrepreneurs. It was organized by the Export Council of Australia in partnership with APEC and funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. As many Indigenous businesses have primarily focused on developing in the domestic market and have not yet tapped into the potential of international trade, “the program was created to address the need for Native-led enterprises to develop additional skills and build capacity, particularly in the area of international trade” (Wright, 2023). The course content covers a wide range of fundamental export readiness topics, including market analysis tools, intellectual property rights, accessing the right finances, and finding innovative business models. Likewise, these types of training programs provide Indigenous entrepreneurs
with “a practical understanding of how to undertake international trade, which can be overwhelming without a proper understanding of the process” (ibid.).

To be eligible for the GRIT program, Indigenous entrepreneurs must meet certain requirements, including being a member of an APEC economy; having a registered domestic business; being willing to expand their business internationally; being proficient in English; having internet access; and having the time to commit to the program. The process of organizing the GRIT initiative involves reaching out to key points of contact in other APEC member economies, who are responsible for nominating potential participants. The nomination form allows Native entrepreneurs to provide information about the stage of their business, their specific targets for market expansion, and any prior experience in exporting. Additionally, “assessing the applicants involves balancing gender, economy, and industries as significant factors” (ibid.).

According to Wright, the GRIT program was designed to create connections among Indigenous participants and guest speakers from around the world. This provided them with an opportunity to “build a supportive ecosystem where they were able to engage in peer-to-peer learning experiences, create awareness of each other’s markets, as well as collaborate with each other in the business field”. Likewise, Wright highlights that building a network of Indigenous entrepreneurs in different economies is crucial as it allows them to develop a sense of camaraderie and new market connections, which can be helpful when entering a new market. Moreover, she states that the program’s mix of social outcomes and knowledge gained is essential, as they can lead to economic returns. Given this, “participants can use their newfound knowledge to make impactful business decisions that enhance growth prospects” (ibid.).

Furthermore, when asked about her recommendations for export-readiness programs, Wright proposes building larger pools of potential participants for training programs similar to the GRIT initiative. Along this line, she emphasizes the poor contact that governments have with local Indigenous businesses and proposes “enhancing the engagement of Indigenous Chambers of Commerce to better understand the needs of
Native entrepreneurs and strengthen their relationships with the government”. Additionally, Wright suggests that extending the follow-up process would be useful, as the mentoring provided is typically limited to a fixed-term period. She adds that having a more formalized follow-up process, including additional dedicated sessions with participants after the end of the training period, has the potential to enhance their confidence in applying the new knowledge further. Besides, Wright comments on the importance of hosting training programs for Indigenous entrepreneurs within their countries. In her experience, participants from the same country, with commonalities in their background and culture, seem to build stronger connections with each other (ibid.).

Overall, “providing training programs for Indigenous entrepreneurs is essential for their economic growth and development in the international market, and thus it is important to continue developing and expanding such programs to better support these communities”.

4.6. Impact of Entrepreneurship on Indigenous People’s Livelihoods

Through the experiences of Paz, Cliver, and Amasinfuen, this section showcases the impact of entrepreneurship on the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples living in Peru. It specifically highlights the role of social entrepreneurship and its ability to address the socioeconomic challenges of Native communities. Additionally, this section explores the positive intergenerational impact of entrepreneurship and how it allows Native communities to pass down their expertise and preserve their cultural heritage.

4.6.1. Social Entrepreneurship

Paz (2023) presents the Sempa Association as a form of social entrepreneurship aimed at providing access to new markets and specialized training for women Indigenous entrepreneurs in the Quechua region of Peru. According to Paz, through this business association, the Quechua people are able to generate income from their production,
which is then reinvested in social works that benefit them and their families. In recent years, the Sempa Association has been able to provide essential resources to schools, such as lunch, dining rooms, computer centers, and libraries. By prioritizing collaboration within the Indigenous community and its empowerment, Paz states that the Sempa Association has been able to create a sustainable model of social entrepreneurship that addresses some of the main socioeconomic challenges of Native communities.

Similarly, by leveraging his high-quality education and know-how, Cliver has created a positive impact on the Shipibo Konibo and other adjacent Indigenous communities. Through this cooperative, Cliver (2023) mentions that he has been able to fund solutions that tackle the main barriers that these communities face in the business world. Additionally, it has provided Indigenous people with “access to wider markets and opportunities, which has helped improve their economic prospects and raise their standard of living”. Indeed, the fruitful results of Cliver’s cooperative have risen the interest of other Indigenous ventures, who are seeking similar support systems.

