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**A THEORETICAL MODEL ON THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS' SUCCESS. A CROSS-COUNTRY STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

In this study the authors explored the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success within a cross-country context. This is a theoretical research based on literature review into relevant articles published in significant and high ranked journals, in the last decades (2011-2019). The findings discovered many types of cultures across countries, with multiple aspects. Although, the meaning of success has both qualitative and quantitative connotations, the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success whilst seems to be positive in some parts of the world, is predominantly negative in the majority of countries. Thus, women in general, and women entrepreneurs particularly, encountered multiple cultural barriers which affect negatively their intention towards entrepreneurship opportunities and entrepreneurial success. The study proposed a theoretical model for the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success. Although, the research presents some limits and further empirical research is recommended to test the model, the study is a contribution to knowledge, theory and practice, and designs suggestions for policy makers and recommendations for Governments in approaching the cultural element.

Keywords: Culture, Gender, Entrepreneurial Success, Women Entrepreneurs, Women, Cross-country context

Word Count: 6963

Track: Entrepreneurship. Women Entrepreneurs

A THEORETICAL MODEL ON THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' SUCCESS. A CROSS COUNTRIES STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing number of women entrepreneurs across the world, and studies confirm their contribution to the national and global economy (Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017). *Women's entrepreneurship* is the process of creating and developing an enterprise by women entrepreneurs who own such entity, and are either sole owners or partners in business; women entrepreneurs attach to enterprises their characteristics and their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Tomos, 2017; Clements and Spinks, 2001; Drucker, 2015; Penrose, 1980). However, there are disputes regarding women's entrepreneurship phenomenon and various factors impeding the development of women's entrepreneurship (Dvoulety, 2017). Thus, one of the factors regards the effect of culture on women entrepreneurs' success. Although, there are studies discussing the role of cultural element (Aramand, 2012; Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2018; Colina, Benito-Osorio and Rueda-Armengot, 2014) for women entrepreneurs across the world, there are still gaps in knowledge and questions to be addressed in this regard (Roomi, Rehman and Henry, 2018). Therefore, empirical and theoretical research must be conducted on the impact of culture on women entrepreneurs' success, in various parts of the world (Henry, Orser, Coleman and Foss, 2017).

The main research question for this study is "What is the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success?" within the contexts of a dual qualitative and quantitative interpretation of success and a cross-country context (Angel, Jenkins and Stephens, 2018; Rennemo, Widding and Bogren, 2017). This study addresses this gap in knowledge by proposing a theoretical model on the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success. This is a theoretical model, which offers insights into various aspects of culture, placing emphasis upon traditional and national culture, with its implications for women entrepreneurs' success. The study is a contribution to theory by designing a theoretical model on the effects of culture, which increases our understanding and expands knowledge. Moreover, the study is a contribution to entrepreneurship and culture theories. Further, the study is a contribution to practice, by raising concerns about the role of cultural element for women entrepreneurs' success and proposing a framework that brings understanding and helps designing suitable policies for women entrepreneurs in different parts of the world.

The aim of this study is to explore the role of cultural element for women entrepreneurs across countries and to bring light onto various effects that culture can have upon women entrepreneurs. In this respect, the study attempts to discover the relationships and the effects of culture upon gender in the context of women entrepreneurship and within various countries context. The research method was based on comprehensive systematic and unsystematic literature review conducted on relevant journal articles published in the last decade. The purpose is to draw on cultural theory and its role for women entrepreneurs' success. Further, the role of culture within various country context was investigated by building on previous theoretical and empirical research studies that identified women entrepreneurs' success from

both growth platforms: qualitative and quantitative (Dalborg, 2015). This research examines in a cross-country context, differences in cultural impact upon women entrepreneurs' success. The authors propose the theoretical model in view to advance the theory building upon culture, entrepreneurship and gender in an integrative manner (Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017). There are cultural differences, and previous studies confirmed, that cultural contexts, regional and national culture affect enterprises and their success (Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017).

The study has the following structure: introduction, theoretical background, research method, findings with a holistic view of the proposed Theoretical Model and conclusion. The theoretical section comprises the collection of theoretical and empirical perspectives on gender and culture, perspectives on women entrepreneurs' success and growth, the entrepreneurial culture in the Western European countries and across the world, recent perspectives upon women entrepreneurs in developing countries, and the impact of culture on women's entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Women entrepreneurship research highlighted the importance of interpreting enterprise success from both perspectives, qualitative and quantitative. Consequently, concerning women entrepreneurship, the latest research shifted from the quantitative to a qualitative approach to success and business growth (Rennemo, Widding and Bogren, 2017). In the conclusions, the authors present implications and recommendations for further research. The next section introduces the theoretical background of the study.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Culture and Gender

