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An Exploration of Women Owned Home-based Business Through Institutional Theory Lens: A Case of Peshawar, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the dynamics of women owned home-based businesses in the normative context of Peshawar. It helps to add to our understanding of how women create and manage their ventures and get legitimacy in a context where they live like second-class citizen with no rights. The study also highlights the impact of these ventures on their lives and household. A qualitative approach was used to explore the creation and management of women owned home-based businesses in the context of Peshawar. 20 women entrepreneurs were selected through purposive sampling technique. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand the lived experiences. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. We have built on institutional theory to understand the creation and management of women owned home-based enterprises, which brought about unique insights into this ever-prevailing phenomenon. The findings of this study reveal that given the distinctive context of Peshawar, the role responsibilities of women are shaped through multiple socio-cultural and religious interpretations. Compliance to which, defines the grounds of negotiation for adopting an entrepreneurial career. This makes the venture creation a bounded

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Home-based Business, institutional theory, negotiation, legitimacy, empowerment

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phenomenon and highly dependent on the familial approval for which norms and values within normative context are negotiated. With familial approval, a home based women entrepreneur (HBWE) ensures her belongingness to the family mores. A legitimacy of HBWE is contingent upon the trust of the family members as an entrepreneur and home maker. At this level, she represents as role model by sharing control which enhances the cultural acceptability of home-based businesses (HBBs). This study has portrayed transition of HBWE through compliance, negotiating, belongingness, legitimacy, emancipation and empowerment.

1. Introduction

The rising importance of home-based businesses (HBBs) can be seen in the context of high growth small business sector in most of the developed world that has favored the creation of home-based businesses. 50% to 60% of small businesses are home-based in UK and most of other OECD countries (Mason et al., 2011; Hastings and Anwar, 2019). HBBs have significantly raised self-employment and in some cases employment opportunities (Burgess and Paguio, 2016) that can be tapped as avenue for local economic growth (Walker, 2003; Barrett, et al., 2008).

Small clientele, poor turnover, maximum working hours, low hourly wages, limited sectoral choices, challenges in acquiring legitimacy and market credibility, childcare and home duties are all considered to be the antecedents of HBBs (Thompson et al., 2009). Having said that, the number of such firms is gradually increasing, and now that internet and many platforms for conducting business are available, people prefer to run their online businesses from their homes (although a minority yet).

Despite HBBs being a viable business alternative with economic potential and social significance (Sayers, 2010) it remains missing in majority of the small business research (Pratt, 2008), partly due to the debate if these businesses fulfill the criteria to be entrepreneurial and partly because these ventures are hidden. Existing literature has two opposing perspectives to HBBs. It is in one-way situated around childcare and domestic responsibilities and the promotion of such hobby businesses is not encouraged. Alternatively, HBBs are seen as ‘micro incubators’ for the nascent entrepreneurs who can experiment and buildup their venture before taking it out to commercial places (Earles and Lynn, 2006; Phillips 2002; Mason et al., 2011). We believe that HBBs are a strategic approach to economic empowerment while staying socially legitimate.

It is interesting to note that majority of HBBs are women owned with the purpose of achieving better work-life balance (Breen, 2010; Price et al., 2019). Other reasons cited in the literature are socio-cultural dynamics that has resulted in the upsurge of female entrepreneurship (Berke 2003), insufficient single earning (Edwards and Field-Hendrey 2002) desire for better lifestyle (Culkin and Smith 2000), less start-up capital (Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004; Thompson et al., 2009), greater flexibility and convenience (Berke 2003; Smith, 2000) and lower psychological pressure in working from home attract women to HBBs. Thompson et al., (2009) assert that HBBs are found by people who want to test the water of self-employment for a shorter period, or those who would like to convert their ‘hobby’ into business where income remains secondary concern with meager growth aspirations.

In developing countries huge proportion of economic activity is concentrated in the informal sector (Anderson et al., 2013) mainly home-based and invisible (Lent et al., 2019) largely owned by women (Williams et al., 2017) hidden within the context of patriarchy (Carter and Shaw, 2006). Most research on HBBs is carried out in developed context; less is known about developing/Islamic societies (Write and Hitt, 2017). It would be interesting to explore ‘how’ the process of women home-based venture creation unfolds in the patriarchal, normative and resources constraint context of Peshawar. For this research we take institutional theory to understand what motivates women in Peshawar to start a home-based venture and how they successfully create and operate a venture in the normative context.

This research adds to the growing literature on home-based business and women entrepreneurship. By drawing on a contextual and institutional perspective to women owned home-based businesses we are not only adding to wider body of entrepreneurship research but also presenting a unique understanding of this growing sector of the small business research from a more informed perspective. Recent studies have called for understanding the heterogeneity of female business owners in new, under-researched and everyday contexts and spaces, home has largely been neglected in the spatial/locational studies of the women businesses (Henry et al., 2019; Price et al., 2019).

