

Belgian Entrepreneurship Research Day (BERD) 2024
Manuscript Abstract

Unpacking the Influence of Students' Migration on Opportunity Recognition Capability

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Full reference

Branca, E., Vanderstraeten, J., Slabbinck, H., Delzenne, E., & Ismail, R. (2024). Unpacking the Influence of Students' Migration on Opportunity Recognition Capability. *Belgian Entrepreneurship Research Day (BERD)*, Brussels, 25 April 2024.

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how migration experience shapes opportunity recognition capability through a sequential capability-formation process. While prior research emphasizes knowledge enrichment from cross-cultural exposure, we argue that migration's transformative power lies in cultivating adaptive cognitive resources - Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Resilience - that support interpretive flexibility and sustained engagement with uncertain conditions. These capabilities enable individuals to broaden their perceptual frame, manage ambiguity constructively, and maintain exploratory effort: processes that are central to recognizing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Design/methodology/approach: We analyze data from the 2023 Belgian wave of the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey (GUESSS; n = 5,320). Using latent-variable structural equation modeling with DWLS estimation for ordinal indicators, we test a sequential mediation model linking migration experience to opportunity recognition via CQ and Resilience.

Findings: Migration experience positively influences CQ across all categories, and CQ in turn enhances both Resilience and opportunity recognition capability. Resilience further influences opportunity recognition, creating a sequential pathway from migration to entrepreneurial cognition. Indirect effects through CQ and Resilience are significant for all migration groups, indicating that these capabilities largely explain the migration–opportunity link. For first- and second-generation migrants, the relationship is almost entirely mediated by CQ and Resilience, underscoring the role of capability development in translating migration into entrepreneurial cognition. For international students, additional direct effects remain, suggesting that contextual advantages - such as access to host-country networks and institutional resources - complement capability-based mechanisms.

Originality/value: This study reframes migration's entrepreneurial relevance from an information-accumulation view to a capability-formation account. By integrating CQ and Resilience into immigrant entrepreneurship research, it demonstrates how migration fosters cognitive and self-regulatory capacities that underpin opportunity recognition, offering a novel perspective on the micro-foundations of entrepreneurial behavior.