In the attempt to define the concept 'Culture', the authors of this study found that many other authors described the term as the most comprehensive and linguistically complex English word (Williams, 1983, in: Storey, 2006). Although, there are multiple meanings, this study focuses only on a specific meaning and defines 'Culture' as "a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" (Storey, 2006, p. 1). The second aspect of culture, which is essential for the advancement and direction undertaken by this research, is the 'Popular Culture'. This is defined by Williams (1983) as "the culture made by the people for themselves" and is considered inferior to other types of culture, "whilst is accepted and approved by many" (Storey, 2006, p. 6). Hence, culture views female as inferior to men (Tomos et al., 2019). In view to understand this second interpretation of Culture, it is advisable for the authors to mention and present a crucial component of culture, which is 'ideology'. Thus, ideology refers to ideas expressed by certain people, in other words, ideology provides meanings for words and practices (Storey, 2006). Further, popular culture is resembled to a 'cultural decline' and has a connotation of exclusion; and not only this, but expresses a sense of a conflict between 'society' and 'masses' and embeds 'social differences' (Bennett, 1982b, in: Storey, 2006, p. 25). Another component, strictly incorporated into 'Culture', which needs to be explained, is 'hegemony'. Hegemony is described in the Oxford Dictionary (1999, p. 660) as "leadership or dominance". Gramsci depicts hegemony as the characteristic of a group of people who speak on behalf of the society as a whole, but instead they represent their own ideas and interests (Storey, 2006). The last term to be introduced as essential to the meaning of Culture is *Discourse*. Storey (2006) used the definition provided by Foucault. According to Foucault, discourse "enables [to speak], constraints [what one can say] and constitutes [one

as the speaking subject]”]; in addition brings together ‘knowledge’ and ‘power’ and creates ‘realities’ (Storey, 2006, p. 101).

The second concept crucial for this research and used in this section is ‘Gender’. Tomos (2017, p.73) argued that gender is “a consequence of culture”. Oxford Dictionary (1999, p. 590) defines the concept as “the state of being male or female”. Gender started to be researched as a concept in the 1980s and Feminism was the school of thoughts that placed gender at the centre of its research (Storey, 2006). There are four strands/theories of ‘feminism’: radical feminists, liberal feminists, Marxist feminists and Dual Feminists system. The *radical feminists* explain women oppression as the result of the patriarchal system and due to their power over women. The *Marxist feminists* describe gender as the result of the oppression in Capitalism. The *Liberal feminists* incline to present gender in terms of men and their prejudice against women through exclusions from social and economic life of society. The *Dual System theory* represents a combined theory (Marxist and radical feminists) (Storey, 2006). The dual system theory confirms previous research by Hudson (1994). Ibid (1994) argued about gender division of labour, male waged work and female domestic work. Tomos (2017) suggested that culture determines ‘segregation’ in self-employment, and between male and female, and impacts upon gender and women entrepreneurship. According to Hudson (1994) the main actors who created a continuity in female/gender discrimination, by ignoring her contribution to family, society, economy and social life were the historical inheritance, the Capitalist System, Trade Union, political parties and finally, the national state through regulatory frameworks that excluded women. Hence, such realities unwisely designed by history and the capitalist system, and sustained by political parties, trade union together with the state, were conducive to a *Culture of dependency* for women, and a *hegemonic culture* of waged labour for men, and ultimately, to a system of social control (Hudson, 1994).

Since the 1950s, the demand for mass production of commodities encountered massive decline and so called ‘social fabrics’ were also in decline (Hudson, 1994). By 1970s, the speed of declined increased and mass production system was replaced by international division of labour and global changes in the location of production (Dicken, 1990, in: Hudson, 1994). Hence, the emergence of knowledge based activities and business services targeting an economic and geographical regeneration, as well as the birth of a new class and social groups with all the advantages (Hudson, 1994). In this transformative process, the *enterprise culture* became pivotal (Ibid., 1994). Consequently, it became imperative that the old working class will accept self-employment and the *enterprise culture*, which automatically required new skills and knowledge and a new regulatory and institutional framework (Hudson, 1994). However, instead of the old working class being involved, evidence indicated that immigrants and the mass of unemployed people proved to be more entrepreneurial than them (Hudson, 1994). Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates the *lack of gender equality in entrepreneurial development*, and an entrepreneurial culture that excluded women from this process. The main factors impeding women involvement in entrepreneurial culture were the *cultural history* and the contemporary *politico-economic environment* (Hudson, 1994; Tomos, 2017). Besides the facts mentioned above, other factors were considered as determinants for the shift from large corporations to small enterprises and entrepreneurial culture: technological change with flexible technologies, global networks, the diversification of consumer demand and the role of international, regional and local institutions in economic development (globalization process) (Tödtling, 1994).

It is essential to emphasise the differing cultures, across organisations and nations. Thus, Handy (1985, p. 185) defines *cultures* as “a set of values and norms and beliefs, reflected in different structures and systems”. Further, there are *organisational* and *national cultures*.

“[Cultures indicate] *how values and beliefs are shaped by history and tradition, by climate, the kinds of work people do, the size of the country and its prosperity*”

(Handy, 1985, p. 185).