The paper begins with a discussion of context that makes the phenomenon unique and worth exploring. After a review of literature on HBBs we present Institutional Theory as a lens to inform the discussion and draw conclusions.

Female Entrepreneurship in Peshawar

Female labour force participation in Pakistan is just 22% of the total population . The lower level of resource investment in a female child when coupled with the ideology of

Pardah and Izaat becomes the basis for gender discriminations in all walks of life and a tool to limit mobility of women (Bhattacharya, 2014) which discourages them making critical decisions at their own (Roomi and Harrison, 2010). Women entrepreneurship is not approved in Pakistani society (Manzooret al., 2014). However, a change has been observed in this trend too and women participation has increased over time either due to economic needs or to achieve a noble socio-economic status (Firdouse, 2007; Roomi et al., 2018). However, it is equally important to note that the society is diverse and there are opposing perspectives regarding status of women pertaining to the rich diversity in social practices across all four provinces of Pakistan.

Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (KP) is one of the provinces of Pakistan, with relatively conservative cultural norms, patriarchy and strong gender discrimination. Gender and religion are among the organizing principals of society. Patriarchal beliefs are embedded and transmitted through local traditions and culture that predestines the social value and gender roles. Predominantly there exists a strong divide of production and reproduction activities that limit women to private sphere of life and men are to be the breadwinners in public domain. This is one of the major reasons of reduced female labor force participation.

Culture of KP is guided by the unwritten code of honor called Pukhtoonwali (Mohammad et al., 2016). A Pukhtoon at all times is expected to guard his land, family, women and property from external invaders. Among one of 4 tenants of Pukhtoonwali that is directly connected to women is "Namus" (women's sexual honor). Sexual integrity and chastity of women in family is extremely important as it reflect honor of entire family. In order to protect honor of the family, women are kept in household, and they are not allowed to mingle with unrelated men.

An attractive feature of Pukhtoon culture is the joint family system. Economically the Pukhtoon household is a single unit, where males of the family mainly share the expenses. Women have limited say in decision-making process in household particularly the ones related to financial affairs of the household. Women are highly appreciated when carrying their 'feminine identity' and perform their housebound role. Women especially those in rural areas of KP hardly find any job opportunities and if there is any a few might be 'allowed' to take them. Patriarchy has reduced women's rights and control over economic resources and their mobility and access to education (Mahbub ul Haq, 2000). The notion of Purdah also presents challenge to mobility of women, which has largely been used to keep them home, or they are not allowed for unaccompanied travel. However, the interpretation of Purdah varies in different social classes and family backgrounds. In some families traveling alone is not a big issue, while in families with conservative norms women avoid going out of home

unnecessarily. Workingwomen are considered ‘second class citizens’, or women with ‘masculine identities’, hence, face social disapprobation. Their independence and agency are interpreted as breaking the social norms (Jalal-ud-Din and Khan, 2008).

It is evident that career choices of women in general and in the KP in particular, are shaped by the complex intertwinement of gender, familial attitudes and socio-cultural norms. It would be interesting to explore what goes on within household that lead women decide about starting a business? How women ‘navigate through’ the normative context in creating and sustaining of home-based businesses? How do they negotiate the power structure within the household to get access to resources? How do they establish their belongingness even after starting a venture? How is this entire process shaped and how it unfolds? In order to understand that it is important to explore what HBB is? The next section will define HBB and will briefly review the extant research on the topic.

Home-Based Business(s)

Conceptually a home-based business is defined as any business entity engaged in selling products or services into the market operated by a self-employed person (entrepreneur), with or without employees, that uses residential property as a base from which the operation is run (Mason et al., 2011; bin Dahari et al., 2019). Existing research on home-based business is highly descriptive with limited theoretical insights (Anwar and Daniel, 2017). We find studies that lists characteristics of home-based businesses (Mason et al., 2011), reasons for starting home-based business (Phillips, 2002; Walker and Webster, 2004), work–life and family issues (Berke, 2003; Fitzgerald and Winter, 2001), growth prospects of these ventures (Meisam et al., 2017; Breen, 2010), employment generation (Earles and Lynn, 2006) and role of gender in opting for home as a business location (Nansen et al., 2010).

HBBs are heterogeneous and cannot be limited to any particular business area especially in this digital era (Sayers, 2010), however, the unique characteristics of almost all the HBBs is their small turn over (Mason et al., 2011), slow growth prospects (Breen, 2010) and invisibility (Mason et al., 2011). Existing research has highlighted that fact the HBBs face the issue of legitimacy and credibility (Wynarczyk and Graham, 2013). Walker (2003) demonstrates that HBBs are not only legitimate businesses but have higher growth potential.

