Social Networking and Contextual Embeddedness: An Exploratory study of Women Entrepreneurs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study explores the contextual Embeddedness of entrepreneurial phenomenon, particularly experienced by women of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It attempts to identity modes of networking activities being practiced by women and also to highlight effects of "push and pull factors" on their social networking. Women entrepreneurship have been conceptualized through the lens of Western theory and there is no research on contextually embedded perspective in the region. Data from 17 women entrepreneurs were collected by using face to face semi structured interviews. Analysis was conducted using "constructivist grounded theory approach". Qualitative analysis reveals that social networks are embedded in entrepreneur's context which effects women orientations towards exploring possible opportunities.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneur, Social Networks, Push and Pull, Embeddedness.

Introduction

It is believed that entrepreneurial process co-evolves with the socio system (Friedman& Desivilya,2010).Moreover, each individual face varied drivers and dimensions that shapes their business. These include social and cultural changes as well that are primitive to business. Somehow the extent to which these socio-cultural drivers effect male entrepreneurs is not similar for women entrepreneurs. In developing countries, majority of small scaled business are owned by male entrepreneurs with an increasing trend of women inclination toward startups while the rate is double in Pakistan.

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Women mark half of the country's population and are actively playing their role in development of Pakistan's economy. However, in some areas of Pakistan, women feel deprived to contribute in economy due to the impact of socio-cultural norms (Roomi, Rehman& Henry, 2018). According to Haugh et al., *(*2016) these norms act as facilitators and barriers in a particular society that may facilitate or restrict the women access to mobility, education and freedom to work. However, there is no universal way in which these norms act as facilitators or barriers. Thus, the gap in understanding is present in terms of how the entrepreneurs might navigate the barriers and utilize the facilitators to their benefits. The need for studying through contextually embedded perspective can shed light on this yet unexplored aspect.

Literature suggests that women face limited access to resources and networks in developing countries and barriers to enter a business (Goyal & Yadav, 2014). While little is known about the contextual phenomenon being experienced by women entrepreneurs, Goyal and Yadav (2014) proposed a need to explore these complex challenges so that it can act as guideline for researchers and policymakers of developing countries. Context need special attention as entrepreneurial process is embedded in their regional context. They further added that entrepreneurship should be searched through gender lens as it will help to recognize the significance of context (Byrne& Fattoum, 2015), It will also help to explore the embedded social networks within the context (McKeever, Jack, & Anderson,2015). Therefore, KPK is selected as the context of the study, since cultural and social factors are in continuous interplay with entrepreneurial process and effects the relationships with in the communities. Furthermore, this study will help in developing an insight in importance of social context and geographical position on women entrepreneurs of KPK (Steyaert & Dey, 2010). This paper endeavors to scientifically understand the role of social networking in venture development.

Literature Review
Entrepreneurship through the lens of Individual-Opportunity Nexus
Shane (2003) explained entrepreneurship as "Individual opportunity Nexus" framework. Which suggeststhat opportunities exist in individual's surroundings. Every individual is not aware of these and very few individuals are able to identify the presence of opportunity. Shane General theory of entrepreneurship suggests that entrepreneurial phenomenon is an interaction between opportunity and an individual's

characteristics who explore it (Gartner, Carter & Hills, 2016). According to Shane andVenkataraman (2000) entrepreneurship definition rely on clarifyingthe nature of an individual (who they are and what do they do),which presumes that presence of skillful person and lucrative opportunity exist together. I-O Nexus is a twofold phenomenon that suggest a) who is an entrepreneur?and b) what does she/he do?The notion "who is entrepreneur" refers to the entrepreneur's alertness towards opportunities (Bull& Willard, 1993), whereas later part points toward availability of opportunity and individuals ability to interact within given circumstances (Venkataraman, 1997). Eckhardt and Shane (2013) further explained the phenomenon by adding that individual information vary due to knowledge corridors, social ties and search process. Moreover, individual's capacity to attain knowledge rely on individual's personal experience (Venkataraman, 1997), Whereas social ties effect information channel.