### 4.6.2. Intergenerational Impact

“Entrepreneurship is an instrument that has allowed Native people to move forward from their precarious living conditions”. Likewise, Amasinfuen (2023); Paz (2023); and Cliver (2023) mention that the motivation behind their entrepreneurship is mainly to generate a positive intergenerational impact that allows them to pass down their expertise, as well as continue to maintain and revalue their culture.

Moreover, “women Indigenous entrepreneurs have been able to progressively tackle occupational segregation and the variety of barriers they encounter through their participation in the economy”. Similarly, the economic engagement of Indigenous women has provided them with the opportunity to achieve financial independence and take charge of investment decisions and family expenses. Simultaneously, this has
allowed them to gain more respect from their male counterparts and thus lowering gender-based violence.

Aside from tackling gender barriers, Amasinfuen (2023) engages in business to help her family prosper and prevent them from undergoing similar challenges as she has as a Native entrepreneur. Her participation in business has allowed her to transmit this expertise to her children. Amasinfuen reinvests the income she receives from her entrepreneurial practices in providing her children with access to education, which enhances their professional paths and thus creates a positive intergenerational impact (ibid.).

Furthermore, as previously mentioned by Cliver (2023), merchants used to take advantage of Indigenous entrepreneurs’ ignorance regarding economic matters. Nevertheless, as the Koshicoop Cooperative has helped Aboriginal entrepreneurs access targeted training, “they have become more informed about the whole process behind trade, thus making it more difficult for merchants to mislead them”.

5. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERU TO FURTHER INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS INTO THE ECONOMY

5.1. The Importance of Research on Indigenous Peoples for Designing Adequate Public Policies

Research into Indigenous communities can set the grounds to design and enforce adequate public policies focused on supporting Indigenous populations in overcoming marginalization and inequality. Namely, the literature review highlighted that researching Indigenous entrepreneurs can provide adequate training and tools for emerging entrepreneurs, which could enhance their incorporation into domestic and international trade (Foley, 2008; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008). Besides, a better understanding of
this sector of the economy is essential to pinpoint their areas of struggle and avoid generalizing them with mainstream entrepreneurship features.

Investigation into Indigenous populations can unveil elements that are unique to their culture, values, traditions, and socioeconomic conditions. One notable particularity highlighted in literature and interviews is their ambition to preserve their cultural heritage, which is interrelated with many aspects of their entrepreneurial practices. These types of characteristics are particularly noteworthy because they can provide valuable insights for those seeking to assist in the development of Indigenous communities—by understanding the significance of cultural heritage in the context of entrepreneurship, policymakers, and other stakeholders can better appreciate the challenges and opportunities that exist among this sector. Similarly, policymakers can develop more tailored and effective approaches to support the socioeconomic integration of Indigenous entrepreneurs by recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities they face.

Another preliminary step towards designing adequate public policies is to strengthen the connection between the government and Indigenous communities. While remote living conditions and marginalized positions in society reflect the need for Indigenous communities to receive additional support, it has often resulted in governments overlooking them. However, it is crucial for governments to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and that they have a say in the policies that affect them. As proposed by Wright (2023), a centralized governmental point seems essential to increase awareness and guidance for Indigenous peoples. In fact, Peru has implemented such an initiative through the Vice Ministry of Interculturality and the Ombudsman’s Office, which play an instrumental role in guaranteeing a fair dialogue between indigenous communities and the Peruvian government. The latter presents a means of mutual support, as governments can benefit from a better understanding of the context of Native communities and thus target their necessities, while Indigenous peoples can benefit from tailored governmental support.
5.2. The Need for Additional Support Systems

The vulnerable living conditions of many Native communities highlight the need for extra support to help them flourish in the business world. Cliver (2023), Paz (2023), and Wright (2023) have both perceived the precarious living conditions and additional barriers that these communities encounter in economic participation, and thus are involved in support systems (i.e., associations, cooperatives, and training programs) which have shown to be essential in paving a growth path for Indigenous enterprises. This type of assistance is crucial as it can provide the resources, expertise, and confidence that entrepreneurs need to overcome challenges and achieve their goals, hence setting them on track to long-term success.

