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Exploring the Influence of Traditional Social Norms on Women's Entrepreneurial Growth in Charsadda District

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ABSTRACT

The entrepreneurship of women has become an important factor of the economy, social inclusion, and empowerment at the international level. Nonetheless, in most of the developing world, such as the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in Pakistan, the traditional social norms remain as a major constraint to the entrepreneurial opportunities and the development of women entrepreneurs. This paper will address the impact of these norms on women in small business in the Charsadda District in relation to how the influence of cultural expectations and authority of family members and members of the local society holds women back in business establishment, growth and viability. It is based on the Social Norms Theory which focuses on how the empowerment of empirical expectations (what people think others are doing) and normative expectations (what people think others think they ought to do) in terms of entrepreneurial activities among women in social conservative situations. Perhaps, the study also tackles an acute issue; women in Charsadda and other areas like this are not freely pursuing bigger ventures that involve access to credit, training, and market experiences because of limiting norms. The literature review provides a clear picture of patterns in global and regional levels of normative restriction toward women entrepreneurship and emphasizes the necessity to focus on local, norm-sensitive strategies. It is also shown by the study that it has practical implications on policy makers, practitioners, and development agencies, which is that by engaging families and communities, role models, and developing culturally sensitive support programs are important. Future research directions involve both the quantification of normative influence and trials of norm-focused intervention,

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comparative distality studies, the use of digital platforms, and longitudinal analysis of the effect of norms and entrepreneurial performance as time varies. Through the combination of theory and empirical evidence plus guidance, the study would add to the knowledge of women entrepreneurship in the conservative environment and create a platform that would support sustainable growth, empowerment, and social transformation in Charsadda District.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Social Norms, Entrepreneurial Growth, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Charsadda, Social Norms Theory, Gendered Constraints, Developing Countries

Background Information

The entrepreneurship of women is slowly being taken as a critical tool to inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the world. Despite the increased rate of female entrepreneurship in most countries, there are gender disparities that arise in terms of entry, expansion, and longevity of entrepreneurship (Begum, 2024). Researchers and policy-makers underscore that in addition to access to finance and markets, it is socio-cultural and normative restrictions that encompass gendered expectations, disability to move, and reputational sanction which are important in the genration of women business pathways (OECD, 2025a; OECD, 2025b). Women who are entrepreneurs experience institutional biases, lack of access to venture finance, and networks over barriers to high-income economies (OECD, 2025a). Conversely, in most setting of developing countries, weak institutions may be complemented by traditional social norms to create even stronger restrictions: women may be restricted in their movements, ownership of assets, and where they can work- none of which can be effectively addressed alone by interventions based in training, finance, or market access (Begum, 2024). The social-norms model would also offer a very useful diagnosis: in situations where women think others want them to act in certain gendered ways, and in situations where they are afraid to act in a way that would make them face social penalties, choices by entrepreneurs are limited even in circumstances where the entrepreneur could have access to formal resources (Bicchieri, 2006).

These global dynamics on women entrepreneurship have an institutional and socio-cultural context in Pakistan, although there is also specific locality in the context of women entrepreneurship. The research shows that the proportion of female participation in labour forces and entrepreneurial activity is low, although females constitute more than half of the population (Masood and Masood, 2024). Studies find common obstacles: restricting institutionalization, the discriminatory legislation, the prevalence of patriarchal social rules, the low level of female literacy, the lack of mobility and access to social interaction (Ahmad, Shaheen, and Hussain, 2021; Yaqoob, 2020). Indicatively, female entrepreneurs in Pakistan claim that family acceptance, social acceptability, and location of motion have a significant impact on the type of business they choose to operate, possibility of expanding the business and decision on whether to reinvest the business (Yaqoob, 2020). A recent study conducted in Pakistan revealed that family and social support proved to be the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial achievement of women, even higher than the

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innovation and need to achieve alone (Pasha, Sahar, and Zafar, 2023). These results support the argument that normative constraints are not peripheral but tend to be central in making gender disparity in entrepreneurial performance.