Cultures are influenced by the past and the present climate, by technology, people, their work and structures and systems (Handy, 1985). It is supposed that cultures transmit “a way of life and set of norms”, and express beliefs regarding the way “authority should be exercised, people awarded and controlled” (Handy, 1985, p. 186). *National* and *organisational cultures* are formed by hegemonic groups in a nation or organisation (Handy, 1985). According to Handy (1985) there are four types of cultures: power, role, task and person culture. The *Person Culture* – refers to a system where the culture inside an organisation serves only the individuals inside that organisation or that particular structure. The last type of culture described here is the *National Culture*. The most comprehensive definition was provided by Hofstede and was based on data collections from 40 countries. These are the main types of *national cultures*: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism; masculinity and femininity (Handy, 1985; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Tomos, 2017).

Lasserre (2012) argued that the national cultural differences are the result of a range of factors: country culture, organisational and management culture, and economic culture. Thus, Hofstede (1980) found four dimensions of national cultures: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity. According to Hofstede (1980), *power distance* is an aspect of culture. This regards how people agree and accept inequality in ‘power distribution’, whether they respect authority or ask for a more democratic style. *Individualism* is another aspect of culture, specific to Western European countries, which is described as a confident style of individuals who care more for their own interests, whilst in *Collectivism* individuals care more for group interests (Hofstede, 1980). The third aspect of national culture is *uncertainty avoidance*. This is defined as the decline of ambiguity, which is opposed to the acceptance of uncertainty, like in USA and Sweden. The last aspect of culture is masculinity versus femininity. Whilst *masculinity* means accepted competitiveness, femininity is interpreted as a negative aspect, which is based on relationship construction (Hofstede, 1980, in: Lasserre, 2012).

According to research conducted on 129 executive women, by Buttner and Moore (1997), women pursued entrepreneurial career after leaving senior jobs, as a result of organisational culture, based on *gender discrimination* (Aramand, 2012). It also transpires from past research, some similarities and some differences in regard to barriers encountered by women entrepreneurs in different countries. Furthermore, the culture expressed in family tradition in business, has positive impact on women business entry and development (Aramand, 2012). In addition, Aramand (2012) argued that Mongolian culture (collectivist, feminist and adventurist/nomad) had also a positive influence on women entrepreneurship motivation and success. Thus, in Mongolia, self-actualization need for women (Maslow, 1980) is achieved through enterprise creation and development and is linked to success. Moreover, the *nomadic culture* of adventurism is fulfilled within the venture creation and risk taking by women, whilst

aiming towards a financial freedom (Aramand, 2012). Equally important is the Asian culture of *collectivism*, which is embedded in women's entrepreneurship through women's desire to foster family and community development (Aramand, 2012). Further research provided evidence that regional cultures, by means of national environment, affect positively entrepreneurial activity (Manolova et al., 2008 in: Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017). Shared values and norms in Spain, impacts enterprise creation and survival, and regional culture and social networks affects positively high tech small firms (Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017). Based on the literature review (Manolova et al., 2008; in: Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017; Aramand, 2012; Tomos, 2017) the authors suggest the following hypotheses (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1: *National Culture affects Women Entrepreneurs' Success.*

Hypothesis 2: *Regional culture influences positively Women Entrepreneurs' Success and the National Environment is the mediator.*

Whilst in Pakistan women entrepreneurs face gender discrimination, due to cultural norms and traditional beliefs. Moreover, such beliefs regarding gender roles have negative impact upon the creation and success of women entrepreneurs (Roomi, Rehman and Henry, 2018). The authors formulate the following hypothesis (Roomi, Rehman and Henry, 2018) (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 3: *Gender affects negatively Women Entrepreneurs' Success, and the National Culture is the mediator.*

2.2 Perspectives on Women Entrepreneurs' Success

Success is defined as a "prosperous conclusion of [...] a business" and has a quantitative dimension (financial indicators) and a qualitative dimension (work-family balance, achievement, satisfaction, self-esteem) (Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017, p. 41; Tomos, 2017). Dalborg (2015) suggested that women entrepreneurs' growth should be explored from a qualitative perspective. Thus, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people are led by various needs: physiological, safety, belonging, self esteem and self self-actualization (Maslow, 1987 in: Dalborg, 2015). Further, there are five business platforms: survival, stability, creation of jobs, appreciation and personal development (Klofsten, 2009, in: Dalborg, 2015). Following these two models, Dalborg (2012) proposed a framework for qualitative growth in business, and designed a *hierarchy of qualitative growth platforms*. As a consequence of this model, Dalborg (2015) argued about the relationship between women entrepreneurs' need for business support and the platform of qualitative growth model they belong to, at a particular phase. Some authors acknowledged the possibility of business growth through business networking in Norway (by means of knowledge expansion), confirming thus, the certitude of qualitative business growth (Rennemo, Widing and Bogren, 2017). It is certified by research (Angel, Jenkins and Stephens, 2018), that success can be equally defined as business quantitative growth (by means of financial indicators) and as qualitative growth. The definition of success in Columbia embeds criteria such as women entrepreneurs' personal fulfilment, customer satisfaction or community impact (Angel, Jenkins and Stephens, 2018). Furthermore, success can be studied and explained by means of entrepreneurs' typology: individualists, tribalists, evolutionist and revolutionist (Ibid., 2018).