The interviewees stressed the need for financial support to access business opportunities in local and global markets. As explored in the literature, 60% of the Indigenous people are said to reside mainly in rural areas, where employment and economic development opportunities are scarce (Jordan, K., Markham, F. and Altman, J., 2020). Likewise, this can apply to the Peruvian Indigenous peoples, who have generally shown to be more vulnerable in terms of poverty, compared to other sectors of the population (IFAD, 2018). In this vein, increasing large-scale initiatives to provide better access to funding for Indigenous-led businesses during their initial stages would be essential; this can help them establish a strong foundation that can allow for quicker career advancement. Regardless of the benefits, it is important to recognize that financial support alone is not enough; Indigenous entrepreneurs also need access to opportunities that allow them to increase the quality of their offering and their customer base. In this line, as reviewed in the findings of my thesis, the IFAD has provided substantial support to not only provide funding to Indigenous peoples, but also to assist in capacity-building, technical training, and raising awareness among governmental institutions to support Indigenous peoples' development. Given this, Peru should focus on co-financing initiatives of the like, targeted at enhancing the socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous populations.
Moreover, poor education was identified in the literature review and interviews as one of the hardships that have a direct impact on the disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous peoples and their lack of business expertise. Therefore, the interviewees themselves claimed that a plausible method to account for their deficient business knowledge was through training and mentorship programs. This type of extra support can be an essential instrument for Native entrepreneurs to better position themselves within markets. In this context, Cliver (2023) suggested product certification as a value-added feature that could better allow them to grow in the local market and engage in international trade. Ultimately, targeted training is essential to improve quality assurance, which is a prerequisite to access this benchmark for product quality.

Following that, the interviewees presented cultural heritage as not only a source of pride but also a fundamental source of economic income for Indigenous communities. However, as some ancient practices become insufficient for modern business development, networking with dominant cultures and receiving targeted training is shown to be crucial for the successful scaling of their enterprises. In this line, while interviewees regarded cultural involvement as essential to maintaining traditional practices, some suggested that blending modern practices with traditional Indigenous culture is necessary to thrive in the market. This aspect was also brought up in the literature review by emphasizing the need to strengthen rural-urban linkage yet is an aspect that may result challenging for many Indigenous entrepreneurs (Barr et al., 2018; UN, 2007). For instance, their tendency to reside in remote areas presents a limitation for network expansion and therefore emphasizes their need for further assistance in this matter. In this context, the interviews revealed that support entities, such as cooperatives and associations, can play a crucial role in acting as intermediaries between the market and Native entrepreneurs, and thus help them find a midpoint between western and traditional practices. Correspondingly, for individuals who are hesitant to interact with the modern world due to factors such as discrimination or uninterest, these support systems can offer an indirect means of engagement.

Considering that cooperatives and associations have proven to be crucial support systems for Indigenous enterprises, their impact can be further extended through the
involvement of multinational corporations. As the majority of the world’s richest entities are corporations, instead of governments (Global Justice Now, 2018), they have significant power to drive change. Hence, they should be considered in initiatives to foster the equitable and sustainable integration of vulnerable groups into the economy. Namely, corporate citizenship provides a framework for large companies to act as game changers in improving the socioeconomic conditions of vulnerable economic agents. In turn, by embracing social and environmental responsibility, large companies can contribute to the development and growth of local communities, while also enhancing their own reputation through corporate social responsibility activities. Through collaboration with cooperatives, associations, and other stakeholders, large companies can create shared value and drive a positive impact on important global issues, such as the development of Indigenous economies.

Alternatively, the literature review revealed that a significant percentage of vulnerable economic agents, such as Indigenous peoples, form part of the informal sector, where they are deprived from receiving additional social benefits and labor rights (OECD and ILO, 2019). This aspect was brought up in the interviews by Amasinfuen (2023) and Paz (2023) who stressed the importance of business formalization for market growth. In other words, they portray business registration as a valuable source of support for enterprises. For instance, Amasinfuen shared that business registration allowed her to participate in national trade fairs, while it allowed Paz’s Sempa Association to access bank loans and training programs. However, they argued that the abundance of misinformation and the complex business registration processes in Peru often hinders the transition of Indigenous enterprises towards formality. In this line, facilitating the registration procedures would be valuable in providing additional assistance for Indigenous enterprises as well as accelerating national economic growth. Accordingly, a large-scale formalization in Peru has the ability to promote economic growth, competitiveness, and access to benefits, resulting in better living standards and contributing to the overall development of Peru.
5.3. The Socioeconomic Impact: Opportunities and Benefits for Peru

