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An Analysis Of Informal Female Entrepreneurship In Turkey Through The Lens Of The 5M Framework

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs sometimes operate partly or wholly in the informal sector which may result from a multiplicity of personal and institutional factors. Institutional theory is frequently adopted as a suitable frame of reference to explain informal entrepreneurship (IE). This study examines the association between IE and the level of asymmetry between formal and informal institutions. In this study, the formal and informal institutional factors will be identified through the lens of the 5M framework. The qualitative research presented here was conducted with 38 Turkish informal female entrepreneurs (IFEs).

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Introduction

IE can be a source of unfair competition towards the formal sector (OECD, 2015) or the preliminary stage of formal institutions (Axelrod, 1986), or one of livelihood for the unemployed (OECD, 2015). Scholars frequently adopt institutional theory as a suitable frame of reference for explaining why some entrepreneurs operate informally (Williams and Shahid, 2016). One of the frameworks drawing on institutional theory is the 5M framework which aims to close the gender gap in academic research (Brush, *et al.*, 2009).

It is widely acknowledged that female entrepreneurs are still understudied and a gender gap continues in academic research, especially in developing countries (Meyer, 2018). Correspondingly, to date limited studies have examined the country-specific factors (Kaciak and Welsh, 2018, p.631) as facilitators of female entrepreneurship and there is a requirement for more qualitative studies in different sociocultural contexts to evaluate the association between formal/informal institutions and the pursuit of informal entrepreneurship (Williams and Shahid, 2016). And yet, the high volume of informal entrepreneurial activities among women in Turkey (ILO, 2013) indicates that there is a level of asymmetry between formal and informal institutions which is expected to be high. And therefore, to address these gaps in research, this study attempts to examine the association between IFE and the level of asymmetry between formal and informal institutions within the Turkish context. In this study, the formal and informal institutional factors will be identified through the lens of the 5M framework. The findings will improve our understanding of the phenomenon of IFE and will contribute to the development of formalisation strategies by policy-makers globally.

The framework of this study is shown in Table 1. The qualitative research presented here was conducted with 38 IFEs.

The Institutional Context and 5M Framework

The institutional context draws on the concept of formal and informal institutions as “rules of the game,” introduced by Douglass C. North (1990). Formal institutions are political and economy-related rules which create or restrict opportunity fields for entrepreneurship, such as laws and regulations for market entry. Informal institutions include the norms and attitudes of

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a society, such as the mechanisms of cultural models' reproduction and social roles' transmission that favour men in acquiring active economic roles (Hatos, *et al.*, 2015). The institutional context helps to determine the process of gaining legitimacy, which is critical for entrepreneurs to overcome the liabilities of newness (Stinchcombe, 2000) and increase survival prospects (Ahlstrom and Bruton, 2002). Therefore, entrepreneurs need to behave in a desirable or appropriate manner within a socially constructed system or face sanctions for deviating from accepted norms (Suchman, 1995) which constrains the range of strategic options (Ahlstrom and Bruton, 2002) for nascent entrepreneurs.

The 5M framework, drawing on institutional theory, aims to close the gender gap in academic research. This gender-aware framework is built on an existing "3M" framework through adding two new dimensions to it, namely motherhood and meso/macro environment to take any uniqueness of women's entrepreneurship into account (Brush, *et al.*, 2009, p.9). The 3M framework is organised around three fundamental building blocks of business viability, namely market, money and management (Bates, *et al.*, 2007) which are central to the foundation of any business. Market encapsulates the opportunity, management refers to the human and organisational capital, and money refers to financial capital (Allen, *et al.*, 2010). The 5M framework is rooted in the premise that entrepreneurship is socially embedded (Davidsson, 2003) and therefore it draws on institutional theory (Allen, *et al.*, 2010).

"Motherhood" is a metaphor representing the family context which can help explain economic and social differences, focuses on the role of the household as a foundation for resources and social support for female entrepreneurs and thus draws attention to the fact that family contexts might have a larger impact on women than men (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Brush *et al.* (2009) advocate that the invisible internal family dynamics such as gendered power relations and inequalities should be examined to have an enlightened understanding of women's entrepreneurship. Furthermore, studies highlight the importance of operationalising family and households for women's businesses' survival (Carter and Ram, 2003; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003).

Macro structures frame gender roles and responsibilities within society and is typically defined as the national level policies, culture, laws and economy (Brush, *et al.*, 2009). Meso environment refers to regional support services and industries, occupational networks, regional culture, business associations and the like. The meso and macro environment can limit the exercise of choice for women entrepreneurs which can be accepted as a manifestation of the explicit acknowledgement of the vital importance of the institutional environment on female enterprises.