The diversity of the country is conspicuous in Pakistan at the provincial and district level and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province is characterized by unique aspects. KPK is typified by a larger proportion of rural people and more conservative gender norms in most of the districts with a relatively low level of female literacy and involvement in labour as compared to other provinces. The available empirical research on the topic of the women entrepreneurs in KPK proves that a large number of women venture in home-based enterprise or micro-enterprise that remain acceptable within a socially approved setting but they are limited in expansion by the necessity to achieve family approval, restriction on movement, and support that institution does not provide to women in the context of both entrepreneurship (Haram, 2021). A single quantitative survey in Hazara and Peshawar divisions showed that informal institutional support, i.e. family support, fear of failure and social networking, positively influenced venture creation in women in a statistically significant manner, which is interesting in understanding how normative and informal mechanisms contribute to establishing businesses in KPK (Saleem, Asif, and Lodhi, 2024).

Charsadda District (in KPK) is a promising case to investigate on the district level. Although district-level research is only beginning to develop, emerging field research and local dialogue programs indicate that there are still normative constraints to women entrepreneurship. It has been reported locally that although women are socially acceptable in running business ventures at the home based level, and these serve as supplements to the household income, norms of honor (izzat), gendered mobility, and the acceptable interaction with male customers or suppliers do not encourage business growth beyond the level of subsistence. A study conducted at the district level has noted that so long as the entrepreneurial programs do not involve not only the women but community norms, family decision-makers as well, the growth of a business by women entrepreneurs will be constrained (Bibi, 2025). This is an emerging body of evidence that highlights the claim that context-specific expression of social norms is important: in Charsadda, the situation of the intertwining between the traditional Pashtun culture, rural market form, and institutional reach implies that normative constraints can be acute and need specific research.

Combined with all this worldwide evidence, the comparative studies of developing countries and those that specifically focused on Pakistan bring about two interconnected conclusions. To begin with, social norms may frequently be the instrument according to which the rest of the constraints are imposed on women entrepreneurs–limited finance, inefficient training or market exclusion. As an example, in cases where micro-finance is available to women, even mobility restriction and reputational risk norms may leave women unable to supply or market beyond the local networks. Second, normative influence is very local: what will be viewed as a binding norm where one district and not the other based on local culture, gender regimes and institutional interaction. This implies that the diagnostic work at the district level, that is the measurement of both the empirical expectations (what people do) and normative expectations (what people believe they should do), charting

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the sanction regimes, and associating them to the outcomes of entrepreneurship, is critical to the formulation of effective, culturally realistic interventions. In this respect, the investigation into the role of traditional social norms affecting the entrepreneurial development of women in Charsadda District is both timely and relevant in terms of policy: it provides connections between the world knowledge and local specifics using which the intervention can be developed to fit rural and conservative contexts of Pakistan and other countries.

Problem Statement

Over the past decades, there has been international concern with the emergence of women entrepreneurship as a key ingredient in the inclusive economic development, increased employment as well as alleviation of poverty. And in spite of this potential, the women globally still experience significant obstacles when it comes to launching businesses, growing them, and maintaining businesses. Studies indicate that other more traditional factors like the availability of financing, market and technical expertise are not the only limitations to have an entrepreneurial success, but social and cultural norms are at the core of women in entrepreneurship (Begum, 2024). In most of the high income economies, women entrepreneurs grapple with gendered networks, unawareness bias in fund disbursing and industry division (OECD, 2025a). But in the situation where the lower income and developing world context prevails the normative constraints tend to have a higher significance as they work under the absence of robust institutional security and supportive systems. As an example, women in developing nations are often constrained in access to both physical movement and reputation when exercising non-traditional jobs and the resources of their families- factors which enhance the impact of financial and market limitations (Saviours, 2024).