As examined in the literature, Indigenous peoples are disadvantaged groups with untapped economic potential (Schulze and Riley, 2021). In Peru, where 25% of the population is Indigenous (INEI, 2017), there is a huge opportunity for these communities to contribute to the country's economy. Unfortunately, this potential is often wasted due to the inequality and marginalization that these populations face (Heath and Cheung, 2007). Despite these obstacles, Indigenous peoples have demonstrated remarkable resilience in preserving their cultures and fighting for their rights. In fact, the interviews conducted provided further insight into the opportunities and benefits that Indigenous entrepreneurship can bring.

On one hand, Indigenous entrepreneurship can play a significant role in expanding the use and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge. In fact, the value of cultural heritage has been recognized by Peruvian norms that protect traditional knowledge linked to biological resources (ILO, 2020). Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, Indigenous peoples tend to have a close relationship with nature, thus their entrepreneurial practices often honor the conservation of the environment (Dana, 2015). In fact, Amasinfuen (2023), shared that she follows Indigenous ancestral techniques that rely solely on natural ingredients for dyeing her textiles. Hence, by engaging in entrepreneurship, Indigenous individuals can not only promote their traditional practices and knowledge but also bring attention to the importance of environmental sustainability. This can lead to greater recognition and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge, not just within Indigenous communities but also among the wider society. In turn, this can help address global challenges such as climate change and food security (UN, 2021). Simultaneously, the Indigenous interviewees of Peru claimed that by expanding the use and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge through entrepreneurship they can contribute to the preservation of their cultural heritage and identity.

On the other hand, one of the key themes highlighted in both the literature review and the interviews was the prevalence of traditional gender roles within Indigenous communities. These gender roles have been identified as a major barrier to Indigenous
women’s access to education, land, and employment opportunities, among others (Amasinfuen, 2023; Cliver, 2023; Paz, 2023; Suttie, 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Indigenous people of Peru who were interviewed emphasized that they have been able to make progress in overcoming occupational segregation (Amasinfuen, 2023; Cliver, 2023; Paz, 2023). They mentioned that the increased engagement of women in the economy has been highly impactful in breaking down gender barriers within Indigenous communities. They pointed out that entrepreneurship has enabled Indigenous women to achieve financial independence, make investment decisions, and gain respect from men, resulting in a reduction of gender-based violence (ibid.). Given this, the increased entrepreneurial involvement of Indigenous women in Peru shows to be playing a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women to make a greater contribution to society. Regardless of this, it is important to note that this engagement needs to be sustained in order to continue making progress.

Likewise, expertise acquired from business participation has the potential to create a positive intergenerational impact on Native communities. As mentioned by the interviewees, they can leverage this know-how in improving quality performance—which is a prerequisite for market growth—and thus ultimately achieve better economic profitability. This aspect can also be directly linked to social impacts, as the increased income generated by these entrepreneurs can be reinvested to improve the living conditions of their families and Indigenous community members, which has been highlighted in this study as a key motivational element for Native entrepreneurial engagement. (Amasinfuen, 2023; Cliver, 2023; Paz, 2023; Lee-Ross and Lashley, 2008; Peredo et al., 2004). In this vein, these efforts can help improve economic prospects and raise standards of living for Indigenous communities in Peru, thus being significant for halting cycles of poverty and inequality within the country.

5.4. Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The literature review and findings of this thesis have uncovered significant areas of opportunity for fostering the economic participation of Indigenous populations. Nations
and organizations have implemented various initiatives that can serve as guidelines for countries, such as Peru, to implement inclusive strategies for this sector of the economy.

APEC’s and the Australian Export Council’s GRIT program for export readiness has had a positive impact on Indigenous entrepreneurs in preparing them for international expansion and building a pool of Indigenous entrepreneurs from around the world. Providing them with instances to connect with Indigenous entrepreneurs from different countries can be a game-changer when entering new markets. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous peoples emphasize the need for external support programs and systems that can guide them in their business journey. However, it is essential to note that certain program requirements, such as language and internet connectivity, could limit the participation of some Native entrepreneurs in Peru. Therefore, it is suggested that Peru engage in more initiatives to organize export readiness capacity building programs within its national borders and the Spanish-speaking region. This can be a way of ensuring that these programs are culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of these communities. Similarly, it may involve partnering with local Indigenous leaders and organizations to develop curriculum and training materials, as well as providing ongoing mentorship and support for program participants. This point was also reiterated in the interview with Wright (2023), as she perceived stronger interactions among participants from the same country or similar backgrounds.

