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## **Enablers and Constraints of Women Entrepreneurship in Khyber Pukhtunkhawa, Pakistan: Institutional and Feminist Perspectives**

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**Abstract:** Entrepreneurship is often considered a male gendered concept and carries masculine connotations. However, the importance of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to economy has recently been realized. Nonetheless, there is limited research about women entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship in the developing countries context. This paper challenges the implicit masculinism of traditional entrepreneurship research and aims to explore the enablers and constraints of women social entrepreneurship in a developing country context. Our theoretical lens is based on institutional and feminist perspectives, thus developing and reconciling predictions from these two competing theories. This integration contributes by offering novel insights about social entrepreneurship. Utilising on an interpretive qualitative research approach, data from in-depth interviews with ten women social entrepreneurs of KP, Pakistan were analyzed using thematic analysis. Empirically, we identify and discuss a number of interesting and explanatory themes affecting women entrepreneurship such as "women empowerment, patriarchal culture, role of culture and societal norms, religious extremism and terrorism, forced entrepreneurs, change creators, unique institutional constraints, institutional corruption and security issues". The findings highlight women entrepreneurs struggle for sustainability and explain how these occur. The paper also provides an interesting insight on how context determines social entrepreneurship in KP, Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Women Social Entrepreneurship; Institutional theory; Feminist theory; Sustainability; Context based; Enablers; Constraints; Developing country

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## 1. Introduction

Today, many women contribute to government, business and politics. Recently we have also seen a rapid expansion of the number of female entrepreneurs. Yet in some developing countries women face enormous challenges in trying to accomplish their entrepreneurial dreams. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world and almost half of its population is women. It presents exemplary cases of women struggling with challenges arising from dynamic modernization, heritage and conviction. Like other developing countries, in Khyber Pukhtunkhawa (KP), Pakistan women entrepreneurs do not enjoy the same opportunities as men. Women are often thought best suited as “home makers” rather than being bread earners. They are encouraged to stay at home and refrain from indulging in such pursuits. However, a small number of women do start entrepreneurial ventures; some, and interesting theoretically, have social objectives in mind. For these women the dynamics of the context create interesting enablers and constraints for managing a business in Pakistan.

This perspective informs our research problem, what theory best explains this situation? We try to bridge the practices of social entrepreneurship with theory as it applies to the small but expanding number of women engaged in social entrepreneurship. After a review of the relevant literature, we present an exploratory study critically examining a sample of Peshawar, KP Pakistan women social entrepreneurs. Drawing on novel empirical evidence, we explored motivation, entrepreneurial enablers, entrepreneurial practices, local and cultural factors impede the growth and development of women social entrepreneurs in KP Pakistan, developing country context. We conducted interviews with women social entrepreneurs, focused on their entrepreneurial journey. We were particularly interested in the factors that motivated them towards social entrepreneurship. These factors are embedded in their life stories and are influenced by their contextual realities. This led us to collect interviews as life stories, entrepreneurial journey narratives.

Women entrepreneurship has attracted considerable attention around the globe and developed a substantial literature. [1,2,3,4]. Women entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon [1,4,5], recognised as contributing economically in terms of growth and job creation [6,7,8] and for improving quality of life [8,9]. Women entrepreneurship is also recognized as a source of entrepreneurial diversity. Nevertheless, their talents and potential often remain untapped in developing countries, such as Pakistan due to economic and socio-cultural complexities [10,1]. Research has emphasized that there are only a limited number studies concerned with this contextual environment for entrepreneurship [11,12]. Yet trying to understand entrepreneurship in isolation without considering context presents a limited insight [4]. Therefore, we believe it is important to attend to the social constructions of gender in this context, thus resulting in adding new insights into theory and perspectives of entrepreneurship [13]. Our core argument is that

understanding gender in the context of entrepreneurship is necessary to understand entrepreneurial behaviour, such as how they respond to entrepreneurial enablers and constraints. This study takes full account of context, identifying gender biased gaps identified by literature, especially Feminist theory [4,13,14,15]. Our empirical analysis of the women's entrepreneurial journeys is theoretically contrasted with current theory.