Individual-opportunity nexus as a networking activity
Entrepreneurship has also been inquired in the realm of networking. In the words of Scott (1986, pp. 109) social network is defined as network of individuals who are "knitted into a crisscross mesh connection", which suggest that entrepreneurs use their personal ties (networks and contacts) to support their venture (Burt,2017).Networking is an important factor that is defined by individual's social position i.e., race, age, gender, education, income, occupation and location. Entrepreneur's social circle can be sub divided in to four types: a) inner circle b) action set c) The partners d) network of weak ties.

Social-Network and Embeddedness
Social changes are important indicators to shape entrepreneurial phenomenon.A considerable amount of literature has been published that highlight that how entrepreneurs manage to explore opportunity through social networks. Gidden's(1979) structure theory has been used to study the affiliation between entrepreneur and its context, where entrepreneur is considered to be a knowledgeable and skill full person and structures are considered as 'social structure' that is made of overlapping interaction patterns between groups and actors and reoccurrence of interaction (Gidden, 2013). McKeever, Jack and Anderson (2015) explained context as an important factor which explains the tweaks of entrepreneurial process. It comprehends that entrepreneurs are embedded in networks,

communities and places that helps them to socially construct opportunities out of resources.

Hence in order to develop an insight about embeddedness of networks within social structures, it is important to understand entrepreneurship with in social context.

Research Method

The Current study takes entrepreneurship in its natural settings i.e., Peshawar, KPK, explores experiences of women entrepreneur and then data is collected from multiple sources (emotions, feelings, etc.) to interpret what participants have experienced. Individual has been considered as a unit of analysis, which is in relevance to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of current study (social constructivist approach).

Based on researcher's judgment (Babbie, 2013), 17 women entrepreneurs were selected from Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan for interview by using Purposive/judgment sampling technique. As qualitative research focuses on data saturation i.e., by obtaining broader information maintaining sampling until no new set of evidences occur (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Purposive sampling technique is commonly used in qualitative research for selection and identification of relevant cases(Patton, 2002).

Data was collected over a period of 6-month, semi-structured interview technique was employed. Respondents were interviewed once and, if needed, were contacted through phone calls for further elaboration of any ambiguity. Interview time varied from 30 minute to an hour depending upon the nature of emerging data. Interview guide was used to direct and probe interviewer. Various themes emerged during data analysis process by using analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Chosen methodology provides an in-depth understanding of entrepreneurial socially embedded networks and context (KPK). The process also helped to explore the underlying meanings of push and pull factors that moderate entrepreneurial process to perceive opportunity. Though selected entrepreneurs are not the representative of entrepreneurial universe, however it provided useful insight about phenomenon understudy in its context.

Provided that current research design is not without its limitations i.e., small number of respondents and restricted area for study inhibits generalizability (Chandler & Hanks, 1994).

Data Analysis Framework-– Grounded Theory

Qualitative data analysis is iterative process that starts with conducting interviews, taking field notes and proceeds with analyzing data. After collecting data, it was organized in understandable form. NVIVO 9 was used for data management, transcribing of interview data was done by following process as suggested by Nagy et al., (2006).

Since Charmaz's (2006)constructivist grounded theory approach is used for current study, it relies on researchers to identify phenomenon to be explored and then develop understanding by interpreting behaviors and action within context. Therefore, three step coding method was used for data analysis namely, initial coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. Coding process work in iterative manners. In first step, data was divided in to segments by using linebyline analysis technique to outline commonalities and common concepts. In second step the data is classified into main and sub categories using various concepts and constant comparison method.

Relationship between categories and subcategories were developed by writing memos and developing mini models. Theoretical coding was developed to explore relationships among various categories (Charmaz, 2006). As a result of the exercise, theoretical model emerged as a central category of the study.