Furthermore, as presented in the literature review, both Australia and Canada have implemented meaningful governmental initiatives to increase the participation of Native businesses in public procurement. These procurement strategies for Indigenous businesses have also included specific entities that advocate for this initiative by raising awareness among federal procurement officers about the many benefits of supporting Indigenous enterprises. Along these lines, the interviews shed light on the impactful role that cooperatives and associations play in helping Indigenous entrepreneurs access better opportunities in the market—by assisting them with funding, capacity building, and resource accessibility, among other essential business development features.
Given this, Cliver’s Koshicoop Cooperative and Paz’s Sempa Association are examples of ways through which Native entrepreneurs can meet the quality and quantity standards demanded by agencies for public procurement. Similarly, considering the tendency of Indigenous peoples to live in remote areas, they can act as intermediaries to help them access new information and markets. Hence, alongside increasing support entities such as cooperatives and associations, Peru should consider implementing public procurement strategies targeted at its Indigenous population as a means of increasing the awareness of their ventures.

Another remarkable feature explored in the literature review regarding Australia and Canada is that their governments not only acknowledge Indigenous rights but have also taken significant strides to promote their involvement in the global economy. These nations have as a common practice to include special sections in their FTAs on ways to foster the participation of the Indigenous population in global trade. Similarly, the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (2017) identified FTAs as key instruments to provide Indigenous peoples with access to new markets, technologies, investment opportunities, and legal protections, which can lead to sustainable and economic growth for Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, research into Peruvian public policies revealed that Peru lacks a specific regulation or strategy to include Indigenous peoples in its FTAs. Therefore, in addition to the development of public policies at the trade level, Peru could learn from countries such as Australia and Canada in implementing FTAs focused on supporting Indigenous peoples’ engagement in international trade. In other words, the establishment of a comprehensive policy that encourages the incorporation of Indigenous ventures into the international market should be among Peru’s priorities.
6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Main Findings

Peru is a multicultural nation and has implemented several initiatives over the years to improve the socioeconomic conditions of its Indigenous communities. These programs have focused on education, conservation of traditional knowledge, infrastructure, and economic development, among others. Peru's 1993 Constitution includes various norms that regulate the specific rights of Indigenous peoples, yet there is no particular norm addressing Indigenous peoples' right to work or access to housing. Besides, the Vice Ministry of Interculturality and the Ombudsman’s Office play a role in guaranteeing a fair dialogue between indigenous communities and the Peruvian government. Aside from the legal framework, the Peruvian government has engaged in financing initiatives, such as Peru’s Law 27811 and IFAD, which support the economic development of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Peru, on the other hand, has not implemented strategies to include special sections targeted at Indigenous peoples in its FTAs.

Entrepreneurship has shown to be a powerful tool for Indigenous peoples in Peru to improve their economic prospects and raise their standard of living. It has allowed Native peoples to gradually move forward from their precarious living conditions and generate a positive intergenerational impact. As Indigenous entrepreneurs tend to engage in social entrepreneurship, they are able to reinvest their earnings and expertise in social works that benefit them and their families. Moreover, the further engagement of Indigenous women in the economy has allowed them to progressively tackle gender barriers such as occupational segregation, education, and gender-based violence. Besides, as Indigenous entrepreneurship tends to be closely tied to cultural heritage, it plays a significant role in expanding the use and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge. However, there are specific areas in which Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru need additional assistance to better integrate into the economy.

Firstly, increased support is essential to guarantee the integration of Indigenous entrepreneurs into local and global markets. Namely, corporations and associations
play an important role in paving a growth path for Indigenous-led enterprises. They can enable better access to tools such as targeted training and financing, which are essential for market expansion. Additionally, these support systems can help strengthen rural-urban linkages by acting as intermediaries between the market and Native entrepreneurs. The latter is significant as Indigenous communities often reside in remote areas and thus have limited networks with the larger community.

Second, the research found business registration to be a significant value-added feature for Indigenous enterprises. It can provide access to social benefits and labor rights, such as bank loans, training programs, and new markets. However, complex registration processes and widespread misinformation among Indigenous businesses were identified as key factors contributing to the prevalence of informality. In light of this, targeted support from government agencies, such as SUNAT, is necessary to tackle the vast informality of Natives entrepreneurs in Peru.