The entrepreneurship disparity between men and women in most of the developing nations is still significant. The women are allowed to think, possess talent and readiness to think but the structural environment and social norms inhibits them to transform micro-subsistence operations into growth-focused enterprise. As an illustration, a study of female entrepreneurs around the world singles out the absence of female role-models, prejudice by investors and fear of failure due to the expectation of society as the main obstacles (Digital Relay, 2025). Such limitations are especially intense in the territories where patriarchal gender roles are heavily enforced, and the role of women is supposed to complement, but not replace the work of men. This, then, is not merely a problem of making finance or capacity-building possible, but changing the normative environment where women are not as argentic to entrepreneurship as they can be.

To Pakistan, the issue of women as entrepreneurs is exceptionally hot. It has one of the lowest levels of women as entrepreneurs in the world, with approximately 12 percent of the corporations owned by women as opposed to approximately 34 percent worldwide (JERSR, 2023). The participation of female labor force is still low (approximately 22 percent), and women experience embedded obstacles through the entrepreneurship ecosystem such as financing, training, networks, legal/regulatory bias and social norms (Amir, 2023; Saviours, 2024). Indicatively, women entrepreneurs in Pakistan have lamented against the lack of collateral in accessing

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bank credit, male dominated business network and gender discriminated views on the competence of business (Turn0search10). Social conventions confine women, deter their interaction with others, and mandate them with the most significant part of the household care, therefore, depriving them of time and cognitive capacity to expand the business (Turn0search18). In addition, there exists policies but they are poorly implemented--women could be entitled to special credit schemes or talking about schemes that are designed especially to be obtained by them, there is still a barrier to their effective accessibility (Turn0search2).

In Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province offers a very difficult situation to women entrepreneurs. KPK is mostly rural, with relatively lower female literacy and labor participation levels and with strong conservative gender norms, such as restrictive mobility, higher honor anxiety (izzat) and less market exposure (Haram, 2021; Saviours, 2024). The analysis on women entrepreneurs in KPK revealed that most of them are involved in low-value activities, which are located at home, and they tend to work informally as the environment is unfavorable, the levels of female entrepreneurship in KPK were extremely low (Enablers & Constraints, 2024). It was found that the influence of informal institutions in terms of family expectations, societal sanctions and conservative norms was very instrumental as a hindrance to venture creation (Saleem, Asif and Lodhi, 2024). The perceived pressure to conform to the family-related needs or to the avoidance of visibility meant that although women obtained training or access to micro-credit, they could not grow their businesses.

The empirical gap in research is larger at the district level (Charsadda District in KPK) although anecdotal and policy-brief information indicate that women entrepreneurs are subjected to extreme normative restraints. Even though women can initiate home-based or micro-enterprises that are not socially unacceptable, they have trouble growing as it is the very social norms which allow small scale, in-house projects (like handicrafts or food processing) which bind when social norms are violated by trying to move to outside markets or employ some workers or travel to carry out business. Gender norms of men guardianship, sexed territory, and legitimate areas of activity are established as reputational limits and confine development above subsistence (SDPI, 2022). Moreover, in the districts, such as Charsadda where infrastructure, market connectivity, and institutional clinch are of lesser strength the normative constraints have intersected with the economic-structural constraints in limiting the entrepreneurial performances of women.

The essence of the issue, however, is that the entrepreneurial development of women in such areas like Charsadda is not suppressed by the lack of access to finance or market only, but by the combination of social rules and structural discrimination. The normative environment, as it relates to women mobility, family decision-making, approach to deal with male customers or suppliers, and good business sectors define the opportunities, strategies, and outcome of women entrepreneurs Unless such normative constraints are met, then any interventions that are narrowly centered on finance, and training or market might be insufficient. Otherwise put, the normative context is a multiplier of other restraints and is frequently the establishing factor. This implies that the inability to address social norms compromises efforts of women entrepreneurs to leave the micro, necessity based and home-based operations into

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larger, growth-driven business.

