

Growth Aspirations of Pukhtoon Women Entrepreneurs in the Household Context

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The intertwining of gender, entrepreneurship and household context highlights the importance of understanding female entrepreneurship in its entirety. Current research study attempts to explicate the growth aspirations of the Pukhtoon women entrepreneurs in Peshawar, Pakistan through a qualitative lens. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis was carried out. The results show that contextual forces at play within the household have significant impact on the growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs. The regulative pillar of the household shapes the overall resource structure for the Pukhtoon women entrepreneurs however; the functioning of normative/cognitive pillar limits their growth aspirations.

Keywords: Female entrepreneurs, growth aspirations, qualitative thematic analysis, household context

Enactment of entrepreneurship cannot be explicated in the vacuum therefore, situatedness of entrepreneurs in the 'context' is essential to understanding the phenomenon. The household/family context was traditionally treated as a separate sphere from the entrepreneurs but recently it is gaining ground as the nurturing force of entrepreneur. Household acts as an institution for administering the human, social and economic resources for entrepreneurs (Wheelock & Oughton, 1996). Individual's behaviors and their actions are shaped by their social and economic context, commonly known as 'institutions'. Institutions are factors that "define what actors can do, what is expected from them, or they must do, and what is advantageous for them, in this way they give stability and predictability to economic interaction" (Dallago, 2000: 305). Scott (2008) states that "institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life". Regulative elements refer to enforceable and codifiable contractual laws that form the basic structure of the household. Normative pillar refers to the norms and values of the household whereas, cognitive elements refers to the internalized belief of the members of the household that structure their socialization experiences.

The regulative pillar of the household determines 'who' can form a household such as formal rules of marriage, residence, partnership and co-habitation in the society. In a Muslim society the household is formed by lineage or by marriage according to the *Sharia* law¹. On the other hand normative aspects and cultural cognitions also stem from the Islamic prescriptions such as gender wise role specifications and resource allocation (Islamic inheritance law and *hiba*² rules). Furthermore, based on the family's intrinsic normative structure every household develops a different value system (Georgas, 2006; Allen & Truman, 2016). The paper studies the households to which female entrepreneurs belong in the '*Pathan*³' society shaping their growth aspirations.

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¹ It is religious law forming part of Islamic tradition. The rules are derived from Quran and Hadith (narrations of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

² Arabic term which means 'gift', in this paper it refers to particular rules of 'gift' of property to women in Islam.

³ Also called Pushtuns, is an ethno-linguistic group with majority in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan

A household perspective implies that one views entrepreneur within the context of his or her immediate family unit, implicitly recognizing the blurred boundaries between the business sphere and the private sphere. For this reason current research study adopts the Scott's construct of institutions to understand the household and the role it plays in shaping the growth aspirations of the female entrepreneurs in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Women's personal abilities and aspirations, along with the norms and values of the household that determine women's status and access to resources in the household, in turn shape their conception of growth. The growth aspirations are conceptualized as inhabiting within the household of the entrepreneur, but they are strongly connected to the personal characteristics of the female entrepreneurs as well.

Choices of Growth Shaped By Familial/Household Context

Gender based differences have been argued to prevail in the growth and performance of entrepreneurial ventures for several reasons (Nilsson et al., 2010 as seen in Haugum et al., 2011, Marlow and Carter, 2004; Morris et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2009; Watson and Robinson, 2003; Welter et al., 2014 as seen in Modarresi et al., 2017). Differences in the socialisation experiences of women and the life cycle stage cause low growth of female owned enterprises (Coleman, 2016, Brush et al., 2009; Aramand, 2012). The literature has given no importance to the subjectivity of growth that requires an understanding from the point of the view of the actor, that is, the female entrepreneur in this case. In order to take an individual's perspective on growth to understand the dynamics of growth orientation of female entrepreneurs the study adopts the concept of 'growth aspirations' (Delmar & Wiklund, 2008, Bulanova et al., 2016).