HBB is very popular among women across the globe, justifying the great interest of scholars in HBBs from a ‘gender’ perspective (Breen, 2010). Women opt for home-based business due to non-availability or high opportunity cost of alternatives. Women owned HBBs are financially marginal as they work part time and opt for something that is currently trending (Loscocco and Smith- Hunter, 2004; Thompson et al, 2009; bin Dahari et al., 2019). Breen (2010) suggest some ‘push’ factors for women self-employment are desire for

challenge, better work environment, independence and meaningful work. Push factors mentioned here reflect the influence of local environment (and the prevailing norms) on employment choices of women (Minniti and Naudé, 2010), hence understanding that local context of high significance. Gender roles are embedded in specific contexts and may stipulate entrepreneurial behaviour (Welter et al., 2014).

Understanding of these external and social factors is important because these factors shape behavioral outcomes. By adopting institutional approach, we shall be able to highlight the normative context to understand women's actions and their context, we can offer an in-depth explanation of women owned home-based businesses and their ability to negotiate the startup in the patriarchal context.

Institutional Approach to Home-based Businesses

Institutions are defined as cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative systems that offer meaning and stability to social life (Scott, 2008). Cultural-cognitive institutions are about shared understandings, beliefs, assumptions and ideologies at a wider level. These systems shape the understanding of how a society works and the role each gender plays in it. Normative systems define the patterns of social life by describing social norms, values and behavior and stipulate the legitimate means to achieve the desired behaviours. These normative expectations are constrainters or enablers of individuals' social behaviour. To ensure conformity to the normative systems, the regulative systems offer rewards and punishments. In short, to attain social rewards, avoid sanctions and maintain legitimacy, individuals must abide by shared norms and values (Scott, 2008).

Individuals' choices are informed by injunctive norms (which involve the perception of the right thing to do) and descriptive norms (which involve the description of others' behavior) (Schultz et al., 2007). When a society admires women in their domestic role, the entrepreneurial activity is automatically low; as women perceive it as something 'undesirable' from a societal perspective (i-e descriptive norms disapprove any such activity). In the patriarchal society of Peshawar, women are expected to abide to their 'feminine identity and roles' where their wishes are subjugated to the normative context of household. In such circumstances it would be interesting to investigate what leads to the formation of these home-based businesses and what comes in the process of taking a masculine identity in a highly normative context and creating a legitimate venture.

For a business to be successful, it must be legitimate (Stringfellow et al., 2014) to get access to resources (Adler and Kwon 2002) and enhance credibility (Bensemman et al. 2018). Legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an [enterprise] are

desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995: 574). Research has highlighted two main perspectives of legitimacy. One suggests being legitimate, organizations tend to conform to the socially established standards of appropriateness (Mizruchi and Fein, 1999) due to external pressures and attain legitimacy. Strategic perspective suggests, organizations and organizational actors are always involved in legitimacy seeking behaviors (Pfeffer, 1981: 9). Suchman (1995) listed 3 strategies to build legitimacy. First, to conform to standards set by environment, second, to select an environment where the actor gets support in performing the action, while the third, and manipulate the existing structures in way that new standards of legitimacy can be created. In the context of entrepreneurship Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002: 423) added fourth category creation- “the creation of the social context, rules, norms, values, beliefs, models, etc.”

Women home-based businesses and their legitimation strategy also present an interesting area to be explored in the existence of both external forces to abide to the normative context and (internal) presence and enactment of individual agency to become an entrepreneur. We build on Lent et al., (2019) conceptualization of legitimacy proposing legitimacy as interplay of both traditional and strategic perspective “to (understand) external and internal influences on the legitimation process.... their nature, scope and interaction” (348). It would be interesting to see how women conform, select, manipulate (Suchman, 1995) and create environmental structures (if they do) (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002: 423) to be legitimate in their entrepreneurial endeavors. So, an institutional framework with Lent et al., conceptualization of legitimacy provides an interesting lens to explore the invisible presence of women HBBs.

2. Research Methodology

An interpretivist stance approach is adopted for this research because the main aim is to get an in-depth understanding of the institutional dynamics at play shaping women entrepreneurship in Peshawar (De-Bruin et al., 2007b; McGowan et al., 2012). Interpretivism is “associated with the philosophical position of idealism, and is used to group together diverse approaches, including social constructivism, phenomenology and hermeneutics; approaches that reject the objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independently of consciousness” (Collins, 2010: 10). Through Interpretive philosophy, the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and/or constituted with the underlying assumption that the world is complex and multilayered and textured (Mason, 2002). Interpretivist research philosophy suggests that researchers are social actors hence it is important for them to appreciate differences between individuals (Saunders et al., 2012).