### **Context and Social Entrepreneurship: A complementary understanding from Institutional and Feminist perspectives**

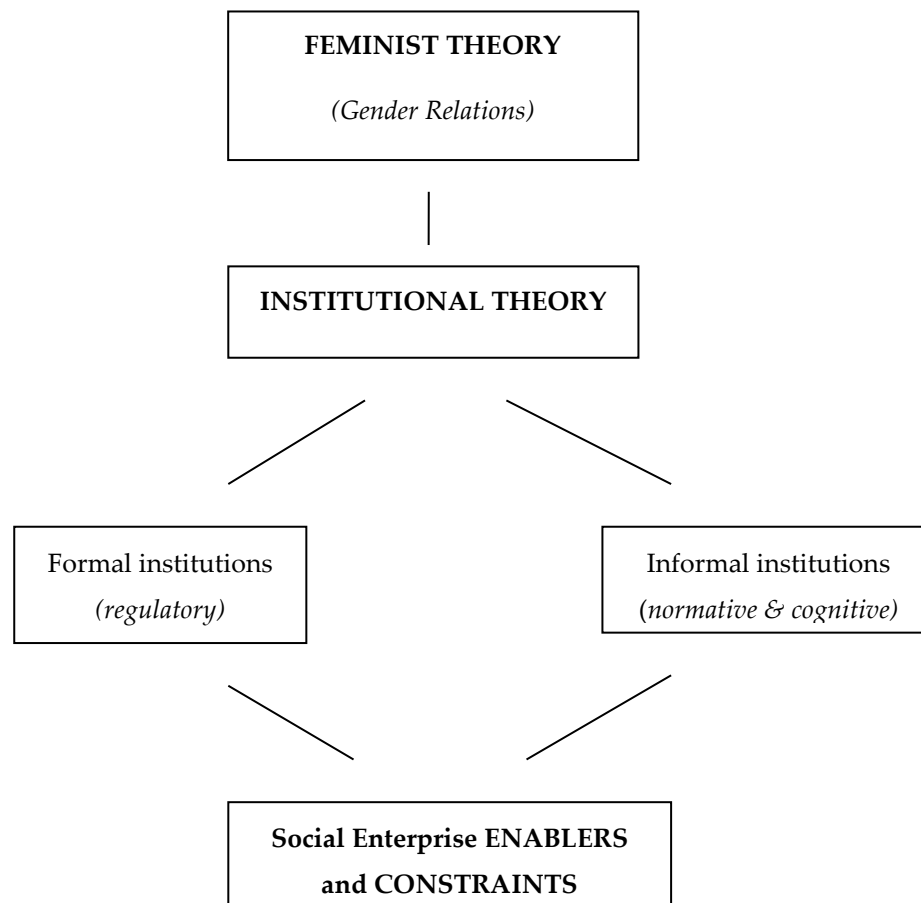
The term "Social Entrepreneurship" cannot be understood properly unless one first understands the word "entrepreneurship" and "social". Martin and Osberg [16] defined entrepreneurship as "the combination of a context in which an opportunity is situated, a set of personal characteristics required to identify and pursue this opportunity and the creation of a particular outcome". The word "social" then modifies the term. Entrepreneurship driven by altruism, rather than motivated by money or profit, is termed social entrepreneurship. A social entrepreneur is argued to be strongly motivated by pursuing their visions relentlessly for psychic rewards [16]. Social entrepreneurs seem to aim for value in the form of transformational benefits. Such transformation in society leads to positive changes in social, political and economic contexts for marginalized areas like KP, Pakistan [17].both the perceptions and practices of entrepreneurship. But contexts vary in how they affect entrepreneurship [59]. However North provides us with a useful theoretical account of how context works- as formal and informal institutions. Institutions provide the general rules of the game which facilitate social, political and economic interactions [18, 57].

Building on the above discussion, to understand social entrepreneurship one cannot neglect the significance of context in which it takes place. Entrepreneurial behavior is embedded in its context [19]. Uniqueness of the context can result in unique entrepreneurial behaviors, thus challenging the explanatory power of existing theories. Merely describing and considering entrepreneurs in isolation without considering context offers a limited understanding of entrepreneurship [4,12,20]. This seems to suggest the need for a contextual approach towards social entrepreneurship. Understanding context requires exploration of what determines a particular context and how institutions set of of rules of the game (formal and informal) [21]. Entrepreneurs act within a context determined by these rules [18], but formal and informal institutions are not independent, nor fixed immutably, and they tend to interact. Accordingly, changes to the formal and informal rules of the game can also result in either enabling or constraining entrepreneurship.