Growth is recently studied by the researchers as a 'choice' of female entrepreneurs (Chandler & Hanks, 1993; Bulanova, et al., 2016). Riebe (2003) and Venugopal (2016) argue that profit is not the main motive behind the growth ambitions of female entrepreneurs rather preference for independence and flex work-life schedule is their main drive. Socio-cultural influences play an important role in taking the growth/no growth decision by women (Aldrich, Reece & Dubini 1989; Modarresi et al., 2017). Though the literature offers a multitude of explanations of growth ambitions of female entrepreneurs, ranging from the personal to the institutional, social and organisational factors but it does not offer the alternate perspective to conceptualize the impact of socio-cultural and religious influences (Modarresi et al., 2017). In order to meet conflicting demands from professional and personal lives women enter selfemployment arenas (Cliff, 1998). This conflict can affect their growth ambitions adversely. Furthermore, the cultural conditionings, gender role of women requiring allocating more time to households, and resistance from family prove to be significant obstacles to growth (Still & Timms, 2000; McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). Gender roles' definitions vary in varying cultures and societies suggesting variations in growth conceptions among women entrepreneurs. Therefore, there is a need to recognize the heterogeneity within the group of women entrepreneurs to discover their particular growth/no-growth choices (Hakim, 2002). The preference theory of growth, proposed by Hakim, recognizes the perceptual nature of choices made by women regarding their ventures. Perceptions and experiences are interlinked because the former represent summation of the latter over a certain period of time (Hakim, 2006). The preference theory categorizes women entrepreneurs into; home centered, adaptive and work centered women entrepreneurs. Establishing and running the entrepreneurial ventures for home centered women entrepreneurs is not a priority as compared to work centered women who would be interested in the growth of ventures, whereas, adaptive women struggle to maintain work-life balance. These indicative categories hint at the growth preferences of female entrepreneurs.

Aspirations act as the strong predictor of outcomes (Cassar, 2007; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003; Bhardwaj & Mittal, 2017) therefore, this study adopts the preference theory of growth to explain the impact of household institution on the growth orientation of Pakistani female entrepreneurs. The growth aspirations are considered in terms of intentions, motivations and familial mediations of Pakistani female entrepreneurs. The figure below hints at the nature of exploration of the study;

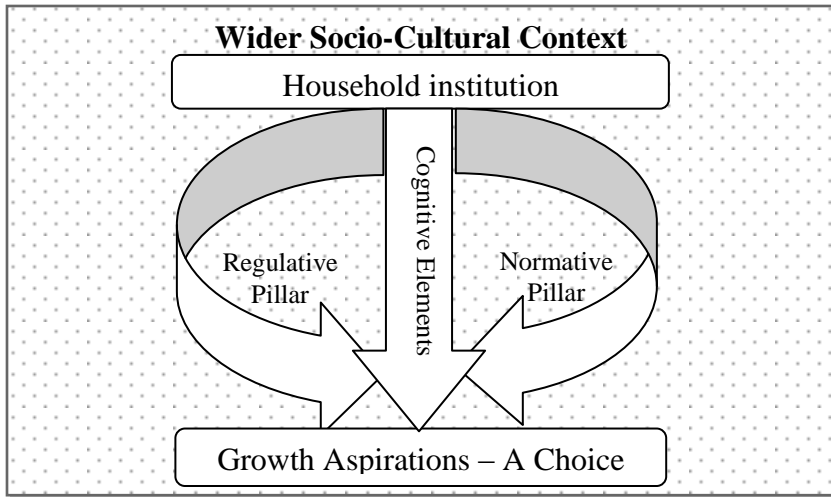


Figure 1: The Choice of Growth Aspirations Shaped by Household

Household as an immediate context has bearing on the growth aspirations of women owned enterprises as it legitimizes women in their traditional roles and allow them to create ventures into sectors with less barriers to entry, that do not require prior business experience, and can be easily managed with domestic responsibilities (Welter, 2004; Coleman, 2016; & Brush et al., 2006.) Generally, women choose to stay small as growth demands may conflict with their lifestyle (Dalborg et al., 2012) and cause issues of work-life balance (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Hence, the dynamics of household institution in terms of power relations, inter and intra household connections, resource possession and the social status in the wider culture strongly influence the growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Further, it has also been observed that development and growth of the business owes to the household structure and relations within the households (Sanghera, 2002).