Lastly, training programs are an effective means of developing additional skills and building the capacity to engage in international trade for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Training programs, such as APEC’s and Export Council of Australia’s GRIT initiative, cover a wide range of fundamental export readiness topics and provide the opportunity for Indigenous entrepreneurs to build a supportive international ecosystem, which can be a game-changer when navigating the complexities of global trade. Apart from international mentorship programs, hosting training programs for Indigenous entrepreneurs within their countries can be beneficial in terms of building stronger connections within the local community. Moreover, they can help Native businesses develop skills specific to their local context, such as understanding local regulations and customs.

Overall, Peruvian public policy has made significant strides in addressing Indigenous people’s needs and rights in recent years. While these efforts have had some impact, there are many areas in which Peru can improve to ensure that these policies are effectively implemented and that its Indigenous communities are presented with the opportunity to better access local and international markets. Understanding their
characteristics and needs should be the basis for adopting public policies, and within this process, it is also crucial to be aware of best practices applied by other nations on this matter.

6.2. Implications for International Business

Although Indigenous peoples make up only 6.2% of the total population (ILO, 2019), they are a group of individuals that have the potential to generate a valuable contribution to the global economy. Their economic engagement is crucial, as it significantly contributes to the GDP of many countries, particularly developing nations (Manta et al., 2021; OECD, 2017). Besides, their further engagement in the economy can have impacts beyond just economic growth; it can also affect social justice, environmental justice, and equality issues. Moreover, as Native communities are heterogeneous, there is no definite path to further integrating them into the global market; it will most likely depend on the reality of each country and its Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, the findings of this research highlight several areas of opportunity that nations, such as Peru, can consider in fostering equitable trade.

The findings of this research are not solely limited to Peru; taking into account each country’s particular characteristics, policymakers around the world can consider them in the development of sound public policies that enable these disadvantaged actors to fully participate in economic and social development. The research found that providing the necessary resources for Indigenous entrepreneurs to grow in their local markets is a prerequisite for their engagement in international trade. To this end, nations should invest in initiatives tailored to Indigenous peoples, such as training, mentorship, and business funding. For instance, providing export readiness training programs can both help Native businesses engage in global trade, as well as build a supportive ecosystem of local and international Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Recognizing the vulnerability of Indigenous entrepreneurs is essential to address the barriers that limit their participation in the economy, and thus prevent their
marginalization from being a “source of economic inefficiency and waste” (Heath and Cheung, 2007, p.1). Hence, gaining a better understanding of the reality of Indigenous peoples is essential for policymakers, businesses, and citizens around the world to enable transformative change toward inclusivity.

6.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

There are some limitations in this study that should be taken into account. Firstly, it is worth noting that the study was limited to a specific geographic region and time period. It may well be that the experiences of Indigenous entrepreneurs in other parts of Peru or in other countries differ due to certain contextual factors. Therefore, these factors should be carefully considered when generalizing the findings of this study beyond the specific sample and context.

Moreover, the sample size for Indigenous peoples was rather small as it only included three Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru, with two of them being from the same community. As there is heterogeneity among Indigenous communities, the findings may be subject to biases and thus are limited to the sample of the study. Given this, interviewing a larger pool of Indigenous entrepreneurs from diverse communities could provide a more comprehensive understanding of their context. For example, it may be possible to identify subtle differences in the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs from different communities, which could have important implications for policy and practice. Along these lines, conducting in-person interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs would have been worthwhile as it may have allowed for a deeper understanding of their reality and ways of operating their businesses.

Additionally, Peruvian public policies regarding Indigenous peoples were not thoroughly addressed. A more in-depth investigation of the impact of public policies on Indigenous entrepreneurs in Peru could have provided a more practical perspective of the context, which would have helped propose more tailored recommendations. Following that, a qualitative analysis could be used in future studies to measure the effectiveness of
Peruvian public policies on the socioeconomic development of Indigenous peoples. This could involve gathering data on various aspects of Indigenous people's lives, including their access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

Since this study has identified training programs as a crucial instrument for Indigenous entrepreneurs to engage in global trade, further research can be conducted in this area. This research can evaluate different types of export readiness programs and their impact on assisting Indigenous businesses in exporting. This can be valuable in determining the appropriate tools that Indigenous entrepreneurs need to engage in global trade.