The literature on women entrepreneurship and institutions is still considered fragmented [13,22]. Institutional theories fall into three different categories. These categories; cognitive, normative and regulatory, describe as their name suggest, different functions of institutional application. The cognitive institutions "represents models of individual behavior based on subjectively constructed rules and meanings that limit appropriate beliefs and actions" [23]. Considering the gendered context of KP, the cognitive traditional religious institutions are powerful in KP, thus channelling the

way residents look at gender. Institutional theory thus works well to explain the context, formal and informal institutions in detail. Yet it fails to present a clear perspective on gendering of the contexts. Institutional theory informs us about the structure of the society. Hence for our purpose of explaining enterprising activities, we treat feminist theories as institutional theories. Put differently, these theories try to explain the “position” and role of women in society. Therefore, inclusion of feminist theory for understanding the gendering of these institutions and ultimately the context is vital [13]. We focus on how gendering is seen and how it influences entrepreneurial behavior. We argue that entrepreneurs are not the only subject that is gendered; the socio cultural context in which entrepreneurship arises is also gendered [24]. Put differently, different contexts are deemed more appropriate for masculine practices. The issue of how entrepreneurs are constrained and enabled by the environment in which they live and work has been studied in the light of institutional theory by researchers like Scott [25], Bruton and Ahlstorm [23] and Gaddefors and Anderson [20]. Feminism looks at the world through the lens of gender, not women or femaleness [26] but sees how gender is institutionalised. Consequently, we argued that how gender is understood, is significant for understanding entrepreneurship research and practice [14,15].

Our analytical conceptual framework offers a multi-level research lens for understanding women social entrepreneurship in an eastern developing country context. This framework (Fig. 1) combines institutional and feminist theory in to clarify how these theories can be used in combination to enhance clear understanding of social entrepreneurship with respect to context.



**Fig. 1** Conceptual Framework Adapted by [4,15,21,23]

We posit that the framework proposed in Figure 1 is powerful for analyzing women social enterprise in a developing country like KP, Pakistan because it recognizes the complexity of social systems through a multilevel institutional and feminist lens. For studying entrepreneurship, we acknowledge that we are studying gendered beings (sample) in a gendered context. Consistent with the recent work in the study of social entrepreneurship [13,22,4,27,28] we adopted a conception of women entrepreneurship as forming around and anchored in a specific context. Thus, we understand social, and indeed all entrepreneurship as socially situated. (Anderson et al 2014) - Our analysis worked around North's distinction between formal and informal institution which provides a useful insight into societies in which entrepreneurship takes place [60].

Informal institutions are composed of rules and expectations to which an individual in a society is expected to conform. Such rules also encourage or discourage entrepreneurial behavior (emergence of S.E) [25, 19-29]. It also limits entrepreneur's beliefs and actions because non compliance to informal rules can result in a bad reputation and lack of acceptance in community [30] and the social legitimacy of a practice or behaviour is challenged [61]. Informal forces thus shape the standing of an entrepreneur in a society. The regulatory forces on the other hand deals with formal mandatory rules which if refused can result in formal sanctions [19-29]. Together these institutional forces shape the implementation and practice of social entrepreneurship.

Rethinking categories like man, women, context/area, entrepreneur become crucial to understanding entrepreneurship as a situated practice. Pakistan, particularly KP, is set in a strong feminist patriarchal culture which strongly influences the societal structure, materialising as the institutions of this area (Scott [25]; Bruton and Ahlstorm [23]). Fig. 1 builds on this notion of the feminist theory. It proposes feminist geographies provide an explanatory theoretical framework within which one can study how gender is shaped in a given place/context and vice versa and how it relates to structuring society and entrepreneurship. From this, we tried to derive understanding of women social entrepreneurial behavior in a developing country context, and how it is influenced by salient institutional and feminist pressures in play.