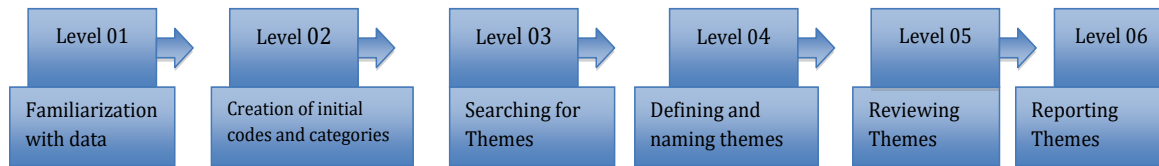
Interpretive approach seeks to interpret events and phenomena in terms of how the people concerned perceive and understand their own experience (Patton, 2002). The reality in this case is understood to be subjective and it is function of interpretation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). For contextual understanding it is pertinent to opt for a qualitative approach (Burg et al., 2020), both of the authors belong to the same culture and they prefer to indulge in conversation with women entrepreneurs, resulting in better understanding of the researcher's interest. On the practical side, there is no such database prevalent about women entrepreneurs and their invisible home-based enterprises that can be utilized for data collection (Roomi et al, 2018).

2.1 Data Collection

In order to understand the creation and management of women owned enterprises in the context of Peshawar, 20 women entrepreneurs selected through purposive sampling technique (Marshall, 1996). We also requested the interviewees if they could snowball us to some other women entrepreneurs. As in qualitative research information-rich cases that can reflect upon experiences to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell and Creswell, 2017) hence, a small sample size is appropriate. Women running their HBBs for at-least 03 years either in manufacturing or service sectors were contacted for the present study. After taking their consent, face-to-face indepth interviews were conducted with a focus on the entrepreneurial activity of the participants with a reference to the normative context of its occurrence. Interview provides thick description that helps in reaching the essence of the experience (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Medium of communication was adopted as per comfort of the respondent; hence, interviews were conducted either in Pushto (local language) or Urdu (national language). Interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the respondents also some observations were made. The length of the interviews varied from an hour to an hour and half.

2.2 Data Analysis

After intelligent verbatim transcription of the interviews, thematic analysis was carried out. Thematic analysis is one of the widely used qualitative data analysis tools (Huberman and Miles, 2002). It provides an opportunity to examine the perspective of various research participants that are helpful in generating unanticipated insights (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis helped us summarize insightful patterns from the large dataset to understand the entrepreneurial processes of WHBEs in their normative context. There is no consensus on how to carry out thematic analysis, for this research steps suggest by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed.



Thematic Analysis: Authors

The analysis resulted in the following themes

1. *The Normative Context of Action*
2. *Towards Familial and Social Acceptance*
3. *Turning the Table/ Taking Control*

2.3 Demographic Profile

Majority of the respondents (75%) were initially married with children. Out of married, 02 were divorced and 01 was widowed. Those who were single used to live with their parents. Majority of venture were in feminine businesses like beauty salon, boutique, stitching/embroidery, jewelry designing while couple of them were furniture designing, stage decoration/event management and Tent service etc. Most of the entrepreneurs (70%) started their ventures out of necessity while the remaining (30%) were opportunity entrepreneurs. Those with beauty salon used to have either another woman as an employee or someone from the household used to help them in their business activity.

3. Findings

3.1 The Normative Context of Action

In traditional Pakistani society, family is the fundamental social unit that provides identity, resources, and safety to its members while also influencing their life opportunities and choices. Surprisingly, women were well aware of the privileges granted to them by Islam; they were aware that they were not expected to provide for their families if the male members were there. They were grateful for the freedom to create their own business and handle their own finances. They understood, however, that in order to be acceptable, they had to adhere to conventional segregationist conventions and do business in places that were acceptable to the family. Through their logics and explanations, women were able to negotiate their startup (both necessity and opportunity). Women who were given the freedom to run their own businesses mentioned two key factors that aid them in negotiating. One was the financial assistance they would provide, and the other was the 'home-based' business.

“My husband lost his job and was unable to find another one. We were financially constrained; meeting ends was becoming possible while having young children. Leaving home and children unattended was not an option, so the only choice I was left with, was to do something from home, so that this sphere of life is not disturbed” (HBWE 6)

It can be seen that in some cases the venture becomes 'the only' source of income. HBWE 5 mentioned the disproportionate increase in prices and lower levels of earnings, which are not sufficient to meet the expenses. However, for prosperous entrepreneurs their business was a luxury or productive use of time. HBWE 03 stated

"I am an excellent artist and craftsperson, and my business is doing well." I make a good living, which I put towards my own costs rather than putting money into the family's coffers. But I'm also taking care of my household duties; my house is clean, my children are well fed and behaved, so if you have the skills and the time, there's no harm in starting something from home; look it is at the cost of nothing."