Locational Context of the Study

The study is conducted in the spatial context of metropolitan city of Peshawar. Peshawar is the capital of province Khyber Pukhtoonkhawa (KPK), where predominantly *Pukhtoons* are greater in number. They share the land with people from other cultures and subcultures also; however, colours of *Pukhtoon* culture are prominent on the canvas of the province. The *Pukhtoon* culture promotes gender segregation as both men and women have separate spaces, termed as public (for men) and private (for women). The life of women is normally built around the household and family. The culture of *Pardah*⁴ (veil) and the notion of *izzat*⁵ (honour) significantly influence women while they are opting for a career (Roomi & Parrott, 2008). Women in *Pukhtoon* society are empowered within the household domain but they are intrinsically politically, socially and economically disadvantaged, particularly in terms of ownership of the resources. Those who wish to opt for and are allowed to have a career path; they must obtain consent of the *Mehrams*⁶. Due to these unsaid rules from among several women operating home based ventures only, a few can make it to the mainstream business (Harper & Arora, 2005). The proportion of selfemployed women is very low in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa which can be attributed to strict adherence of social members to the values that keep women veiled and away from economic sphere.

⁴ *Pardah* basically is seclusion of men and women on the basis of their gender, limit females to the domestic sphere and males are given the responsibility to provide family with the necessities life.

⁵ *Izzat* is the notion that vests family’s honour in women, which means that to protect family’s honour and good reputation, ‘they’ must be guarded (Shaheed 1990).

⁶ Male members of the family related by law or by blood/lineage such as husband, brothers, father (Barakat & Wardell, 2002; Qadeer, 2014).

Method

In order to generate an in depth understanding of growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs in the complex context of household necessitated the use of interpretive multiple case study method (McDonough and McDonough, 1997; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Stake 2013). Case studies are tailor made for understanding the real life phenomena in a specific context where other methods may not be much effective. "Case study method enables a **researcher** to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships" (Zainal 2007, p.1-2). For current research multiple case study method (Stake, 2013) is employed since the context for each case is different (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and it allowed the researchers with the maximum instrumentality to provide a detailed and indepth answers to our research focus. A multiple case study also allowed us to analysis not only within the case but across the case too (Yin, 2002) which further elaborated how different each individual's experience could be or a more or less similar contexts and situations.

Under the multiple case design, respondents were selected through criterion, purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Stake, 2013; Flick, 2009; Patton, 1990, Stake 2013). As there is no established database of female entrepreneurs maintained in Peshawar, or if any existed, no access was allowed due to confidentiality of data, therefore, researchers initially asked their contacts for referrals of female entrepreneurs in Peshawar and whenever the sample was interviewed she was requested to refer female entrepreneurs in her contacts. In this way the case book of female entrepreneurs (samples) was prepared. The criterion was set to select the sample/female entrepreneurs for the study, that is, a female who has set up her business and is actively operating it for at least a minimum of 3 years (Carter and Shaw, 2006; Allen & Truman, 2016) in the informal sector, (household) in the geographical boundaries of Peshawar. The inclusion criterion is based on the theoretical definition of entrepreneurship, gender, with a business in the household sector and geographical location of the entrepreneurs. Furthermore, in a multiple case study design, the sample size is not predefined, however, the number of case should be enough to offer a clear elaboration of the case itself and the contextual settings its embedded into. In the current study, 10 cases were purposively selected.

The respondents were between 25 to 45 years of age and married. All of these women started their business after getting married and had children too at the time of startup. The participants of this research have their business in services sectors and were managing their business from home. Majority of these women were from lower middle class where their businesses were providing financial support and subsistence to the family thus ensuring the survival of the families. Nevertheless these women entrepreneurs were necessity entrepreneurs.