Furthermore, future studies could conduct an in-depth analysis of the approaches taken by a wider range of countries. Examining the specific strategies and initiatives implemented by different nations can lead to a better understanding of specific factors that have contributed to successful outcomes and identify possible areas for improvement. Similarly, including countries that are less experienced in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship can also be useful to avoid potential pitfalls in the future.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions to Blanca Paz and John Cliver

1. What is your role in the association/cooperative?
2. What was the main purpose for establishing the association/cooperative?
3. What has been your motivation for joining the association/cooperative?
4. When was the association/cooperative founded?
5. How many member enterprises does the association/cooperative have?
6. What are the requirements to be part of the association/cooperative?
   a. Are all the member enterprises required to sell all their products through the association/cooperative, or do they also have the possibility to sell their products individually?
7. What are the main means used to sell the products of Indigenous members?
8. What do you consider to be the main benefits of belonging to an association/cooperative for Indigenous-led enterprises?
9. Do you think that joining an association/cooperative helps Indigenous entrepreneurs have better access to the national and/or international markets?
   a. What have been your experiences in helping Indigenous entrepreneurs sell their products abroad?
   b. In addition, what other aspects do you think are important to facilitate the access of native community entrepreneurs to local and/or international markets?
10. What have been the main struggles or barriers that you have observed among Indigenous entrepreneurs to integrate into national and international markets? (e.g., lack of resources, training, digitalization, etc.)
   a. What kind of assistance do you consider that businesses led by Indigenous communities need in order to better integrate into these markets?
Appendix B: Interview Questions to Hilda Amasinfuen

1. May I ask to which community do you belong?

2. Business Details:
   a. What sector does your business operate in and what kind of products or services does it offer?
   b. What is your role in the company?
   c. What is the size of the business? Microenterprise; small enterprise; medium enterprise; large enterprise.
   d. How many years has your company been operating for?
   e. Is your business registered?
   f. How do you sell your products or services? For example: physical store, trade fairs, online platform, etc.
      i. Do you have access to online sales?
   g. What was the motivation behind establishing your company?

3. Do you consider that the culture of your Indigenous community has any influence on your business practices? For example: values, beliefs, ancestral designs, ancestral work practices.
   a. Do the workers of the company belong to the same community or is it a family business?
      i. Yes: What do you think is the advantage of having workers from your community/family in your company?

4. In which areas/regions/countries do you sell your products or services?
   a. If already exporting: How did you manage to enter the foreign market? What would you say were the main aspects that allowed you to export?

5. Do you have the intention to expand your company to other regions of Peru or to other countries?
   a. If no: Is there any specific reason why not (e.g. language barriers or lack of knowledge of legal procedures)?
   b. If yes:
i. What have been the main difficulties or barriers that your company has had when expanding within the national and international market (e.g., lack of resources, training, digitalization)?

ii. Do you believe that your gender or belonging to a Native community has had an influence on the difficulties you face as an entrepreneur? If so, in what way?

iii. What kind of support would you need in order to be able to export?

6. Have you received any support for your business? If so, who has given you this support (Municipality, State, private entities, investors, etc.)?
   a. Training programs; Financing or marketing; Access to fairs or virtual platforms; Other.

7. What experiences or recommendations could you pass on to other indigenous entrepreneurs who wish to form businesses to trade locally and/or internationally?

Appendix C: Interview Questions to Angela Wright

1. Tell me a bit about your background/experience in working with Indigenous-led businesses.

2. I am aware you have led a few training programs targeted at Indigenous entrepreneurs. Can you share what the specific purpose of organizing those programs has been?
   a. What is the process of organizing these types of training programs? Do you receive support from organizations or other entities?
   i. Have you perceived noticeable gender differences among Indigenous Peoples and their forms of entrepreneurship?
      1. If yes: do gender differences among Indigenous Peoples have an impact on how the training programs are organized or who they are targeted at?
b. Are there any requirements for Indigenous-led enterprises to participate in these programs?

c. Specifically, what type of training is provided for them?

d. What do you think is the importance of providing training programs for Indigenous entrepreneurs?
   i. What type of impact does it have on Indigenous entrepreneurs?

e. Based on your experience, what are some key struggles that you have identified among Indigenous-led enterprises to do business in domestic and international markets?

3. Finally, what experiences or recommendations could you pass on to other organizations or governments who wish to support Indigenous-led businesses in achieving local and global market growth?