Grounded Findings

Five categories evolved using constructivist grounded theory method, which further evolved in the form of two process (higher level categories). The exercise consequently enabled in developing the central category which enables researcher to integrate theory (Strauss &Corbin, 1998).

Process 1: The role of Networking in perceiving opportunity is being moderated by Trust factor.

According to the transcribed, data networking is important for participants. They account their friends and family members as close circle of networks. Participants were asked about how do this business location effect their business and what impact does it have on their networking? Respondents replied in affirmative. Few women explained that due to the societal barriers i.e., culture andvalues) and family responsibilities, they cannot afford to work out of home. Use of technology has made it easier to work from home.

Excerpt 1:

> *"My family supports me a lot in this matter and also they tell other people that she has good stuff and my family buy first. So, there should be family support"*

According to the participants, it is easier now for them to network with customers, clients and suppliers. While the other group of participants shared that they find difficulties in networking with people because they rely more on their close family members. They also exclaimed that their family members help and guide them in various matters such as dealing with suppliers and purchasing raw material from market.

Response collected from other set of women revealed that since they have developed trust in suppliers and customers therefore, they do not hesitate in taking risk and accordingly they prefer to perform their outdoor activities and take decisions on their own decisions on their own.

Process 2: Moderating role of push and pull factors that affect women orientation towards venture development.

According to the empirical data, family support is major push factor for women to initiate business. While in other scenario, few women explained that their family was not supportive,however, withthe passage of time they gained confidence and proved their metal. Family structure is deep rooted in culture,that have a significant impact over family values.

Excerpt 2:

> *"Initially when we stated we had to face problems at suppliers end also being a beginner we were unaware of the market suppliers from where we could have required items at less prices. like as we could not purchase required material in bulk, so we had to purchase baking items on high. And over the years if you tell me so now, I can say I know some places that where I have to get stuffs that are less expensive. So now we can better handle our costs and manage our resources. cannot step out alone for purchasing required items."*

Hence push and pull factor are embedded in the context of KPK, that are being governed by various cultural values and government rules. Therefore, data suggest that women orientation towards perceiving opportunity is governed by many factors in KPK including How do they utilize their networks? - to what extent push and pull factors facilitate or limit their progress and Trust factor and its effect on overall process.After developing mini models and identifying relationships, core category emerged from the following two process that act as a core of

grounded theory which pull together all the relevant codes and categories together and explain research phenomenon comprehensively (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Core Category: Networking Issues being faced by women entrepreneurs to perceive an opportunity is Embedded in entrepreneurial Context
Figure 1illustrates that how core category combines all the micro processes to display the main phenomenon being experienced by women entrepreneurs of Peshawar. It also answers the research question that guide the research namelyRole of social networking in venture development? and a subsidiary question "what pertinent factors are involved?" and how does trust factor effect networking phenomenon?

Emerging theory fabricate the entire phenomenon in such a way that it expresses the micro phenomenon very well. Figure 1 depicts two processes that represent two sides of coins. Process 1 refers to the social networking and its importance in perceiving opportunities and explains the presence of Gidden's concept of agency and structure, which states that agency (individual) is responsible to identify its ability and to identify opportunities that are present in the surroundings.
Hence individual capacity to perceive an opportunity is also influenced by social ties, social networks and types of networks (Echardt& Shane, 2013). Findings suggests that social networking phenomenon being experienced by the women of KPK rely on different factors i.e., business knowledge,level of trust among partners and suppliers, customers primary and secondary networks. Trust is considered to be the important factor in the context of KPK, when it comes to work with different people. It strengthens the bond between the network and promote future relationship. However, lack of trust among network ties can hinder the networking process that ultimately effect opportunity perception.
Whereas process 2 (Figure 1) refers to the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurial intensions to identify opportunity.As women entrepreneurial, intentions are being supported and hindered by many factors that are contextual in nature.