In-depth interviews with ten (10) respondents were conducted at their business sites. Respondents were asked to narrate the stories of their experience with the business. By inviting the openness in the responses researchers aimed to get detailed responses that later in the analyses helped in generating diverse themes. The emphasis was on the experiences relating the entrepreneurial venture and multifaceted aspects of the same. In order to gain the insights and details no questions were posed, though triggers were used where respondents needed a direction during the interviews.

In order to generate insightful patterns of growth aspirations of embedded entrepreneurs, qualitative thematic analysis was carried out on thick qualitative data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In qualitative research data collection and analysis takes place simultaneously. Data analysis begins with transcription (converting talk into text). Interviews conducted with the entrepreneurs were transcribed using express scribe. Transcribed interviews were read several times to get familiarity with the data before the coding process. "Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means" (Charmaz, 2006:46). In the second round of coding, initial codes were read several times with the intention to merge the similar codes and move towards higher order themes. Themes and sub-themes that demonstrated similar patterns were then

merged together to form a higher order category representing the essence of the study i-e growth aspirations of Pukhtoon women in the household context.

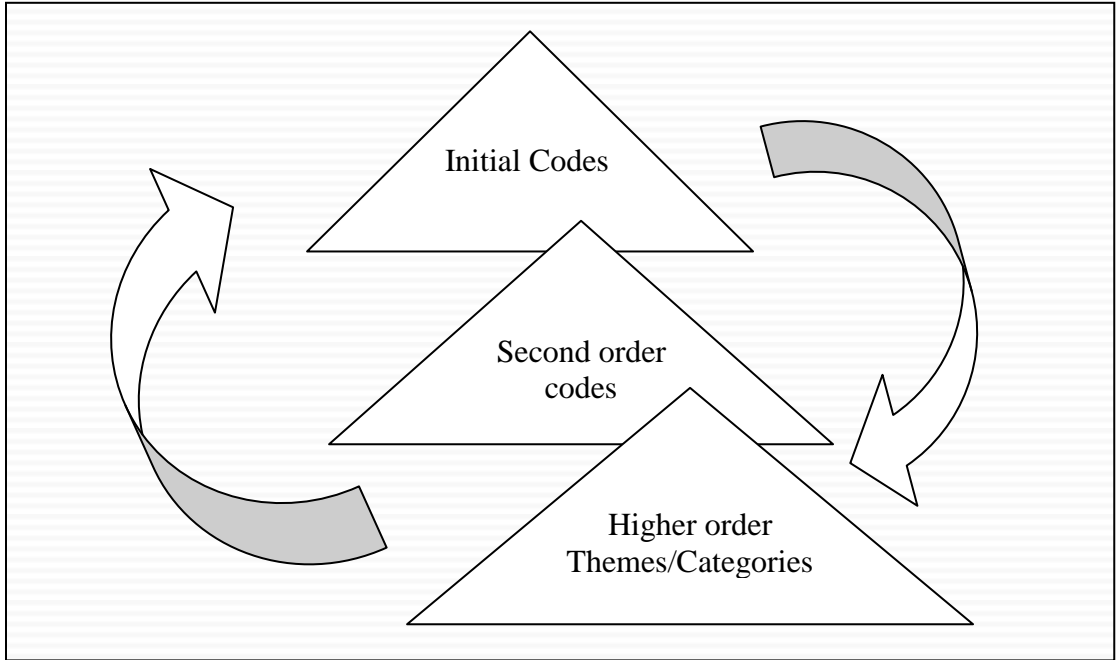


Figure 02: The data analysis process

The figure visualizes the steps in analysis process and also portrays the iterative nature of the qualitative data analysis, leading to conclusions. This process has given us 06 themes/categories that have been described below. Respondents’ actual quotations served as evidence to represent their voices (Wolcott, 1990).