Aim of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the role of traditional social norms in how the entrepreneurial development of women in Charsadda District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, operates. The research aims at identifying the particular cultural, social, and family elements that limit or influence the entrepreneurial activities, decision-making, and business growth of women. In addition, it seeks to give a contextual meaning of interaction of these social norms with structural issues like education, finance, and institutional support to facilitate or dis-favor women in the entrepreneurial success. Finally, the study will seek to make policy and community-level suggestions on facilitation of a favorable socio-cultural support to female entrepreneurs in Charsadda.

Objectives of the Study

In order to determine the existing traditional social norms that affect women entrepreneurship in Charsadda District.

To find how social norms of gender roles, family expectations, and community perceptions influence women business growth and mobility.

To assess the association between normative constraints (e.g. limited mobility, patriarchal decision making, social stigma) and access of women to such resources as finance, training and markets

To understand coping and adaptation styles of women entrepreneurs to overcome social and institutional constraints in Charsadda

To develop policy and social intervention measures that could alleviate the normative constraints and create more enabling environment to help women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to become more entrepreneurial.

Research Questions

What are the traditional social norms in Charsadda that define the acts of entrepreneurship and involvement in business by women?

What impact do gender roles and family influence on the choice of women, their mobility, and their business growth in the district?

How do social norms interplay with institutional and structural processes (access to credit, education and markets) to create effect in women in their entrepreneurial development?

What are the strategies of the women entrepreneurs operating in Charsadda to overcome the limiting social and cultural context?

Which policies, institutional and community-based initiatives would work to minimize the normative seclusion to female entrepreneurship in Charsadda?

Significance of the Study

The importance of the given research is in a combination of interconnected aspects, among which are economic, social, policy, and academic. To begin with, economically speaking, women entrepreneurs are an under-exploited resource that has

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untapped full potential of returns when it comes to their participation and development. Studies have found that the entrepreneurial performance of women positively correlates with a better household welfare, expanded labor markets and economic vibrancy in the developing economies (Feng, Ahmad and Zheng, 2023). This affects economic growth in a place that does not allow women to fully participate: this is shown by research that found that in most of the developing environments, higher gender equality in entrepreneurship and labor force participation is connected with higher national income (A Study on Role of Women Entrepreneurs in G20 Countries, 2024). This research fills the gap between the potential and actual results of the economy by considering the aspects of a differentiation of how traditional social norms contribute to the development of women in entrepreneurship in Charsadda.

Second, women entrepreneurship leads to empowerment, agency and inter-generational benefits on the social aspect. The studies conducted in developing settings demonstrate that besides their personal autonomy level increases, the wellbeing of their families and societies tends to increase as well when women have access to entrepreneurship opportunities, which is ensured by enhanced income, decision-making power and social status (Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Developing Contexts, 2022). Nevertheless, the cultural and normative obstacle level is still high and blocking the transformational prospects of women business operation in most locales (Determinants of the Business Performance of Women Entrepreneurs in the Developing World Context, 2024). This study can inform interventions to not only increase economic growth but to increase social inclusion and gender equity since it investigated the normative barriers in Charsadda.

Third, to policy and practice, this study is important as it helps to focus on the role of social norms that can be underestimated in determining the outcomes in entrepreneurship. A lot of the current policy attention in Pakistan and other such situations is that access to finance, technical capabilities or market access, but there is less of a systematic attempt to deal with the normative environment (Factors affecting women entrepreneurs to success in Pakistan, 2021). This research can lead to the evidence of more holistic and context-based programs responses through mapping of how traditional norms in Charsadda relate with other structural variables (finance, mobility, networks) including family-engagement, community-dialogue, norm-shifting campaigns, and socially acceptable business models. Such interventions are essential in the district such as Charsadda where the traditional entrepreneurship programs have restricted coverage.