In Pukhtoon culture women are made to believe that they can have a life of their 'own' choice but after marriage, they will be free to take their decisions. With husband's support women were confidently starting and managing their enterprises. Women are the primary caregivers in the home; launching a business would not free them of their responsibilities. HBWEs were proud of their status as moms, and they valued the role of women in the home and in running a business.

"She (woman) has a significant role; women have a significant impact on the household; they are the ones who make or break a household," says HBWE4.

Women's home-based businesses revolved around traditional feminine pursuits, limiting their ability to influence their responsibilities. Her business ideas and decisions are ingrained in her family. She must ensure that her business does not interfere with her household responsibilities and obligations as a wife and mother, and she must be able to negotiate as a result.

3.2 Towards Familial and Social Acceptance

The necessity of belonging to a culture and family was emphasized by female entrepreneurs. The family, in particular, was shown as the focus of life. They are not allowed to do anything that may bring shame to the family. They established the business with the family's blessing and support, which helped them gain acceptability and respect.

"When I was about to start the business, my mother and mother-in-law were very upset and opposed it because they were afraid that it would disrupt my children and my household, and that their education would suffer as a result. So, as of now, I have started the venture and it has been 5 years, but I have to make sure that everything is running smoothly; my first priority is the household."(WHBE 8)

Women choose home-based business strategically to ascertain belonging to the families, and if they are not forced to, they establish a business after their children enters school and they have more free time (WHBE, 02 and 05). Another entrepreneur (19) states that her

husband had turned down her opportunity to work as a coach in a vocational centre, which would have given her access to the mainstream market, but this required her to leave her home for set hours, which was not acceptable.

In Pukhtoon few professions are considered appropriate for women because society consider it respectable like education, medicines and trade (from and within home). Interestingly, the definition of 'respectable' differs based on one's caste or culture. One of the interviewees talks about her experience breaking into the beauty industry and the challenges she experienced.

“...this occupation is associated with barbering, therefore they used to joke about what people would think if a girl from the Syed family worked as a barber” (WHBE 15).

The quote symbolises the environment for entrepreneurship; belonging to a particular cast limits industrial options and raises questions about authenticity. Women from other family origins, on the other hand, do not have this problem eg (WHBE 05). So there is social as well as familial perception of the various professions. Being home-based is essentially necessity pushed which has its own pros and cons for women and their ventures.

“...My children are my main priority in life, as is appropriately running the home and caring for your children. That is also an industry...their future is being shaped, as are their personalities. That's why, despite the fact that I was having a great time at the newspaper, I decided to leave. Then I thought I needed a vacation because, as you know, I've never been home during meal times and now I'm constantly home, living out my dream of being active while also caring for children, which is quite relaxing” (WHBE 20).

On the plus side, along with childcare and home obligations, businesspeople who were attached to their traditional identities found sanctuary and psychological cover in the fact that they are with their children and capable of caring for them.

On the other hand, opportunity entrepreneurs were feeling overwhelmed by the reality that running a business from home results in a smaller market share and fewer opportunities for expansion.

Being an entrepreneur is not a justification to avoid doing household chores; rather, in some cases, using a woman's business identity to belittle her is a taunt.

“...My in-laws would mock me that "oh yes, she is a businesswoman, why will she be performing such home activities?" if there was a delay in cooking lunch” (WHBE13).

Such family members' behaviour causes psychological problems for women, who do not take pride in their business identity and instead feel terrible for not being able to effectively execute domestic responsibilities. However, this is the case in houses where the powerful family figure is unhappy with the business or simply wants to keep their women under control by pulling their legs.

Getting support in both material and non-material ways is another key part of belonging. Women, particularly males, require financial and emotional support from their families, which they can only receive if they follow the norms set down for them.

“...I never thought of it that way. ...Whether its my money or is his money. I suppose family or husband has to give because if I was not working before, like I was not on job that I was being paid for, which I could have used for business, so yes they have to provide me”.

Interestingly Pukhtoon women entrepreneurs think it is the responsibility of male members of family to help them financially. Because they rely on their families for entrepreneurial capital, they are cautious in their company decisions and choose something with a minimal risk of failure. Furthermore, it was discovered that families only invest in an enterprise if they believe it is credible.

Empirical results show that family is not only the main source of financial capital but it provides strong support in managing and running business and household. Entrepreneurs are vigilant of their families' role and they highly appreciate the role played by their parents, husband and children in particular. An entrepreneur shared her response to a critic

“I am not doing any sin. My husband is sitting [with me] and I am doing it with his permission, if he has no objection you are not allowed to object, just go away and mind your own business” (WHBE 6)

Her husband's trust and support gave her the fortitude to face and respond to the criticism. It is important to highlight, however, that this assistance is contingent on women's capacity to plan their operations around the family's preferences.