Thematic Description of Women Entrepreneurship in Household Institutional Context

This section discusses the themes emerged from the process of qualitative data analysis. Data revealed women entrepreneurs and their enterprises are interlinked and interlocked within their households, and are strongly influenced by the dynamics of this institution. The embeddedness of women and their enterprises render them and their ventures reliant on the household and the power dynamics at play in this gendered institution. The growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs are shaped by household norms, cultural prescriptions and their subjective experiences of self and their gender roles in the household and society. This interplay of cultural dynamics and personal preferences leaves women with two main options- 1) a sacrifice if growth is unachievable; or 2) a carefully managed growth.

Strong influence of Normative Pillar on growth aspirations

Household plays different roles in different stages of venture, it may be supportive in the creation of the venture (either due to financial necessity or due to assertive role of females) but they in most cases set a threshold beyond which they would not like the businesses to thrive. In *Pukhtoon* culture a progressive, independent and financially sound woman challenges the self-respect of men.

“And secondly something which hurts me is when my husband discourages me, I will not say bad against him it might be his age factor or he is retired so having some inferiority complex like I am working and he is sitting idle. But sometimes he will just speak off, and this is highly discouraging” (FE 10. 311-314).

The words of the respondent show that 'male-ego' of the related men (husband, father and/or brother) can put a break on the growth aspirations of the entrepreneurs.

Accommodating growth aspirations in the socio-spatial construct of household: Women being the home maker and care taker of family stay dependent on family members for business operations. Growth of the venture is planned within familial limits and according to the social norms. The conditional freedom is also a subjective phenomenon that varies among Pukhtoon female entrepreneurs; those from relatively conservative households are given conditional permission to venture out. The conditions many include restricted timings to business, sharing burden of household chores with others at household, as well as being home based business.

"I am not allowed to open a shop or open my own studio somewhere in the market. Yes! I want to do it on a large scale but I am not permitted to do it commercially although ...so whenever, I will be doing a larger setup I will be doing it from home" (FE3 401-404).

In the above quote the reliance of the entrepreneur can be seen through the expression of permission from the household for expanding her venture. The entrepreneur is scared that not abiding to the saying of the husband might result in withdrawal of his support to her venture and may disturb her married life too.

Constrained independence to growth

Pukhtoon women often lack the financial resources. Their ventures are financed by family members; hence, their decisions related to the business have to be in consensus and approval of their investors.

"...it is always at the end of the day my decision but I have to look for the advice of my father in law and husband who have invested in it" (FE3. 612-614).

For *pukhtoon* women entrepreneurs, lack of finances seems to be the major constraint to growth aspirations. Families get involved in business by investing the finances in two ways; active participation in the business operations and (dis)approval of business related decisions including growth.

Dual responsibility hinder growth aspirations

Women entrepreneurs develop a sense of 'self' as a result of culturally and religiously oriented socialisation processes at various life stages, through interaction with their significant others. The subjective sense of self is gendered as reflected in their interviews.

"I don't want to take it to a very large scale; if I want I can take it to that level as well because I am in contact with some fashion magazines and they want me to display some of my stuff in their magazines but with this your work load increases immensely while my priorities are my husband, my children, my home and my family so they will get neglected then" (FE9. 207-211).

Also if women feel that their personal mores are in conflict with the external world of work, they prefer to take care of their feelings and their family's honour. Women want to be in control of their businesses hence, they would want to expand it to limit where they can easily handle it with their other responsibilities and strike a work-life balance. This can be traced back to the start-up motivation and venturing experience of the entrepreneurs. Necessity entrepreneurs, are tired of their dual roles and have low growth aspirations. However, if they positively connect to their entrepreneurial identity to grow their businesses and have familial support, they have high growth aspirations.

Reliance on significant others act as growth impediment

It is not only about the perceptions of traditional gender roles but perceptions of personal capability of the entrepreneurs also shape growth aspirations. One of the respondents narrates that;

"Like the international order I got, for example Canada, America and London etc. All those Pakistani people that are known to us in these countries we send their dresses from here and this is all done via

computer but the children help me in that, as I do not understand these new technologies, I tried to learn it but found it hard to be learnt, so I depend for this on my girls, now my daughter is married so I had to let go these international clients so like this if I want even then I cannot expand at my own" (FE4. 155-160).