Fourth, scholar-wise, the paper adds to the body of knowledge of female-related entrepreneurship as it examines a local and little-investigated area, the Charsadda District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Numerous research focuses on the data on a national or provincial level, whereas little research goes down to the level of a district and social norms as well as mechanisms of influence. The study provides a fine-tuning acquisition regarding the merging of the local culture, family formations, market connections, and normative assumptions in a rural-semi-rural Pakistani district. This micro-level data contributes to the theoretical knowledge of the working mechanism of social norms as constraints of the binding influences of entrepreneurial systems, thus contributing to the knowledge making in the field of entrepreneurship and gender

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studies.

Lastly, in development practitioners, the results of this study could influence program design, program monitoring and evaluation on women entrepreneurship initiatives. As the implementers will be in a better position to develop locally relevant interventions, by creating particular normative barriers and adaptive measures employed by women entrepreneurs in Charsadda Where the norms of gender role, mobility and business legitimacy are high, the effectiveness and sustainability of entrepreneurship interventions can be enhanced with the help of tailored approaches.

Literature Review

Global Landscape of Women's Entrepreneurship

Over the last ten years, the literature on female entrepreneurship has increased considerably exposing the reality that women are creating businesses at an alarming rate in most of the regions worldwide but women-led firms have limited growth and expansion capability. Recent bibliometric literature determines that in developed and developing nations, the topics of "entrepreneurial intention" as well as gender networks and normative constraints prevail in the literature (Sisovic et al., 2024). According to this review, the current research has surpassed merely recording access to finance, in its turn to de-packaging the influence of socio cultural and institutional factors in shaping entrepreneurial selections and growth performance. Among them is the fact that access to venture capital, network gaps and gendered investor bias tend to be the scaling constraints of women in higher income economies, but mobility restrictions, reputational risk, and patriarchal social norms tend to be the scaling constraints in lower income economies (Sisovic et al., 2024).

Besides, systemic examination of the barriers to women entrepreneurs worldwide revealed traditional gender roles (less time and resources that women use to find business opportunities), social expectations concerning the involvement of women in society, and institutional discrimination in lending as the most common biases (Begum, 2024). Such worldwide evidence underlines the idea that social norms hold no peripheral power, but are central processes where other forms of restraint (finance, training, networks) are imposed on women.

Social Norms and Women in Entrepreneurial Growth.

Social norms are both empirical (what most people actual do) and normative expectations (what most people think one should do) and are strong in an entrepreneurial situation when the behaviour of women depends upon the behavior of women in terms of conformity to the expectations (Bicchieri, 2006). This framework can be used in the research on entrepreneurship as a reason why women might not undertake the growth oriented ventures despite their skills and resources: reputational cost can be learned in such a situation, consequently the costs can be examined through their family sanctions or social disapproval affecting their strategy. Recently, subjective norms in the theory of planned behavior have been found to have important influence on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors of women in emerging economies (Jan et al., 2025). As an example, according to research in Pakistan, about the digital innovation introduced by female owned businesses in Gilgit Baltistan, the mediating role of subjective norms was pronounced, which highlights the role of local expectations as obstacles to innovation and expansion (Jan et al., 2025).

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Entrepreneurial growth, in its turn, does not only presuppose start up, but also scaling: hire, outside market, innovation, formalization. Normative constraints like limited networks, restricted movement outside the household and the issue of honor (izzat) usually restrict women to home based and low growth businesses. To illustrate, a research study conducted in Pakistan determined that cultural and social aspects decrease networking opportunities to women entrepreneurs tremendously, which also influences the capacity of female entrepreneurs to expand their companies (Rehman and Qamar, 2024).

Women in the Developing Countries as Entrepreneurs

In this particular context in the developing countries, the studies show that there is always a greater determinacy of the social norms and informal institutions (family control, gender segregated networks, mobility restrictions) in preventing women entrepreneurship as compared to the developed states. The absence of regulations (a weaker system and poorer enforcement) or a limited number of formal supports (institutional void) result in norms that are stronger (Saleem, Asif & Lodhi, 2024). In a Pakistani study of informal institutions, the role of women in business was heavily dependent on informal rules -social expectation issues, family reputation issues, and, community sanctions -that mediate the availability of markets and scale expansion of ventures by women (Saleem, Asif & Lodhi, 2024).