Enterprise growth is the quintessence of entrepreneurship and must be easily measured (Kirzner, 1985). However, gender studies on women entrepreneurship research in Australia,

indicated that, compared to men entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs underperformed (Klapper and Parker, 2011, in: Watson, Stuetzer and Zolin, 2017). This claim is disregarded by Robb and Watson (2012, in: Tomos et al., 2016, p.87). It is argued therefore that, when assessing growth, analysts should consider a comprehensive view of entrepreneurship outcomes and embed into analysis multiple variables. Moreover, in studies on the negative relationship between gender and growth, researchers should incorporate within it, the impact of goals on business outcomes (Watson, Stuetzer and Zolin, 2017) and criteria of measuring success (Tomos and Thurairaj, 2019). Thus, for some young women entrepreneurs in New Zealand, their main goal was happiness which was transmitted as business outcome to others. Hence, gender, motherhood and entrepreneurial identity were factors leading to satisfaction and success (Lewis, 2017). A study with literature review in cross-country context by Cabrera and Mauricio (2017) on factors impacting success discovered a relationship between each stage of entrepreneurship process (conception, infancy, childhood and growth) and factors affecting women entrepreneurs' success: education, experience, opportunity recognition and acquiring resources. Some authors perceived entrepreneurial growth from the perspective of learning machine and twitter-based learning (van Witteloostuijn and Kolkman, 2018; Antretter et al., 2018). Moreover, DeBruin et al. (2009) proposed the 5M factors: management, money, market, motherhood, meso environment and macro environment (which includes Culture) (in: Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017, p. 42). Finally, it is suggested that the concept of success should be related to both business performance and entrepreneur's interpretation of success (goals) (Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017). In strengthening the above discussions, Normaizatul et al. (2017), highlighted the determinants of *women entrepreneurs' performance* in Kelantan, Malaysia. These include the profile of the entrepreneur (age, years of business experience, qualifications, and family history of the enterprise), the profile of the entrepreneur's business (annual sales, number of employees, business sector, legal status, stage of business development, capital) and the culture. The next section to be introduced in this study regards recent view on women entrepreneurship in developing countries.

2.3 Recent Views upon Women's Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries

Currently 139 countries are declared as developing countries by ISI – web of science (2019). World Bank has recommended the criteria for classification into category of developing countries, those countries that were slightly over the amount of US\$ 12.056 GNP. According to the World Bank, almost 1 billion women have the potential to positively influence their economies as entrepreneurs and workers, yet they are unable to do so, due to unique challenges when starting and growing businesses, leaving a widely untapped source of economic development and innovation. It has been well established that businesses owned and managed by men are different from businesses owned and managed by women particularly in developing countries. One important concern is whether the fewer number of women entrepreneurs and the differences in the businesses owned by women reflect preferences, or are the result of constraints placed on women, that unfairly target the ability of women to grow businesses and accumulate wealth (World Bank Group).

In South Asia, fewer than 10 per cent of entrepreneurs are women. By contrast, women account for 38 to 47 per cent of entrepreneurs in East Asia, Central Asia or Eastern Europe (Asian Development Bank, 2013). In most of the studies in South Asia, women entrepreneurship is linked with poverty alleviation, thus making entrepreneurship the factor driven phenomena.

South Asian countries like *Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh* etc., are predominately-agrarian countries, with their cultural practices affecting almost every aspect of their lives. Female entrepreneurs in Pakistan face many societal and structural constraints. The unequal status of women in Islamic societies is the result of relating gender to the forms of exclusions (Roomi and Harrison, 2008). These women only like to conduct businesses with relatives and friends. They stay in their comfort zone, which in turn inhibits the growth of women entrepreneurs in this region. There are other challenges that women face: to own their businesses. Women entrepreneurs generally restrict their businesses to ‘feminine’ professions, such as education, health and beauty, where they provide services mostly to women customers, or in the garments/textile sector where they have women employees to manufacture products for women customers (Roomi, 2005). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1996) pointed to a strong inside–outside dichotomy in Pakistan, where women are restricted to the ‘inside’ space of their homes and households. This ‘inside’ reference restricts females from access to education, employment, training opportunities and social services, and the dichotomy continues to prevail in Pakistan. In the labour market (the ‘outside’), lower educational attainment coupled with social norms of restricted mobility confine women to a limited range of employment and training opportunities and lower wages. An extremely patriarchal perspective on Islamic female modesty restricts women’s mobility in Pakistan, limits social networks and imposes a check on their economic activity. Although, in the past two decades, the number of women joining the formal economic sectors has been increasing, equal opportunity in the workplace remains elusive (Sajjad and Raza, 2007). Conditions in Bangladesh are no different. Women in Bangladesh are also reported to be deprived socially (MOWCA, 2008; Haque and Itohara, 2009).