The context of KP, Pakistan and the situation of women

Pakistan has a 96.4% Muslim population, of whom 49.2% are women. Some 15.42% of the population belongs to the Pukhtun community living in KP province in the north of Pakistan. KP is one of the four administrative provinces of Pakistan. Women in traditional Pakistani culture are considered as homemakers and custodians of family honor. In countries like Pakistan, powerful societal norms and conservative practices are widespread. The legislation of Pakistan follows Islamic principles, but the social setting is often influenced by pre-Islamic tribal trends [31,32] that

promote patriarchal culture, thus ensuring women structural subordination to men. These cultural norms give men control of women's lives, so that gender forms an organizing principle for Pakistani society. Tradition and conservative social values construct the role expectations of gender in Pakistani society [33,34]. This construction is primarily based on the concept of reproduction and production, as perceived masculine and feminine traits [35]. Consequently, the social value of gender is predetermined by the patriarchal values that are embedded in local traditions and culture of Pakistani society. Such division has placed women in reproductive roles in the private arena of home, while men are considered as the breadwinners in the public arena [36]. Pakistani women are disadvantaged by this entrenched social evaluation. Their social status is low, reduced to roles as producers and providers. Men are provided with better education and skills, while women are only endowed with the domestic skills to be useful at homes. This treatment leads to the economic and social dependency of women [31,36]. These factors are reinforced with the institutional structures of this country which are informed by institutionalized sexism. Such is the gendered culture and context that forms the institutions of our study.

### **Status of Women in KP**

However, KP is grappling with “gendered modernity”, where women are no longer willing to tolerate discriminatory social practices and laws, even although conservative mindsets still prevail, blocking the way of many angry educated women [37, 32]. Moreover, KP remains very conservative, retaining gender disparity [38]. Among the Pukhtun tribes, the cognitive symbols of Islamic religion are very important and clearly visible. These symbols allocate status, and measure religiosity of the people within Pukhtun society. The reluctance to give women the power to exercise their rights, and to seek employment instead of staying at home, to become financially independent or even to work among men demonstrates the close conformity with religious informed traditions. Indeed, conservative religious groups are aggressively promoting restrictive gender norms which designates women to domestic roles [37]. These socialised norms are compounded by entrenched gender differences, according to Government of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [39] the general population literacy rate (Table.1) is 36% for women and 72% for men in KP. Low literacy level, patriarchy, women's lack of access to information, knowledge, and employment due to restricted mobility makes progress for women very difficult [37,38]. Women in Pakistan mostly remain confined to the homes and are excluded from any decision making [40].

**Table 1** Literacy Rate

<i>2015-2016</i>	<i>Total%</i>	<i>Male%</i>	<i>Women%</i>
<i>Literacy Rate in KP</i>	53	72	36
<i>Rural</i>	50	70	33
<i>Urban</i>	64	77	52

Source Link: [http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters\\_17/Pakistan\\_ES\\_2016\\_17\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_17/Pakistan_ES_2016_17_pdf.pdf)

## KP Women as Entrepreneurs

According to the labor force survey by the Government of Pakistan [39], the women entrepreneurial activity level is 0.1%. This tiny participation rate suggests that the factors discussed earlier, and their influence on women's power and mobility create formidable challenges for women entrepreneurship. One response is that women entrepreneurs in KP mostly engage in textiles, garments, food and jewellery or provide beautician services. Moreover, they often work through undocumented channels (informal entrepreneurship) due to the unfavorable entrepreneurial environment. Indeed, most even lack knowledge about formal channels of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the constraints such as male focused credit allocation, difficulty in dealing with licenses, registering or acquiring property and working outside of their homes adds to women's disadvantage [37]. A study conducted by USAID [41] showed that Pakistani women, especially in KP, are rarely involved the boards of industrial organizations. This translates into fewer opportunities for partnering, networking, and identifying opportunities. We conclude that KP's culture, norms and values are hostile to female enterprise. Consequently, our objective is to understand this context in order to fully appreciate the mechanisms for establishing successful women entrepreneurship.

## 2. Methodology

Our study is qualitative and employs an interpretive framework [62]. Data collection took 19 months during 2016-2017 and purposive sampling was deployed. This technique allows a researcher to critically select cases that relate to the objectives of the study. It involves identifying and selecting appropriate respondents who are well informed about the phenomenon under study [42,43, p.370]. Our sample consists of entrepreneurs who are small scale, micro social entrepreneurs, but who seem to be making a difference to social wellbeing.