Further, studies have revealed that women in developing situations tend to congregate in sectors that are socially appropriate (e.g. home based food, handicrafts, tailoring) with few growth patterns not only indicating a constraint of supply but also indicating a constraint on what women are allowed to do. A methodological analysis of the barriers in female entrepreneurship in the emerging economies proved once again that social norms regarding household activities, restricted mobility, and institutional discrimination are the most significant challenges (Begum, 2024).

A comparative study of developed and developing counties has found that capital and networks are more stressed in developed settings but in developing settings it is time constraints (because of home labor), immobility and family decision making processes that best predicted less growth in women entrepreneurs (Agricultural & Food Economics, 2024). This reaffirms the need to have norm sensitive interventions, and not resource based only ones.

Focus on Pakistan

The ratio of women in entrepreneurship in Pakistan is still a significant decline of what it might be, and normative restrictions contribute to it. Research indicates that despite the availability of training or financing, women lack the capacity to use these resources due to social norms: limited mobility, perceptions of home services, fear of loss of reputation and men having control over resources (Abbas et al., 2024). As an illustration, the article, How Social Norms Shape Women in Pakistan, states that women are heavily constrained in exercising their employment or public life, which includes starting a business under the influence of social demands.

The Pakistan empirical research also contributes to the loss of access to business networks and external markets by women entrepreneurs due to cultural and societal factors (Rehman and Qamar, 2024). A journal article on the status of women

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entrepreneurs in Pakistan discovered that even though empowerment, innovation and family support is important, normative barriers comprise gender role would moderate scaling (Pasha, Sahar and Zafar, 2023). Moreover, a recent study by the Pakistani team, which examines the sustainability of women led startups, highlighted that normative expectations regarding women being seen in the public and having their businesses be legitimate, have to be tackled in order to grow (Exploring the role of women entrepreneurial startups in shaping a sustainable future, 2024).

Therefore, in Pakistan the issue is not about simple resource disparity but the interaction and reinforcement of normative, social and institutional determinants each other making entrepreneurship programs less effective when they fail to make express reference to norms.

Evidence from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and District-Level Studies

On the provincial level, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) is a more conservative gender normative environment as compared to other provinces in Pakistan. Studies indicate that a significant portion of female entrepreneurs in KPK are engaged in home based micro businesses which in turn are socialized yet fail to grow due to normative restrictions in matters relating to mobility, social interactions and legitimacy of business when venturing to expand beyond the home (Saleem, Asif & Lodhi, 2024). The importance of informal institutions is especially acute: family, circle of friends, reputation, etc. tend to dampen or limit the growth of the business.

Despite the fact that there is limited evidence on the district level, there are case studies which indicate the profundity of the issue. As an example, in Gilgit Baltistan (that possesses similar rural and normative characteristics), subjective norms, and digital innovation restrictions were equally identified to affect women entrepreneurial development (Jan et al., 2025). This is not KPK but implies that the mechanism is applicable in other relatively conservative areas. A mixed methods research paper conducted in the Quetta area in Pakistan determined cultural norms and family support as critical factors that affect women in entrepreneurship, especially their ability to move out of informal into formal types of business (Shahzad, Siddiqui and Ahmed, 2025). Combined, these results suggest that within a district level diagnostic study (as in Charsadda) that specifically deals with measurements of normative expectations, sanctioning mechanisms and the connection these have with growth outcomes are warranted.