India, on the contrary, is a country with diverse culture. Hindu, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, are the four main religions in India. Almost 80 per cent of the total population follow Hinduism, which is fibred in a 2000 years old caste structure. Brahmins, most elevated class, form teachers, ministers and researchers. Kshatriyas are the warriors; they deal with the military administration and organization. Vaishya class is found among brokers, retailer and moneylender. Shudra consists of workers, and slaves (Sahni, 1999). The Indian caste system also impacts gender decision-making, as the greater part of the gender orientation standards are comprehensively implemented socially and institutionally towards women. Joint family system in Indian culture and decision-making authority of ‘Head’ of the family fabricate gender discrimination within families. Since sons are permanent member of the family, they are engaged into family business whereas daughters are considered as temporary members. As wives also, girls are not involved in family business. It is only in distress situation that women take up entrepreneurial venture. Thus, women entrepreneurship in India is considered as factors based (Kelley, Singer and Herrington, 2017). Within the caste system, concerns of purity and pollution also restrict women taking up entrepreneurship. However, in the lower strata, greater poverty implies increased reliance on female wage-earning (Acharya and Bennett, 1983; Kapadia, 1997).

Networks in rural *India* are considered as major sources of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and they are increasingly recognized as valuable tools for women empowerment. Some of the recent studies focused on indigenous knowledge, skills, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise in agricultural and dairy practices (Qureshi, Khan and Uprit, 2016). A recent study on the emerging middle class in developing countries describe that women are much aware of their existence, their rights and their working situation today. However, women of the middle class are not too eager to alter their role in fear of social backlash (Patel, 2015).

In *Indonesia*, SMEs account for more than 90% of all firms outside the agricultural sector. The main constraints faced by women entrepreneurs are cumbersome and onerous business regulations and restrictions, lack of finance, and limits in human resource and technological capabilities. In addition, the representation of women entrepreneurs is still relatively low which can be attributed to factors such as low level of education and cultural or religious constraints (Tambunan and Tulus, 2007). Similarly, in *South Africa*, women entrepreneurs are experiencing gendered discriminatory practices embedded in lending practices used by financial institutions, thereby discouraging them to venture into non-traditional industries. Whilst financial providers may know their products well, many emerging women entrepreneurs in *South Africa* may find it difficult and costly to obtain information on the thousands of financial products available. Hence, women entrepreneurs resort to taking greater risks than necessary in order to get their businesses off the ground (Derera, 2014).

In *Gambia* there are many challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the small enterprise sector. The study focused on the gendered nature of the barriers to survival and growth, particularly the low productivity of sectors in which women entrepreneurs operate, the difficulty in accessing capital for expansion and the need to reconcile business with domestic activities, and the propensity to view business as part of an overall livelihood diversification strategy (Della-Giusta et al., 2006). However, in middle Asian country *Kyrgyzstan*, factors that hamper women entrepreneurship are less socio-cultural in nature, and more originated by general macro-economic problems in the country (Najimudinova, 2015). Similarly, in *Mexico*, studies showed personal characteristics as more influencing factor as compared to cultural context (Banda, 2018). Many studies reported discrimination by banks against women entrepreneurs seeking loans. Although, research has shown that discrimination against women entrepreneurs is less evident in developed countries where competition for business is a factor (Prasad, 2009; Dickerson, 2005). Women entrepreneurs in some developing countries like *Uganda*, gained especially in mainstream operations like marketing and sales, information inflow, customer service delivery, increased business processes and profits, which facilitated increased productivity and enterprise transformation (Komunte, 2015).

2.4 Impact of Culture on Women's Entrepreneurship in Malaysia

One of the most rising trends in the modern economics of Malaysia is women entrepreneurship. This is because many women are venturing into business and economics as it promises more advance growth. According to Elenurm and Vaino (2011), in order to accelerate the process of economic development and technological advancement, entrepreneurship is involved. *Entrepreneurship* is a process of innovation and creation with four-dimensional elements such as individual, organization, environmental factors, and process with support from the government, education, and constitution (Chowdhury et al., 2013). According to Pandian and Jesurajan (2011), *women entrepreneurs* are defined as the group of women, who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Many successful women entrepreneurs are emerging nationally and globally (Agarwal et al., 2016). However many of women entrepreneurs are still tangled with their culture which impacts them indirectly in the process of achieving successful entrepreneurship. Women are struggling against the culture barriers, which stop them from venturing further into women entrepreneurship. According to Metcalfe (2008), in Middle East countries, the inequality in gender hinders women's rights to be a part of the countries' economic development. The factors, which stop women, are the expectation of the society, cultural norms and the culture and tradition of a society (Brush et al., 2009).