We held 10 in-depth one-on-one interviews with these successful KP women social entrepreneurs. These ten cases appeared critical cases among others we had considered. Our selection criteria was based around these being 'interesting' cases. By interesting, we mean they seemed potentially theoretically rich, offering useful examples of the phenomena; a theoretical sample (Ukanwa et al, 2018)

As we discussed earlier, KP women face constraints and barriers from several different angles. This means that these 10 social entrepreneurs are interesting, because they challenged social norms in both their practices and in what they tried to achieve. They offered examples of a duality of challenges; in what they did and how they did it, but also in their outputs. Yet they also seemed to manage (Table. 2). Our semi structured interview protocol was comprised of open-ended questions grouped into themes (Table. 3). The interviews took between 50 and 160 minutes, were conducted in Urdu and Pashto and were recorded. The recordings were later translated into

English by one author, and checked by another to ensure accuracy. These data were then categorised and analysed thematically. Our findings are consolidated in a model of womens' social entrepreneurial enablers, constraints and challenges.

**Table 2 Interviewee List (Details)**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Type of Business</i>	<i>Source of Start-up capital</i>	<i>Registered/Not registered</i>	<i>Years in business</i>
1	Mrs. A	Mid- 40s	Married	Masters	Home Based/ Service and product Based (Textiles, education, beauty, vocational trainings & food)	Sold personal jewelry	Registered	16 years
2	Miss B	23 years	Single	Bachelors Degree	Service Based (Beauty Salon)	Mother	Registered	18 years
3	Miss C	28 years	Single	High School	Home Based/ Service Based (Beauty Salon)	Personal savings, saved over a period of 4 years by doing job	Not Registered	7 years
4	Mrs. D	Mid- 30s	Married	Masters	Home Based/ Service and Product Based (Textiles, Vocational Training)	Personal savings, saved by doing job	Not Registered	8 years
5	Miss E	29 years	Divorced	Masters	Service and product Based (Textiles, Vocational trainings, education)	Sold personal jewelry	Registered	5 years
6	Mrs. F	Mid- 40s	Married	Masters	Home Based/ Service Based (Education)	Personal savings and Husband	Not Registered	6 years
7	Miss G	23 years	Single	Bachelors Degree	Home Based/ Service Based (Beauty Henna Artist)	Personal Savings and parents	Not Registered	4 years
8	Mrs. H	Mid- 40s	Married	Masters	Home Based/ Service Based (Organic food service)	Personal Savings	Not Registered	3 years
9	Miss I	28 years	Single	PhD	Home Based/ Service and Product Based (Online Business, vocational trainings, education)	Personal Savings	Not Registered	4 years
10	Mrs. J	Mid-30s	Married	Masters	Service Based (Education)	Personal Savings and sponsorships	Not Registered	3 years

Source: Own Study

The businesses operated within traditional sectors such as textiles, education, beauty, vocational training and food. All of the participants are well educated. Most (90%) concentrated in the service sector and had women customers (Table. 2). This structure reflects the social norms typical of Islamic countries [44]. They operate in areas where man-women interaction is minimised (education, food sector) or almost non-existent (health and beauty, vocational training). Their entrepreneurial choices are thus context specific and the data demonstrates how context determines entrepreneurial choices.

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis [45] which is a widely accepted approach for studying entrepreneurial situated practices [63] and appropriate for interpretative studies [46,47]. Thematic analysis involved specific steps; 1. Getting fully familiar with the data through thorough reading and re-reading interview transcripts 2. Categorising and coding the material, 3. Identifying themes (basic, organizing and global), 4. Identifying explanatory connections, 5. Theorising, or explaining, the how, what and why of their entrepreneurial practices,

**Table 4** From Codes to Basic Themes and Organizing Themes

<i>Step 1: Codes</i>	<i>Step 2: Basic Themes</i>	<i>Step 3: Organizing Themes</i>
<i>Hobby</i> <i>Friends</i> <i>Family</i> <i>Support</i> <i>Appreciation</i> <i>Encouragement</i> <i>Rejection</i> <i>Risk taker</i> <i>Brave</i> <i>Ambitions</i> <i>Dream</i>	1. <i>Importance of Personal ambitions and risk taking</i> 2. <i>Importance of support and encouragement from immediate family</i>	<i>Entrepreneurs personal traits and family support matters in their success</i>
<i>Home makers</i> <i>Women born weak</i> <i>Men responsible for earning</i> <i>Not allowed in islam</i> <i>Chastity required of women</i> <i>Practice of pardah</i>	3. <i>Women considered weak as compared to men</i> 4. <i>Outside home is not a respectable place for a women</i> 5. <i>Misuse of religion</i>	<i>Gender inequality - feminist theory/institutional context</i>