The way a society encourages women to start businesses reflects social concerns about belonging; in the case of HBWE, this may be observed in the women's business choices. They chose businesses that are primarily referred to be feminine and that may be run from home with minimal interaction from the opposing gender. Not only did women seek approval from their families, but they also sought approval from their peers. They were able to achieve social belonging by replicating and reproducing established conventions of what constitutes a woman's 'entrepreneurial' status. WHBE stated that their ventures are in sectors where there are fewer chances of mixing with people of the other gender, and that if it is necessary for the business, they maintain proper purdah. However, this implication might be interpreted in a variety of ways.

“Purdah means to cover yourself as much as possible when you're a Muslim, so while I'm here, it's my house, the way I live with my children, and those that come are all ladies; gents are not allowed. I can wear jeans, shorts, skirts, or Pakistani dresses at home, but when I go out, I have to wear a full abaya with Hijab because it gets you respect.”

(WHBE11)

Observing Pardah not only give social approval but leads to legitimacy, men of the surrounding households would allow their women to visit that business if they perceive that WHBE is observing Purdah. Again this observance can be symbolic in many cases to get legitimacy.

Purdah introduces a new concept of constrained mobility: women in Pukhtoon culture are expected to stay at home or be escorted by a male family member when venturing out. This expectation of being accompanied has a severe impact on women entrepreneurs, who must wait for the availability of 'someone' to accompany them even if they need supplies. However, after a few years in business, one of the entrepreneurs noted that they have gained confidence and are able to deal with external factors, thus they were allowed to go alone or with another woman or child in numerous circumstances.

3.3 Turning the Table: Taking Control

Women entrepreneurs generally believed that they do not have control over several aspects of their lives, however, after successfully running their ventures now they have started experiencing positive changes on personal and family level. The majority of the entrepreneurs were necessity entrepreneurs, so their ventures have brought about financial ease. They were able to provide better meals and educational possibilities for their children as a result of their efforts. Children's abilities symbolise the mothers' abilities in Pukhtoon society, thus if they act badly or do poorly in school, it is the mother's fault. Women were ecstatic that working from home allows them to teach their children and demonstrate that they are "excellent" mothers. For opportunity entrepreneurs' entrepreneurship is way to become independent, confident and stay close to their children while being at work. Further at family level women felt that after financial independence they are heard in the household.

“That is me; when you have authority and are self-sufficient, you gain respect and your viewpoint is valued. My husband now asks me how to do this or that, and I'm stumped. As a result, I do not always impose my opinion, but it is important. As a result, they follow my recommendations” WHBE 10 explained the decision-making process in her home.

This is also related to the issue of self-assurance. Entrepreneurs stated that they are confident in expressing their opinions and arguing for their rights, but that they prefer to engage with important parties rather than confront them. This ability, however, is not solely dependent on the venture; upbringing and education also play a role in building women's confidence.

Women feel empowered with their ventures, and they are content with their contribution to their household and family. Related to financial independence, most of the entrepreneurs mentioned they need not suppress their desires for themselves or their children anymore.

WHBE (6) stated *“The confidence you gain as a woman should be earned... You will not ask your spouse for money every time you want something; if you want to give something to your children, do so with your own money; if you want to give something to your husband, do so with your own money. It makes me happy”*.

Women used to look at their male custodians for their desires, which have now been met on their own. An interesting point was observed here that some women felt that they need to take permission from their male guardians for spending the money (WHBE 3, 8,11, 14, 18) while those with some level of education and exposure were aware of their rights and control over their earned income.

Turning tables from the perspectives of the wider family can be seen from the fact that venture gave them confidence to stand for themselves. Successful running of venture has resulted in elevated status in wider family, and they are seen as role model.

(WHBE 13) *“after seeing me, my other sister-in laws who are not educated they started following me one started beauty salon, the other did boutique. Why? They follow me as role model now”*.

Women who once faced familial objection have started getting appreciation by bringing positive change to household and now were earning praise and applause.

In Pukhtoon tradition, keeping in touch with extended relatives is extremely essential, and women have deliberately taken advantage of this. As a result, the businesses were not only satisfying social and familial obligations, but also engaging in some word-of-mouth marketing. WHBE (11) spoke of it as

“I manage extended family relationships, which is critical in keeping the mother-in-law pleased and ensuring that you receive the clients. I 'manage' it, and if I have to go, I will do so in the evening. I was able to strike a balance (business and relationships)”.

Though it is time consuming to leave the household and attend various occasions, but they strategically use this to promote their ventures.