Malaysian Government's Effort for an Enterprising Culture

According to Ismail, Shamsudin and Chowdhury (2012) & Alam, Jani and Omar (2011), in order to develop quality, resilient and successful women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, the government has been continuously nurturing an *enterprising culture* among women entrepreneurs. The Malaysian government has also been providing easy access to money to help women in their venture in entrepreneurship. The government has been very active in initiating a positive culture towards women's involvement in entrepreneurship. According to Roddin et al. (2011), there are more than 44 forms of entrepreneurial funds in catering financial supports to women entrepreneurs in the country. In addition, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and National Policy on Women have been involving in various projects to ensure the success of women entrepreneurs. Thus, the government has allocated a budget of RM2.1 billion in 2012, and RM 50 million in 2013 (Al Mamun et al., 2016). According to Mohamed and Syarisa (2003), the Malaysian government has been channeling their support in terms of skills and entrepreneur development, training programs. Thus, women could take up any entrepreneurship easily by reestablishing a positive business culture. Besides, in 1993 as 'to provide the leadership and inspiration to act as a conduit to the transformation of the role of women in business into a dynamic force' the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM) was founded (NAWEM Website). As stated by Kuppusamy, Ganesan and Rosada (2010), NAWEM also acknowledges women entrepreneurs' culture as catalysts to the growth, development, and enhancement of women in business as well as a motivating force, providing leadership and support to all Malaysians. There are many other women entrepreneurs' associations, which are in line with a positive culture such as FEM and USHANITA (Xavier et al., 2012). The Malaysian government has also reached out to rural women with various aids just to invest and cultivate an enterprising culture among the rural folks throughout the nation (Mohamed and Syarisa, 2003; Xavier et al., 2012). Among the aids are training program, development and consultancy, information resources, workshops on motivation, leadership and financial and technical assistance. The Malaysian government among the women entrepreneurs in the country has established a positive and vibrant culture. Thus, the ratio of the women's workforce in the country is growing. However, according to Rozy (2009), women make up 50% of the total population of Malaysia and only 15% of the women own business enterprises.

Impact of Cultural and Social barriers

Generally, women are conservative, prudent and attentive, as well as doing women's tasks at home, where taking care of children and performing household duties are considered as their core responsibilities (Orser et al., 2011). This is a similar culture in Malaysia, a developing country.

“The stereotypical views that women entrepreneurs cannot balance their career and family seem to persist. This perspective is especially prevalent in many Malay novels that portray women engaged in professional or managerial positions. Successful Malay Muslim women, it would seem, have difficulty maintaining their marriages if

they are overly committed to their work. They make irrational choices and learn the lesson the hard way. To reiterate, this construction of a Malay Muslim women entrepreneur shows the conventions women must follow regardless of how educated they are and how successful they seem to be. They must subscribe to certain values pervasive in the Malay Muslim worldview”

(Hashim et al., 2012, p. 428).

According to Ming and Chong (2014), a general perception that men tend to outperform women in business as this may have pulled Malaysian feminists off thus actively involving themselves in the business arena. In addition, the women’s culture is a concern on family matters (either dictated by nature or shaped by the common belief) even if they have an opportunity to expand their businesses (Ming and Chong, 2014).

According to Alam et al. (2011), those women entrepreneurs who have shared a success story at the southern region of Malaysia especially in the state of Johor, are those women entrepreneurs who are middle-aged, married and concentrate on the service industry. This reflects that, those who are in the second phase of their life are more confident and able to succeed in entrepreneurship compared to the younger ones. The study also reveals that the majority of the respondents were found to be the second-born child in the family (Alam et al., 2011). These findings correlate with the upbringing of a second born child as well as those in the second phase of their life. These women have a better networking system. According to Ripolles and Blesa (2005) & Welter and Kautonen (2005), holistic networking provides a variety of information sources which assist the women entrepreneurs to be successful in their business. When the women do not have any social barriers in their communication with others, then it enhances their active participation in entrepreneurship (Ahmad and Naimat, 2010). Hisrich and Brush (1984) stated that a positive network and being able to socialize beyond the boundary and culture help in imparting skills and knowledge related to running a business effectively. The next section introduces the research method used within the study.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The authors conducted a comprehensive systematic and unsystematic literature review in four phases. In the first phase, the authors conducted a systematic literature review, over the period 2011 – 2019, by searching into 250 articles on women entrepreneurship, gender, success and culture, from various databases: Emerald, Elsevier, Ebscohost, and ProQuest. The selected articles were published in relevant and high ranked journals such as: Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Business Venturing Insight, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal. The search was based on the titles of the articles, key words and the abstract content. Based on article content, the number of articles included in the final sample of the first phase, to be analysed, was narrowed down to twenty-three significant articles. In the designed sample of articles, were included both empirical and theoretical research, conducted across-countries: Spain, Norway, Sweden,

United Kingdom, Peru, Mongolia, cross-countries studies, Thailand, Australia, India, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Finland and New Zealand.

In the second phase, a qualitative method of inquiry was adopted for this work. An extensive review of literature was conducted to understand the cultural context of gender entrepreneurship in various developing countries. Databases like Ebsco-host and web of science and Scopus were considered for extracting studies on “women entrepreneurs in developing countries”. Studies from few representative countries were selected to understand the cultural context of women entrepreneurship in this work. Studies from 10 developing nations like Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Uganda, Mexico, Gambia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India were examined. In the third phase, research was conducted on the regulatory frameworks in Malaysia, and the Malaysian researcher further developed an unsystematic literature review, related to women entrepreneurship and the impact of entrepreneurial culture in Malaysia. In the last phase, the authors enriched the knowledge on the subject of culture and gender by searching into relevant books.