<i>Spatial boundry between men and women</i> <i>Protect modesty</i> <i>Custodians of family honor</i>		
<i>Stand on own</i> <i>Financial independence</i> <i>Meaning of life</i> <i>Felt worthless</i> <i>Do better for less fortunate women</i> <i>Societies misfortunes</i> <i>Women can do anything</i> <i>Prove oneself</i>	6. <i>Breaking all chains and fighting for one's position and value in society</i> 7. <i>Desire to earn and be independent</i>	Women Empowerment
<i>Permission of elder male</i> <i>Parents/husband/In-laws</i> <i>Societies acceptability important</i> <i>Respectable job search</i> <i>In line with society</i> <i>Family time comes first</i> <i>Home- women's responsibility</i> <i>Hard to gain societies/family's trust</i>	8. <i>Work in line with social norms</i> 9. <i>Trust issues</i> 10. <i>Patriarchal culture</i> 11. <i>Work life balance</i>	Institutional theory- rules of the game in a society/Standpoint Feminism
<i>Taliban rule</i> <i>Warnings issued</i> <i>Anti women</i> <i>Working women not allowed in islam</i> <i>Women business forbidden</i> <i>Blasts</i> <i>Kidnaping</i> <i>Women education criticised</i>	12. <i>Security issues/Terrorism</i> 13. <i>Religious exploitation</i>	Religious extremist's exploitation through terrorism
<i>Realization</i> <i>Women uplifting</i> <i>Help and opportunities</i> <i>Liberation</i> <i>Guidance</i>	14. <i>Entrepreneurs realized the need for societal reforms for women liberation</i> 15. <i>Entrepreneurship resulted in women uplifting in society</i> 16. <i>Provides women with opportunities to grow in a given context</i>	Social Entrepreneurship as emancipatory

Need one another Society improvement Need reforms Together	17. Government institutions lacks honesty and dedication 18. The government institutions are not efficient in the tasks	Bureaucracy as constraint/ Institutional corruption
Bribery in Government institutions Institutions not efficient in their task Rules are difficult Law not flexible for women Challenge for women		
Medical/teaching respectable options Business education not for women Un awareness of marketing/market Financial dependant Middle class Limited due to resources	19. Lack of business education 20. Scarcity of resources	Women lack independent resources, education and basic awareness about laws
Government support programs almost nil No awareness programs Lack understanding of law Need supervision Need of understanding SME's in pakistan Major issues faced Commercial and residential area issue-major	21. Lack of awareness about rules and regulations 22. Lack of support from government	Rules and regulations are complicated
Vocational trainings provided by NGO Jobs provided by NGO Motivates Earning a living Awareness of self worth Helps financially and emotionally	23. Women driven NGO sector supports women empowerment	NGO sector's dedication appreciated

### 3. Research Findings:

We found that a strong need of achievement and independence, a desire to transform society for the betterment of women were the key enablers for social entrepreneurship, systematically explored below in Table 5. The analysis demonstrated that the participants engaged in entrepreneuring because of self-actualization and to achieve financial independence, women status recognition. They were motivated to change the way society looks at working women.

Table 5 (Themes in the Interview Data)

<i>Enablers</i>	<i>Explained through Interview Raw Data</i>
<i>Self Actualization</i>	<p><i>"I am thankful to my ex-husband and in-laws for their treatment because that motivated me to look outside of my own world."</i>(Miss E)</p> <p><i>"So I decided not to take any further financial help from my family. I decided to create an example of myself that single mothers of the society could reflect upon. I had 8.5 million (8500 Dollars) worth of jewelry at the time of my wedding, out of which 7 million (7000 Dollars) worth jewelry was taken by my mother in law on my wedding day claiming that it's a custom in her family, thus I was never able to recover that jewelry. I sold the rest 1.5 million (1500 Dollars) worth jewelry after my separation and invested that money in my aunt's ladies' gym."</i> (Miss E)</p> <p><i>"An insight that is crucial to my success and to the development of women in the region has been the idea that education, training and self-development is the birth right of each individual and it is to be shared amongst all and not to be sold or kept hidden."</i>(Miss B)</p>
<i>Financial Independence</i>	<p><i>"I personally believe that women should work apart from managing home, and they should be financially empowered. I believe this financial independence is important for women so that's why I wanted to work on it."</i> (Mrs. J)</p> <p><i>"My husband did not allow me to do job, Because of family pressure. I always felt that I need to be more than just a house wife. I was passionate about becoming financially independent and wanted to do more than house hold work".</i> (Mrs. A)</p> <p><i>"Apart from friends and family, financial independence was also another reason that motivated me towards this journey"</i> (Mrs. A, Mrs. D)</p> <p><i>"Because I personally believe that women should work apart from managing home, and they should be financially empowered. I believe this financial independence is important for women so that's why I wanted to work on it. Education and independence, financial independence, as I said I strongly believe in economic empowerment of women, because these things give one confidence to believe in oneself. Such independence makes you realize that no matter what happens, no matter what people say you are able to survive."</i>(Mrs. J, Miss B)</p>