The culture element of macro and meso structures is of crucial importance to understand the informality aspect of female entrepreneurship. In this study, the macro-cultural environment within the case country is described through the Globe Project Turkey practice scores (Globe, 2016). The meso-cultural environment is described by the participants based on their experience with the cultural environment surrounding them. This study acknowledges the view that culture is a multilayered phenomenon that can vary across the different levels of a country (e.g. national, regional), and therefore the cultural environment may be different within a region from the national-level measurements (Hayton and Cacciotti, 2013). And therefore this study supports that any research attempting to examine the culture and entrepreneurship relationship may require an understanding of the cultural climate within a particular context and region, rather than directly applying the findings of a national culture framework's scores to the context.

Table 1: The Design of the Implementation of 5M Framework to the Country-Case

5M Framework Constructs	Context	Case-Specific Indicators & Measures
Motherhood	Unequal household power relations Inequalities within the household Roles of family members Operationalising family Family support	Family statistics Domestic work Family structure Business partnership of informal enterprises
Macro environment	National culture (Level of Entrepreneurship Culture) Formal institutions Women's status	Women labour force participation Female entrepreneurship Globe project culture practice country scores Entrepreneurship culture Economic freedom Corruption Human development and gender inequality (Gender gap) GDP per capita Unemployment Tax rate and morality Ethnic minorities and immigrants Women and Education Income level Level of economic development and stage within the economic cycle Ease of registration Awareness of regulations Resistance towards government
Meso environment	Regional culture (Level of Entrepreneurship Culture) Women support organisations Regional industries Networks	Perceived characteristics of the sociocultural environment (Regional Culture identified through the Globe Project culture dimensions) Women entrepreneurship support Female networks Industry structure Access to finance
Market	Supply chain structure Marketing channels Entrepreneurial Motivation	Supply chain structure Marketing channels Necessity and/or opportunity driven
Money	Source of startup capital	Source of startup capital
Management	Network structures Source of entrepreneurial skills development Demographics Entrepreneurial experience	Network structures Source of entrepreneurial skills development Demographics Previous entrepreneurial experience Previous work experience

Informal Entrepreneurship

Informal entrepreneurs are self-employed individuals and new business owners who are engaged in any form of commercial activities for which they receive a payment that is not declared, partly or fully, for tax, benefit and labour law purposes when it should be declared (OECD, 2015). Home-based entrepreneurs constitute the most invisible segment of the informal sector. This invisibility is reinforced by the fact that home-based entrepreneurs usually have substantial constraints to their employment because of, for women, a lack of male permission or heavy domestic responsibilities.

When the formal institutions of a society are incongruent with the informal institutions, one finds the emergence of economic endeavour not aligned with the laws and regulations of formal institutions but within the boundaries of what informal institutions deem acceptable (Williams and Shahid, 2016; Webb, *et al.*, 2009). Informal entrepreneurs operate outside of formal institutional boundaries “illegally” but within the boundaries of informal institutions “legitimately” (Williams, 2016; Williams and Schneider, 2013; Williams, 2006). Thus, there is widely accepted to be a positive association between the level of institutional asymmetry and the level of IE. When the discrepancy is large, entrepreneurs will be more likely to operate in the informal sector (Webb, *et al.*, 2009; Williams and Shahid, 2016).

Increasing unemployment and the growing youth population prevents the formal sector from generating enough wage employment to absorb the majority of the labour force (World Bank, 2018; ILO, 2015) which results in the informal sector remaining the main contributor to GDP and to employment, especially in the developing countries. The micro enterprises account for most informal activity, particularly among women (Stuart, *et al.*, 2018). 61.2% of the global employment work informally in a highly precarious economic situation (ILO, 2018). Women are disproportionately at the bottom of the informal economy pyramid (Stuart, *et al.*, 2018, p.1), face the biggest challenges and benefit less from any kind of formalisation offerings or social benefits (Bhatkal, *et al.*, 2015).

Contributing family workers among all other types of informal self-employment are predominantly women who have the lowest earnings and are correspondingly at the highest risk of poverty (Stuart, *et al.*, 2018). The evidence suggests that only a relatively small share of informal entrepreneurs in developing countries have the potential to become successful whilst the majority are survivalists facing various vulnerabilities and challenges. Many individuals enter informal self-employment in times of household economic distress. Women are particularly likely to engage in distress-driven work through IE although they have not been active in the labour market immediately before (Posadas and Sinha, 2010; Kabeer, 2012).

IFEs face various unique challenges such as lack of credit, housing-related problems (Raveendran, *et al.*, 2013), low piece rates and declining order volumes related to macroeconomic downturns and consequent declining of revenue (Mahadevia, *et al.*, 2014), and being overlooked by policy-makers (Stuart, *et al.*, 2018). IFEs often lack resources to expand into new markets, lack knowledge about trade processes, and experience limited mobility, harassment and demands for bribes with these most adversely affecting their micro enterprises in developing countries, and hinder regional value chain development (ITC, 2015).