Special attention was given to the interpretation of entrepreneurial success, by women from different parts of the world, the role, barriers and the impact of culture upon success, and the various aspects of cultural element, in a cross-country context. The information collected in the above sections, and the findings provided in the next section of the study, are the basis of the proposed Theoretical Model for cultural impact on women entrepreneurs’ success.

4. FINDINGS – A THEORETICAL MODEL

The Concept and the Measurement of Women Entrepreneurs’ Success

The findings of this theoretical research indicate that *women entrepreneurs’ success* can be assessed in a dual manner: (1) *quantitatively*, by means of financial indicators (sales, profit) and (2) *qualitatively*, based on women entrepreneurs’ sense of achievement, work-family balance, women’s goals, happiness, satisfaction, networking, learning machine, identity, community impact and customer satisfaction, communication, embeddedness into society and economy.

The Concept of Culture and Its Impact on Women Entrepreneurial Success

From the analysis of this study, the authors found the following types of culture: historical culture, national culture, popular culture, organisational culture, person culture, dependency culture, hegemonic culture, entrepreneurial culture, family culture and cultural intelligence. In view for the authors to understand the culture and its impact upon women entrepreneurs’ success, they needed to understand holistically this cultural phenomenon, the meaning of the concept, its structure, aspects and its interpretation cross-countries. The authors discovered a cultural evolutionary process, historically, socially and economically embedded within the society and across civilizations, eras and nations. There are different types of culture, but the most significant for this study are the national, traditional/popular and entrepreneurial, as they affect women entrepreneurs’ success. In different country contexts, either they constitute barriers to women’s entrepreneurial progress, or they support the entrepreneurial advancement. Moreover, the culture with its multiple aspects impact upon women entrepreneurs’ success and its impact is significant. Thus, aspects of culture such as ideology, hegemony and discourse,

provides meaning and creates real barriers to women entrepreneurs' success, if there is not fairly controlled by the systems and there is not a positive culture. In addition, authors (Charoensukmongkol, 2016) argued about the *cultural intelligence*, which allow women entrepreneurs to acquire acquisition and adaptability capabilities, when acting within the international business environment. Moreover, it seems that cultural intelligence has a positive impact on performance and success.

This study indicates that, in countries with a predominant patriarchal society, the culture impacts negatively upon women businesses, inhibits business growth, restricts the choice of business sector and business type, restricts women movement, access to labour market and mobility, limits their social networks, restricts access to education and training, access to social services and creates social deprivation, alienation, barriers to social mobility and impacts negatively on women entrepreneurs' success. Based on the literature review (Manolova et al., 2008; in: Hallam, Dorantes Dosamantes and Zanella, 2017; Aramand, 2012; Tomos, 2017) the authors proposed the following hypotheses (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1: *National Culture affects Women Entrepreneurs' Success.*

Hypothesis 2: *Regional culture influences positively Women Entrepreneurs' Success and the National Environment is the mediator.*

