

## Empirical paper

# An empirical analysis of the impact of family moral support on Turkish women entrepreneurs<sup>☆</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

It is well documented that women entrepreneurs add exponential growth to the economic well-being of countries. The impact of family moral support on Turkish women entrepreneurs' is examined including major challenges (i.e. personal problems and recognition of poor managerial skills and knowledge) and advantages (i.e. perceptions of helpfulness of education and work experience). Our findings show that family moral support can have both positive and negative impact on Turkish women entrepreneurs. Implications and future research are discussed.

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## Un análisis empírico del impacto del apoyo moral de la familia sobre las mujeres emprendedoras turcas

## R E S U M E N

Existen antecedentes teóricos que señalan que las mujeres emprendedoras tienen efecto en el bienestar económico de los países. El impacto del apoyo moral de la familia sobre las mujeres emprendedoras turcas analiza los principales retos (los problemas personales, habilidades directivas) y las ventajas (educación y experiencia en el trabajo). En

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nuestra investigación hemos encontrado que el apoyo moral de la familia puede tener ambos impactos, negativo y positivo en las mujeres emprendedoras turcas. Se analizan las implicaciones y las futuras investigaciones asociadas a este proceso.

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## Introduction

It is well documented that women entrepreneurs add exponential growth to the economic well-being of countries by reducing poverty and increasing the overall level of family income, which translates into better education and health for their children. International experience shows that it leads to better governance and increases the ability of a country to compete globally. Scholars, as well as government policy experts and practitioners, have all focused on the importance of this issue. In fact, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, one of the top journals in the field, devoted an entire special issue on new directions in women's entrepreneurship in May 2012.

In Turkey, labor force participation overall by women is low, less than 22% compared to an average of 62% in OECD countries and compared to an average of 33% in a group of selected comparison countries with similar levels of economic development (*Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO) and The World Bank, 2010*). In fact, women's share of participation in the labor has fallen from 34.3% in 1988 to 21.6% in 2008 (*The World Bank, 2009a, 2009b*); and now, Turkey has the distinction among OECD countries or any country in the Europe and Central Asia region as having the fewest women participating in its economy development (*Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO) and The World Bank, 2010*).

To date, enough is not known about Turkish women entrepreneurs' challenges and advantages and how family may play a role in these. In an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, we examine the impact of family support on the challenges (i.e. personal problems and recognition of poor managerial skills and knowledge) and advantages (i.e. perceptions of helpfulness of education and work experience). We develop and test our hypotheses on a sample of 140 Turkish women entrepreneurs. Then, we present and discuss our findings and provide implications for future research.

## Literature overview

### Challenges faced by Turkish women entrepreneurs

There are many reasons for this phenomenon. The report entitled, "Female Labor Participation in Turkey: Trends Determinants and Policy Framework," found that poor women in urban areas with low education levels face major barriers. They work in the informal economy with little pay, no benefits, and harsh working conditions development (*Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO) and The World Bank, 2010*). *Landig (2011)* summarized the challenges facing women in Turkey and broke these into social and structural challenges.

### Social challenges

The social challenges include a lack of self-confidence, facing dominant patriarchal mindsets and sexism that is institutionalized, bearing the responsibility for the household and childrearing, and getting only one chance at being in business or in the workforce because the family's and the Turkish society's lack of support (*Moghadam, 1993*). According to *Moghadam (1993)*, women's subordination in Muslim countries is connected to urbanization, industrialization, the governments' development role, women's subordination by class and region, state policies, economic processes, and dynamics. The *Central Intelligence Agency (2012)* and *The World Bank (2012)* determined that women's status in Turkey is due to a growing urban population, an industrialization process that is incomplete, differences between regions, ruling political party, power struggles in government, high external debt, high unemployment, a high account deficit, and an uncertain engagement with the EU. The latest report calls for improved equity and support services, including increasing early childhood education, support services such as childcare, and the development of a private gender equity certification program (*The World Bank, 2012*). Necessity-based entrepreneurship occurs when women are pushed into starting a business to escape unemployment rather than launching a venture as an opportunity (*Orhan & Scott, 2001*).

### Structural challenges

The first structural challenge is a lack of education and knowledge in the areas of skill development, basic business, and women's rights. While women are becoming more educated, it is still the lowest among the EU Member States and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (*Landig, 2011*). As of August 2012, 70.4% of the total labor force was male and 29.6% was female. For those having education below high school, it was 70.1% for males and 26.9% for females, and for those with higher education, it was 85.6% for males and 70.9% for females (*Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012*). While there is a positive relationship between labor force participation and women's education level (*Gunduz-Hosgor & Smits, 2008*), it will take longer for education barriers to break down due to the quality and pace of implementation.

A second structural challenge, according to *Landig (2011)*, is legal discrimination and the lack of economic and political power. When women attempt to gain employment or launch a business, they confront a number of barriers, including access to financing, unequal opportunity in the application process, securing locations to rent or buy, access to reasonable and high quality trade goods or raw materials, lack of customer confidence and respect, sexual harassment, lack of community respect, and wage differentials (*Hisrich & Brush, 1988*;

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