Literature gaps and Implications to the Study

Although the literature is abundant in its accounts on normative constraints and their impacts, there are three big gaps. First, the bulk of empirical research is still descriptive or qualitative; few studies exist between the measurement of normative expectations (both empirical and normative) on one hand and quantitative outcomes (in the form of revenues, employment increase, market expansion) of firm growth on the other. Second, very little research is on district level micro contexts, particularly in conservative parts of Pakistan such as KPK where norms can be particularly binding and institutional supports are comparatively weak. Third, norm-related interventions (family discussion, community, normative nudges) have not been assessed in the context of entrepreneurship. This means that both normative variables need to be

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rigorously measured and associated with entrepreneurial performance in localised contexts (e.g., Charsadda) is what the literature is demanding.

This paper attempts to address these knowledge gaps by exploring the impact of traditional social norms on the entrepreneurial development of women in Charsadda District, KPK, through contextually-specific design that will involve measurement of normative expectations, informal institutions and growth outcomes.

The Underpinning Theory to be used is Social Norms Theory.

Why Social Norms Theory?

The most suitable theoretical framework of the current research is the Social Norms Theory since your study is based on the impact of traditional social norms on the entrepreneurship development of women. The main assumption of the theory is that empirical and normative expectations (what people think other people do) are considered to be significant influences on human behavior. In such situations as Charsadda where the traditional gender role and conservative culture are tightly embedded, such expectations direct their choices, actions, and access to entrepreneurship.

In contrast to other theories, including the Theory of Planned Behavior or Resource-Based Theory, the Social Norms Theory deals directly with processes of social pressure and conformity thus it is best suited to studying cultural, familial and community-based barriers and not necessarily structural or resource related.

Putting Social Norms Theory into Practice

The Social Norms Theory can be used to understand why women in Charsadda prefer one kind of business over another (e.g., home-based tailoring, handicrafts, or food entrepreneurship) and dislike another one (e.g., retail outlets, services with male customers). Not only is it economically opportunity that needs to influence their choices but it is also how they think family, community and peers regard or disregard them.

Empirical expectations: Women can feel that the majority of women in their society do not own a business that dealt with the public, and thus they follow this expectation to prevent the punishment of the community.

Normative expectation: Females can expect family disapproval or social stigma in case they take this visible and developmental entrepreneurial action.

This is in line with your research interest in explaining how the traditional norms are deterring factors to entrepreneurial development.

Normative Influence can be measured.

There is also the Social Norms Theory which gives a methodological approach to empirical research. In practice, you can measure:

Perceived frequency of action(s) (e.g., How many women in your community run businesses outside the home?).

Perceived social approval (e.g., would your family accept that you expanded your business and got employees?

Through these, you can measure the power of social norms and how it impacts entrepreneurial activities such as business growth, job creation, or increase in

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revenues.

Designing Interventions

Social Norms Theory is diagnostic as well as informative of norm-sensitive interventions. As an example, any program that would facilitate women entrepreneurship in Charsadda would:

Involve relatives or male guardians to change the attitude towards the acceptable business behaviors.

Alter empirical expectations by using role models and community champions (to demonstrate to women that it is possible to be a successful woman who manages visible enterprises).

Promote group activities and behaviors that will support good practices of women entrepreneurship.

This renders this theory quite useful, such that it links research and policy, which is crucial in conservative and rural settings such as Charsadda.

Conclusion of the Study

This paper shows the importance of traditional social norms relating to entrepreneurship development by women in Charsadda District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In international, national and local environments, there is some evidence that access to populations, markets, and skills are not the sole factors that limit the entrepreneurial activities of women. Instead, a more dominating force is the invasive power of the social and cultural expectations, more so, the norms of the gender roles, mobility, and controlling nature of the family, and tolerability of women in terms of business and capacity to grow ventures.

The implementation of the Social Norms Theory is a powerful conceptual framework to be used to comprehend these dynamics. The theory explains the interaction between the empirical expectations (what the women believe that others are doing) and normative expectations (what the women believe that others think they should do) to influence entrepreneurial behavior. These demands tend to keep the women in Charsadda in home-based or low-growth activities without encouraging any participation in the external market, employment of workers, or finding a new business. These findings support the fact that social norms are binding constraints that are at times stronger than structural and monetary barriers.