Entire process sums up both processes by explaining the complete picture as social network and women intentions are both pertinent to perceive an opportunity that is embedded in context of entrepreneur. An entrepreneur (agent) is nested in his/her social structures, therefore, entrepreneurs and their social system co-evolve (Gidden, 2013).
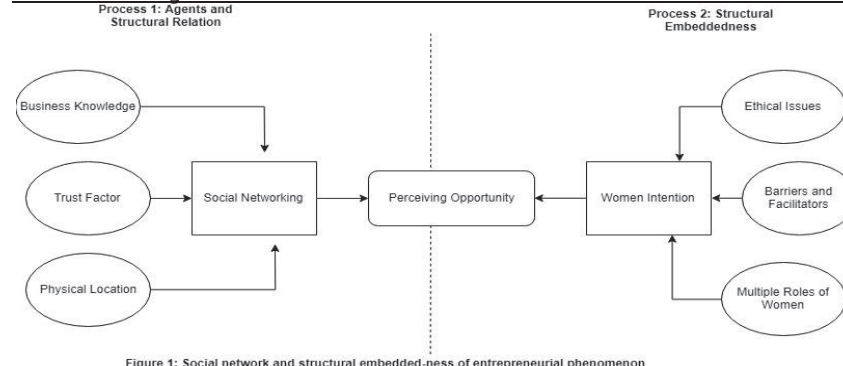
Figure 1: Social network and structural embedded-ness of entrepreneurial phenomenon

Discussions and Practical implications

The absence or weakness of formal institutions and their failure to implement or enforce their will, is the primary reason thatmechanism in larger social sphere act as a crucial factor. The high strength of social-cultural institutions coupled with formal institutions that are insensitive to local culture naturally compels the entrepreneurs to rely on informal institutions rather than formal ones. Trust mechanism developed through informal contacts are reliant on a variety of factors such as business location and family background (gatekeeper of female's interaction) (Roomi, 2018).

However, it can be noted that women entrepreneurs are creating some sort of trust relationships with formal institutions such as KPK Chamber of Commerce and sometimes even with Suppliers and customers. It shows that women emancipation can be expected due to changing education (high trend of female education in past decade or two) and demographic factors (youth bulge in Pakistan and KPK especially) (Byrne & Fattoum, 2015).

Moreover, push and pull factors accounts for the impetus for venture development as these factors are deep rooted in socio-cultural norms as discussed above (Chowdhury& Audretsch, 2018). Mushrooming of home-based business is witnessed in KPK, which illustrates that women are taking advantage of their social ties and prefer to manage their business from home along with other family responsibilities. Findings confirms presence of Gidden's (2013) concept of agency and structure among the women and their environment in KPK. Since they are aware of their norms and family values, it helps them to take advantage of their social ties (Roomi, 2018).

Based on the findings some implications have been suggested that can help women entrepreneurs to develop their venture easily. It

suggests that if formal training and workshops at Schools/college/University level are provided, students can develop professional behavior. Women entrepreneurs in Peshawar must rely on their close associates and strong network links to create a trust-based network. This should be done while remaining within the reasonable norms of close family and broader society. Respecting social institutions in the absence or weakness of formal instructions is an imperative which cannot be avoided. Trust networks are not only important for current women entrepreneurs for the aspiring ones as well.

Limitation and future research

This study offers various arenas for future research followed by the limitations being faced by the research. Cross sectional approach was used for data collection that can limit the scope of the data, however, longitudinal approach would be useful in future to further understand the changing behavior of various factors over a period of time. Secondly, data was collected by interviewing 17 women entrepreneurs. Though the data so collected gave a complete picture of current phenomena in KPK context, it does not ensure generality of the evolved model. Therefore, model should be tested for different contexts to ensure global acceptance. Thirdly current study does not speak about SEC (socio economic class) of respondents and its impact on women intentions to perceive opportunity. The factor can be further researched in future. Lastly, data reveals major trends in respondents' demographic data i.e., their marital status, in future comparative study would be useful to identify the diverse approach.

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