Initiating any form of a business, formal or informal, and surviving it requires extra effort for women trying to succeed in male-dominated environments. This leaves no option for IFEs but to obtain all assets and support through their social networks and connections, resulting in greater use of their social networks as a source of social capital (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Greve and Salaff, 2003). For instance, nascent IFEs acquire the necessary skills to survive their micro enterprises by learning from an experienced individual in their immediate network. An

informal apprenticeship as such is based on an informal agreement embedded in local norms and traditions, rather than on a contractual relationship (Debrah, 2007). In some underdeveloped countries, informal apprenticeship training constitutes 80% to 90% of all basic skills training of IFEs (Palmer, 2009). And yet, women's reliance on their immediate social network for business survival undermines their participation in formal economic activities (Vossenbergh, 2013).

The Main Causes Of Informal Entrepreneurship

Participation in IE results from a multiplicity of personal and institutional level factors whose importance depends on the development stage of the country (OECD, 2015; Williams, 2006). Table 2 summarises the main causes of IE.

Table 2: The Main Causes of Informal Entrepreneurship

Factor		Correspondent Value of Turkey when applicable
Macroeconomic conditions	The decision to work in the informal sector is influenced by macroeconomic conditions, as higher GDP per capita levels are linked to lower informality rates.	The GDP per capita level in Turkey is \$26700 as compared to \$40220 and \$42943 in the EU and in the UK respectively (OECD, 2016).
Labour market conditions	Since entrepreneurship is ultimately an employment choice, labour market conditions will influence the decision of whether and how to start a business. Thus, high unemployment and low labour market participation will cause higher numbers of informal necessity-driven self-employed workers. In smaller localities the labour opportunities are scarcer and the push towards self employment in any form more powerful (Hatos, et al., 2012)	The unemployment rates in Turkey, in the EU and in the UK are 13% (TUIK, 2018), 6.7% and 4% respectively (OECD, 2018). The labour market participations rates are 58%, 73.6% and 78.5% for Turkey, the EU and the UK respectively (OECD, 2019). Ratio of female to male labour force participation rates are 45%, 85% (ILO, 2018) and 84% (European Commission, 2016) for Turkey, the EU and the UK respectively.
Macroeconomic trends	Variations in economic growth and unemployment also have repercussions on informal entrepreneurship. Recessions will prod more entrepreneurs into the underground economy to cope with declining revenues, whereas periods of economic expansion will reduce the incentive for entrepreneurs to remain informal by generating new opportunities in the formal sector.	
Industry structure	Services and construction are more prone than manufacturing to informal self-employment, so that countries with a large services sector or a booming construction industry will tend to show higher rates of informal entrepreneurship.	The share of informal employment in total employment in the service industry are 57.2% and 15.3% in the developing and developed countries respectively (ILO, 2013).
Taxation	Taxation affects informal entrepreneurship in multiple ways. High taxes on labour income are thought to increase informal self-employment.	Taxes on personal income as the total percentage of GDP are 3.6% and 9.1% in Turkey and in the UK respectively. Taxes on corporate profits as the total percentage of GDP are 1.7% and 2.8% in Turkey and in the UK respectively (OECD, 2017).

Factor	Correspondent Value of Turkey when applicable	
Tax Morale	Tax morale refers to the perceived fairness of the tax system. Respectful and impartial tax authorities who apply reasonable rates and inform taxpayers on how public money is spent are associated with improved tax compliance (Williams, 2014; Tanzi 1982). Although, informal entrepreneurs are “free-riders” (Stuart et al. 2018, p. 17), they may well already pay tax – notably consumption tax – even if they are not paying it directly. Furthermore, they may also pay informal taxes, such as bribes and high interest rates on loans.	
Business regulations	Compliance with business rules and regulations implies cost and time, which are proportionally bigger for own-account workers and new entrepreneurs still waiting for the first revenues to flow in.	Compliance with business rules and regulations implies cost and time, which are proportionally bigger for own-account workers and new entrepreneurs still waiting for the first revenues to flow in.
Social security systems	National social security systems often discourage entrepreneurship especially when the self-employed pays the social contributions of their pensions in full.	contain disincentives to formal self-employed pays the social contributions of their pensions in full.
Lack of deterrence	A loose government approach to contrasting the informal economy tends to lead to higher rates of informal entrepreneurship (Tanzi, 2002).	
Ethnic minorities and immigrants	A large part of informal economic activity is undertaken by social groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market such as immigrants and ethnic minorities due to the lack of legal rights to live and work in the host country (Basu, 2008). Countries with large shares of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the population tend to have more informal entrepreneurship. New immigrants may not have the legal rights to live and work in the host country, which will force them into undeclared work and informal self-employment. Cultural barriers may also prevent migrant or ethnic-minority entrepreneurs, especially women, from operating in the formal sector (Leed 2015; OECD 2015).	The UK population was 14.4% foreign-born and 9.5% non-British citizens in 2017 (University of Oxford, 2018). Ethnic minorities makeup 5,5% of the entire Turkish population (Kizilay, 2017).
Corruption	Corruption is heralded as a key factor leading entrepreneurs to exit the formal economy and to operate informally (Williams & Shahid, 2016).	The corruption perceptions index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. The corruption indexes are 40 and 82 for Turkey and for the UK respectively (TI, 2017).
Age	Younger people are less likely to operate formally (Williams and Schneider, 2013)	
Income	Lower-income groups disproportionately engage in informal entrepreneurship (Williams & Shahid, 2016).	