The paper also highlights the fact that handling the entrepreneurial development of women necessitates measures other than traditional training or credit programs. The strategies should be norm-sensitive, involve families, communities and the social networks to change the perceptions and lessen the reputational costs of women economic participation. It has been indicated that a combination of norm-targeted programs and the availability of resources, role models, and institutional support would increase confidence, legitimacy, and capacity of women to grow their firms.

Finally, to promote female entrepreneurship in Charsadda requires the complex approach to understanding the interaction of social norms and structural units. This research will offer a base to engage in specific, culturally relevant interventions by identifying the particular normative barriers by diagnosing them at the district level

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and correlating them with the results of the entrepreneurial activity. Women entrepreneur empowerment in Charsadda is not a question of economic growth but of the way to achieve more gender equity, gender social inclusion and community development. Further studies ought to track and respond to normative expectations, examine the effect of norm-sensitive interventions, and investigate ways of empowering women to circumvent and change confining social contexts.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the study are immense both in terms of theoretical, practical, and policy:

Theoretical Implications

The empirical findings in this study richly support this conclusion, which was made using Social Norms Theory, that normative expectations (empirical (what women believe others do) or normative (what women believe other people think they are supposed to do)) are directly linked to influencing entrepreneurship among women. This supports the fact that social and cultural processes should be included in an entrepreneurial growth model, particularly in regressive or ruralized settings. Moreover, it not only expands the application of the Social Norms Theory on its classical dimensions (behavioral compliance, health, or civic action) but also introduces the entrepreneurship as a theoretical comprehension of future research on the obstacles confronting economic participation based on gender.

Practical Implications

The article focuses on the necessity of norm sensitive entrepreneurship intervention activations within Charsadda and other districts of the same caliber. Training programs, financial aid and business development service cannot make much difference in the case where women have strong normative barriers that restrict mobility, market participation or visibility. The idea can be applied in practice in the following ways:

Creating entrepreneurial initiatives that are inclusive to families and involve the male guardians and the community leaders

Encouraging local role models to change empirical expectations on business behaviors of women

Getting women-only market spaces or online platforms that would enable them to expand their businesses without encountering much social opposition.

Mentorship and networking opportunities including social and cultural factors

Policy Implications

Policymakers should understand that the traditional measures such as lending, grants, skills training should be supplemented with the strategies that should respond to cultural norms. Some of the policies should focus on community education, promotion of gender-focused business, and processes that normalize the economic contribution of women into the society in ways that are acceptable. Moreover, to make interventions context-specific and powerful, the social-norm diagnostics can be integrated into the programs of entrepreneurship assistance developed by the local

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governments and NGOs.

Future Directions

Future research on this topic to inform about interventions is also opened by the study:

Measurement of Norms Qualitatively

Further research may design and confirm instruments to assess both normative and empirical expectations on the household and community level on a quantitative basis, and directly relate to the outcome of a business in terms of gains in revenues, employee recruitment, or community level.

Intervention-Based Research

The effectiveness of norm-targeted interventions (e.g., family dialogues, role model exposure, and digital platforms) related to the growth of women entrepreneurs could be tested with help of experimental or quasi-experimental research. This would offer practical data of what can be done in conservative districts.

Comparative studies on a district-wide basis

A study comparing several districts in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, or some other provinces in Pakistan, can determine the contextual differences in norms and their impact on female entrepreneurship. This would enlighten geographically specific policies and interventions.

Longitudinal Studies

Assessing women entrepreneurs over time using long-term studies would be able to indicate the adjustment of social norms and how women either turn to accommodate social norms or resist them to grow their business. This would provide information on how norms interact dynamically in terms of entrepreneurial development.

Technology and Digital Entrepreneurship Incorporation

Further studies might also examine how electronic systems and online business environments reduce normative constraints through allowing women to gain access to markets without losing socially an admitting presence. The research question of norms, adoption of technology, and the development of businesses is even more relevant in rural Pakistan.

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