The ventures of these women had an emancipatory impact on them and their households.

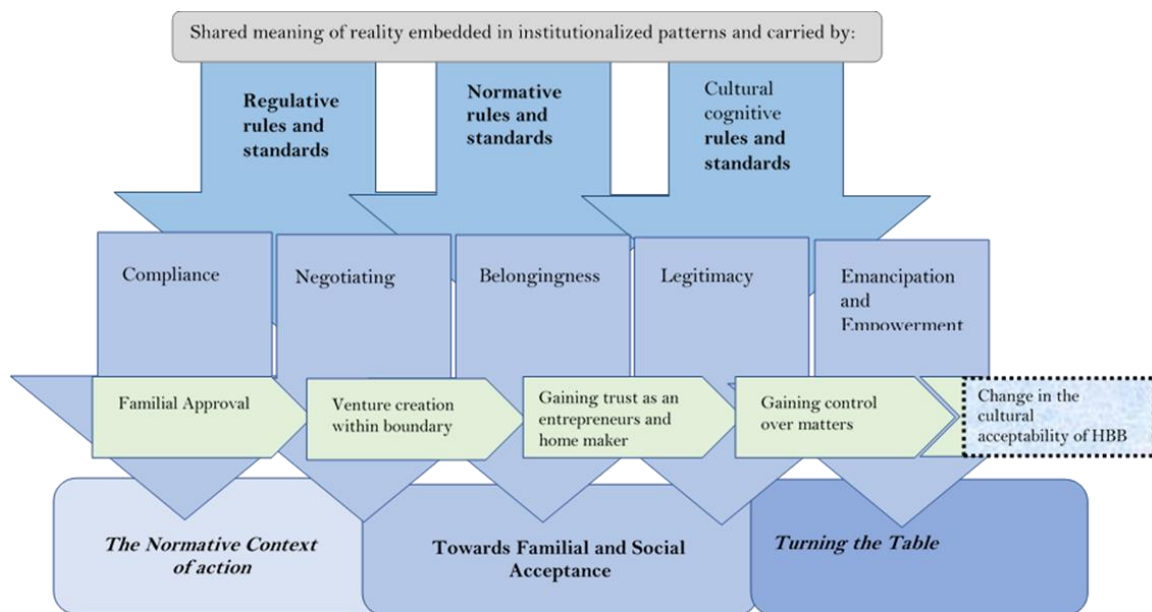
“...It is very important for yourself personally, because when you earn, you may have the experience that you think of yourself as very strong and confident; however, if your husband gives you in lacs (millions), you may not feel that happiness and satisfaction, because when your husband gives you money, he also asks you about your expenditure, and you are not answerable to anyone for your money; you can spend it wherever you

want. ...”(WHBE19).

This can be seen for both necessity and opportunity entrepreneurs, they were happy and passionate about their venture, they wanted to grow large subject to cultural and financial restrictions. They were aware of the fact that their survival and progress is linked to help and support from family and approval from society. To make sure that they get it, they were tactfully molding the norms without overtly confronting.

4. Discussion

The life of Muslim women living in an Islamic society is entirely different from their counterparts elsewhere (Dupree and Gouttierre 1997). Khalid and Frieze (2004: 293) note, “Although there are common features among these women, the realities of their lives vary greatly from group-to-group,” as “Islam provides a general framework for life, with a range of individual options”. Our research aims to better understand how women-owned HBBs are established and run in a strongly normative Muslim environment



Shared Meaning of Reality Embedded in Institutional Patterns Carried by WHBE in KP: Authors

Findings illustrate the intertwining of women owned home-based businesses with the normative context of its occurrence through three themes of the normative context of action, the desire and efforts to accomplish social and familial acceptance or the creation and running of venture which gave them power to turn the table as a result. Using these themes as lens to understand the dynamics of these home-based enterprises it is clear that the enterprising ability of a woman entrepreneur in Peshawar is significantly shaped by her ability to negotiate various roles and identities. The strongly patriarchal structure of Peshawar embeds

female agency in household and renders her dependent on the family for taking any role other than the traditional one. In order to turn entrepreneurial intentions into actions women in Peshawar have to negotiate the gendered identities, household consensus and their relational embeddedness to bypass the relational and structural barriers. Findings depicts that they have negotiated their agency tactfully by linking the motivation to enterprise with financial needs of the family and have reduced objection of family by strategically selecting home as business location.