If entrepreneurs perceive themselves less capable due to lack of technical know-how or human capital or due to the support required for a large scale business, they prefer to remain small.

Mistrust on others hinders geographical expansion of business

The cultural norms of sex segregation and religious rulings of *Purdah* do not allow unaccompanied mobility of women; hence, in most cases women find it hard to extend their ventures to other cities.

"I have offers for extension like offers to have a branch in Islamabad but I am a female and so I cannot trust everyone who will sit there I mean that if I had a brother or any other relative I would have given them permission. We can have branches of it, like, this will be the head office but for that I cannot trust anyone" (FE9. 405-408)

Words of the respondent above show clear trust deficit on others that causes hindrance in the process of ventures growth.

Discussion and Conclusion

Findings from the present research reveal a multidimensional construct of growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs in Peshawar, shaped by their respective household institution. The growth aspirations of women are shaped and influenced by family traditions and cultural norms.

It has been established that the start-up motivations of entrepreneurs exert significant influences on the growth aspirations of women (Delmar & Wiklund, 2008; Ettle & Welter, 2010). Studies conclude that necessity entrepreneurs have low aspirations to grow their ventures, once the livelihood is secured (Morris et al., 2006). On the other hand, opportunity entrepreneurs have high growth aspirations (Block & Wagner, 2010). The growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs in the *Pukhtoon* culture are the outcome of both household-imposed restrictions and socio-cultural and religious constraints.

Present findings support and extend Cliff's (1998) assertion that women entrepreneurs establish a self-imposed threshold beyond which they do not prefer to grow their ventures due to the risks associated with the growth. This research reveals that in Peshawar, establishment of threshold is associated with their primary role in household, and level of support obtained from the family. For women entrepreneurs in Peshawar the reduced level of available support is reflected in the form of unmatched human capital, lack of resources, limited mobility, conditional permission to business operation, constraints on time, and lack of emotional support (Modarresi et al., 2017). Hence, the choices women entrepreneurs make are more relational than rational.

This research study brings new insights into the growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs by embedding it in the household and wider culture. If entrepreneurship is perceived as a desirable and feasible act by the family of the entrepreneur, they not only extend support to make the venture creation possible but encourage them for growth by providing them and allowing them to exploit the opportunities. However, it only happens if the personal desirability is in harmony with familial expectations and cultural norms and values. Such findings are not in harmony with the Hakim's (2002) preference theory of growth, because for Pukhtoon women entrepreneurs growth/no growth option is dictated by the powerful household institutions. The study highlights the importance of household as an assertive institution that shapes the direction of female owned ventures in a particular context, that is, deciding upon the business sector, business growth/expansion, business site, and working hours.

Furthermore, research highlights the tendency in *Pukhtoon* women to depend only on *Mehram*⁷ that hinders their growth in terms of geographical expansion that owes to the trust deficit. It is debatable if there is a general tendency in women to perform all business operations on their own instead of delegating the authority to other. In current research their low growth orientation is attributed to restricted mobility, lesser control over the resources and their personal attribute of taking authority and responsibility that does not let them delegate the authority to others, therefore, their businesses lack the potential to grow beyond geographical boundaries.

Limitations

The present research provides an overarching view of women's entrepreneurial actions in Peshawar (Muslim culture). However, it is not beyond human and literary limitations. The current study also has few limitations. At the time of data collection, the Peshawar city was suffering from political unrest due to which some of the respondents, whose interviews may have generated deeper insights, refused to participate. Also, the lack of the organized data did not allow the researchers to reach many participants. Furthermore, since the current study is a qualitative study, thus the results are generalizable only in the similar contexts. The participants of this study were those who already had been in the business for more than 3 years, thus it only depicts the picture of the successful entrepreneurs.

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⁷ Men related by blood or by law

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