Factor	Correspondent Value of Turkey when applicable
Education and skill levels	There is a positive relationship between the level of educational attainment of entrepreneurs and the tendency to operate on a formal basis (Copisarow & Barbour, 2004).
Gender	Women entrepreneurs are more likely to operate in the informal economy than men. Managing the demands of both work and family is a continuing challenge for female entrepreneurs (Shelton, 2006). Therefore, the flexibility offered by informal entrepreneurship mostly benefits women who may have a preference for a home-based business. It is the case in Turkey where the gendering of entrepreneurship is segregated along sectorial lines (Williams & Shahid, 2016).
Age of business	Many studies reveal that business start-ups are likely to operate in the informal sector (Small Business Council, 2004). The informality enables nascent entrepreneurs to test their ventures.
Exclusion from the formal sector	Informal entrepreneurship is accepted to be more prevalent amongst necessity-driven entrepreneurs who engage in such entrepreneurship due to their involuntary exclusion from the formal entrepreneurship (Williams & Shahid, 2016). However there is evidence to claim that informal entrepreneurship is a voluntary action to escape the costs of formality (Small Business Council, 2004).

Methodology and Sampling

Data was collected through structured interviews and analysed in two steps involving meaning condensation and meaning categorisation (Kvale, 1996, p.194). All the interview data were coded and each code was assigned to the relevant culture category to understand the characteristics of the regional culture. The Globe Project culture dimensions were used, together with a designation of their levels as high or low, to create the 18 culture categories. In total, 1,771 codes were generated and assigned to the relevant culture category. After a pilot study with five participants, the option ‘living together with a partner’ statement was removed due to the fact that having a relationship without solemnisation, either civil or religious, was not publicly acceptable.

This study was executed with 38 female participants of an EU-funded project within the north-west region of Turkey. The participants were selected on a voluntary basis from among 500 applicants who had been engaging with informal entrepreneurial activities through home-based work, such as handcrafting, and were eager to transform their informal entrepreneurial activities into a formal enterprise through setting up a cooperative.

The project was part of the Government’s effort to formalise informal entrepreneurial activities of women in the region through persuasion. The region hosts the biggest traditional craft market in the country with the majority of its suppliers being local IFEs. The project executers employed a “come into the light and join us” approach where the promise was to provide training, networking and funding opportunities for the participants and to tailor business advice and training for their special needs (Appendix 1 provides a representative case for these domestic IFEs).

Chapters in progress

Table 3 summarises the draft content of the chapters in progress.

Table 3: Chapters in progress

Chapter	Indicative Content
Setting the Scene: Turkey in Numbers	This chapter will shed light on women's status in the country. This chapter contributes to our understanding of the macro-sociocultural environment surrounding women and will tap into the religion factor as a part of the macro-sociocultural environment.
Female Entrepreneurship in Turkey	This chapter will examine the profile, entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviours of the Turkish (informal) female entrepreneur and will examine the support for female entrepreneurs.
The GLOBE Project: Turkey National Culture Profile	This chapter will describe the macro-cultural environment through the Globe Project Turkey practice score results.
The Regional Culture (Based on the interview data)	This chapter will describe the meso-cultural environment through the eyes of the participants based on the interview data. The Globe Project Framework will be used to generate culture categories. This chapter will attempt to explain the differences between the national and regional level culture measurements, if observed.
Findings and Discussion (Interview Data)	This chapter will start with introducing the individual characteristics and the demographics of the participants (individual level reasons for informal entrepreneurship). Secondly, the study framework as introduced in Table 1 will be applied to the context to describe the informal and formal institutional level factors (at macro and meso level), the internal family dynamics of the Turkish informal female entrepreneur - such as gendered power relations, inequalities and domestic responsibility sharing – (Motherhood), market conditions, funding and finally human capital. Identification of the institutional asymmetry will follow.
Conclusion	The profile of informal female entrepreneurs will be analysed and described. The formal and informal institutional structures will be described more concisely and clearly. The association between informal female entrepreneurship and the level of asymmetry between formal and informal institutions will be analysed.

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