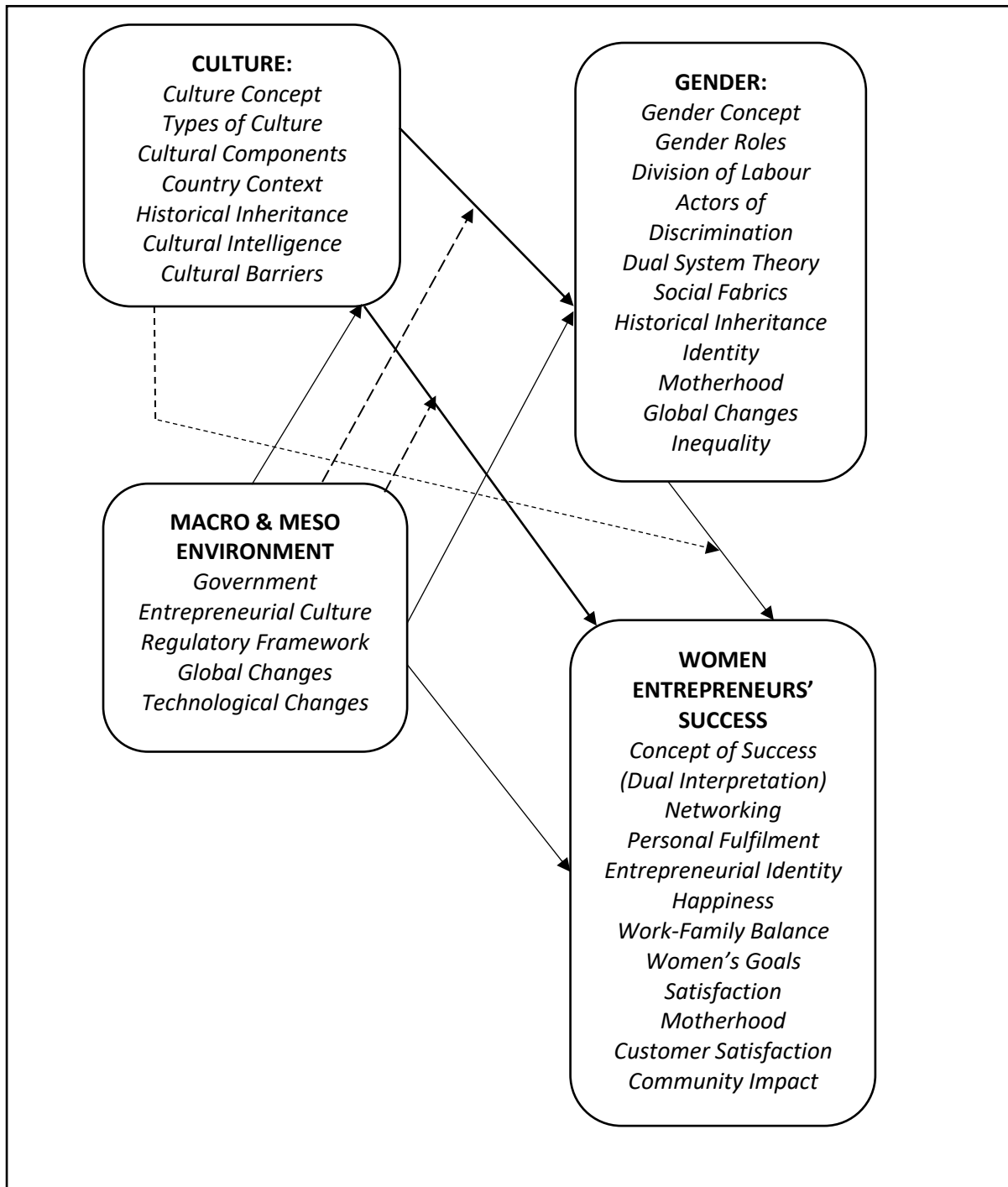
The Concept of Gender

Gender concept is intertwined with women entrepreneurship, success and culture. The analysed studies demonstrated that women entrepreneurship is perceived through the perspective of gender. Based on the analysis of the literature review (Roomi, Rehman and Henry, 2018) the authors proposed the third hypothesis (Figure, 1):

Hypothesis 3: *Gender affects negatively Women Entrepreneurs' Success, and the National Culture is the mediator.*

The root of gender inequality and discrimination is not only the gender division of labour, such as domestic unpaid work, but a range of actors, whose collaborations was conducive to a culture of dependency: historical inheritance, capitalist system, trade union, political parties, national state and the regulatory framework which excluded women. *Economic regeneration* or geographical regeneration requires *women entrepreneurs' success*, and this can be achieved by a fair division of labour and acceptance with recognition of gender and women contribution to the society. Based on the findings of this study, the authors propose an integrated theoretical model of the impact of Culture upon Women Entrepreneurs' Success:

Figure 1: Theoretical Model on the Impact of Culture upon Women Entrepreneurs' Success



Source: F. Tomos © 2019

5. CONCLUSION

This study expands the *knowledge and the literature* on culture, gender and entrepreneurship by focusing on the impact of culture upon women entrepreneurs' success. Further, the study *contributes to culture theory development and entrepreneurship theory*, by proposing a theoretical model/theoretical framework that can be tested, expanded and improved through further empirical research. The study is also a *contribution to practice*, because raises awareness regarding the culture and aspects of culture, which impact on women entrepreneurship, and suggests new policies for the encouragement, assurance and protection of women entrepreneurs' success. Women entrepreneurs are a significant segment of the entrepreneurial population across the world, with crucial contribution to economy regeneration, development and growth. Women are major actors within the family, society, national and global economy. The study proposes policies to address gender inequalities within the field of women entrepreneurship.

Limitations and Recommendations

There is a limited number of studies on this research topic, which addresses only a small number of countries from certain regions and not across the world. The empirical and theoretical studies published in high ranked and relevant journals in the last decade do not cover countries from the Middle East: Saudi Arabia, United Arabs Emirates, Iran, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Yemen, Lebanon, etc. A lack of research was revealed also, on countries belonging to Central Africa (Malawi, Rwanda, and Burundi), South Africa (Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, etc.) and Western Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, Senegal, Western Sahara, Ivory Coast, etc.). Studies on Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia are very few. Consequently, there are limitations of this study, due to existent research gaps constraints on the geographical area covered to present, the nature and research topics of the extant literature. Therefore, further research is recommended with enhanced criteria of selection and wider geographical area, with diverse countries across the world, including Middle East, Central Africa, Western Africa, Western and Eastern European countries, China, Japan and Russia. Further empirical research is advisable with interviews, and surveys, in addition to the theoretical expansion. Questionnaires can be developed, based on the proposed theoretical model, hypotheses designed and tested, for better and accurate findings, and advice can be offered to *policy makers*. It is also recommended a collaboration between countries with similar culture in view to nurture an enterprise culture for women, with supportive Governmental policies.

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