Most of the women overtly expressed about the knowledge of their right to business given by Islam, by narrating the example of Hazrat Khadija who was an entrepreneur and wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but alongside they were feeling religious and social pressures to be stay at home mom. The findings are aligned to previous studies such as Essers and Benschops (2009), Al-Dajani and Marlow (2010) and Roomi et al., (2018). We can conclude that women use religion to get some space to exercise their agency while negotiating their normative context. However, Pukhtoon culture is more rigid, knowing their right to work, family's willingness is kind of prerequisite. Not only male members of the household but permission of elderly women e.g. mother or mother in law is equally significant. These women have the ability to influence operations of the ventures by exercising their powers in the form of increasing domestic workload or withdrawing support in childcare and domestic responsibilities.

Belongingness is among core social motivations that underpin much social behaviour (Fiske, 2018). Following family's will be an effort to accomplish belongingness as an entrepreneur by Pukhtoon women, nonconforming can have serious consequences in the form of breaking up of family ties and relations. Close connection to family members opens door for financial and non-financial support from the family (Williams and Horodnic, 2016). Pukhtoon women do not have any capital of their own that can be used as investment and even if they do they cannot use it without taking family in confidence (Gohar et al, 2018). Women wanted to be accepted and appreciated with this new identity rather than being shunned.

Women were able to get legitimacy as an entrepreneur by responding to family values, cushioning on family's needs and operating as per social expectation. To get social acceptance and respect as entrepreneurs the social actors are supposed to abide to conventional norms and beliefs (Scott, 2008; Taliss, 2019). Entrepreneurs utilize various strategies to gain social legitimacy like "conforming to the rules of the cultural order; selecting an environment(s) whose constituents will support current practices; manipulating the current environment by attempting to make changes that would achieve consistency

between an organization and its environment and creating a new social context by creating new rules, norms, values, scripts beliefs, models....” (Lent et al., 2019: 18), however, in the present study we found that it was more of an effort to accomplish belongingness through legitimacy practices. They started home-based not because they wanted to be legitimate first, but they wanted to stay connected and be a part of the family.

Keeping with the domestic identities, taking on another one becomes a double-edged sword sometimes, which adds pressure to women’s lives. However, their ability to add to finances gave them power to turn the table in their favor. Women were not powerful and resourceful enough to create a new social context; hence, their limited agency was utilized in a way that they could get maximum of both worlds by taking family on board. Their ventures have not only added to the family’s wallet but have brought about positive changes to their personal wellbeing.

5. Conclusion

This research is an effort to understand the home-based businesses of women entrepreneurs in the normative context of Peshawar, Pakistan. We have employed institutional theory to understand how gender and entrepreneurship co-exist in a highly normative, conservative and traditional context. To the best of our knowledge institutional theory has not been used so far in the HBB literature, hence, we bring novel insights to understand the intricacies of HBBs in the context of Peshawar.

In the context of Peshawar being home-based is a necessity pushed, as well as a strategic choice. It has its pros like little start-up cost, being available for domestic tasks, help in childcare, however, it does have the cons associated to it in the form of small customer base, less creative and smaller growth chances. Women in Peshawar do not start home-based business keeping in mind all these pros and cons, to them being home-based is an effort to accomplish belongingness, which later lead to attaining legitimacy and support. Studies using institutional theory have not used the perspective of belongingness; rather they assumed that following norms is to gain legitimacy (Lent et al, 2019). We believe that individuals cannot be isolated from the social structure and the concept of belongingness connects individual (woman) to the social (wider culture) through family. Women in the sample were adhering to the norms of the family because they wanted to stay connected and be a part of them.

Bell (1999) highlights belongingness as performative, created and recreated through different practices. These HBWEs were performing their belongingness by making sure they follow the normative construct of family and entrepreneurial identity does not overshadow their conventional gender identity. These entrepreneurs were responsible for family care and

other domestic responsibilities and were supposed to manage a constant shift and balance of domestic and business life, both of which are located within the family (Hamilton, 2006). The choices made in the process are complex and dynamic whereby women make sense of work and family throughout.

Women in order to start venture have to negotiate various social barriers in the form of gendered attitudes and practices (Fielden and Dawe, 2004). Empirics show that women in Peshawar strategically adjust gender norms than conforming to it. The adherence and disobedience produce tension, which motivates social actors to innovate but within the confines of patriarchal structures. Women felt empowered and emancipated by being able to take control of some aspects of their lives after getting some financial independence. The respondents expressed that their self-employment has resulted in autonomy and assertiveness (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010) may it be on the very basic level, but they do have a say (Gohar et al., 2018). The HBBs of women are not to challenge the norms of Pukhtoonwali rather they epitomize the navigation and negotiation of gendered identities within the 'protected enclave of domestic sphere' (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010:13) with some support from male members of family. Women in KP never aimed to replace the prevailing narrative rather they through their entrepreneurial practices were (re)creating, negotiating and maintaining the gender, hence these enterprises were not seen as a threat to the wider normative context, but as an effort to accomplish belongingness in both public and private sphere of life.

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