Women status recognition /empowerment	<p><i>"Historically, women in KP have had a relatively restricted role in shaping public life and all institutions that serve public needs are administered and lead by men. Even in the arena of free enterprise the symbol of a working man reflects passion, endurance and innovation and women are rather encouraged to lay dormant and refrain from indulging in such pursuits. Hence women rarely ever develop social connections that would lead them into entrepreneurial-ship more so because of the restrains posed by a patriarchal society and not due to a lack of initiative on women's part. In fact the story of B's challenges a prevailing view that there is lack of opportunity for women, and that women ought to refrain from participating in free enterprise within a male dominated society". (Miss B)</i></p>
Social Entrepreneurship as emancipatory	<p><i>"it's always a journey so exactly I cannot say where did it start but I always had this in mind that I want to do something for society so that was always there." (Mrs. J, Mrs. A, Miss C)</i></p> <p><i>"I found it challenging to start my own independent business in KP as a woman, because it was against the Pukhtun culture and norms, but I made this brave and courageous decision that young women could reflect upon." (Mrs. A)</i></p> <p><i>"Hence I decided to help the local women by providing relevant skills to become independent and earn on their own and I knew I could help in changing women image in the KP society." (Miss. E, Miss C)</i></p> <p><i>"I would say that I started this because I wanted to create good citizens for society, Citizens with ethical and civic sense. My aim isn't to create just doctors or engineers as other institutions but to create a good society, People who have civic sense and are able to help others when they are able. We give them education about lying, stealing and bad habits like that. We teach them what's right and what's wrong." (Mrs. J, Mrs. F)</i></p>

Mrs. A states,

*"We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a century of advancements and opportunities, where women have even gone into space, whereas in KP Pakistan seeing a woman driving on the road is still a surprising view for us".* The respondent here is trying to explain the gravity of the situation by comparing it to the developed world. Even with general female advancement. Our respondents are struggling and fighting for their human basic rights.

Women's structural subordination to men in KP society is very evident in the data analysis. Baugh, Chua and Neupert [48] found evidence that gender inequality acts as an inhibitor for female growth and development. It hinders opportunity and choices or can even prevent them arising. Such inequality can be described as materialising as, and within, the institutional context [48,37]. Such subordination, the inclination to deny women their rights have been blamed on unrealistic religious propositions [49] by the KP society. In different, less conservative interpretations, Islam has given women the right to pursue knowledge and education, to own property and businesses,

to hold any office even political, and to enjoy equality, honor and respect [50]. The 'true' interpretations of women status need to be fostered in order to bring a positive change in this society [49]. Religious extremism and fundamentalism are used interchangeably but Pratt [51] argues that "extremism suggests fanaticism". This seems to be the case in KP. During the last decade, terrorists groups have indoctrinated people with radical Islam and causing serious security issues. Such extremists have continuously targeted empowered women. The data analysis shows Radical Islam as a prominent explanatory institutional theme. Such religious exploitation and terrorism has constrained the women entrepreneurs of KP. Yet the data also demonstrates the courage of KP women who chose not to be intimidated by these groups. Instead they fought for their rights, even when their lives were threatened. Several respondents also referred to how institutional corruption had detrimentally affected their efforts. Table 6 presents the constraints/barriers themes experienced in the participants own words.

Roomi [49] suggested that in order to improve women condition in an Islamic society and fight religious extremism, societies need to foster a 'true' interpretation of Islam and women. )

Table 6 (Themes Explained Through Interview Data)

Constraints/Barriers themes	Constraints/Barriers explained through participants interview raw data
<b>Resources</b>	<p><i>"The financial situation got much worse after the death of my father. In our society orphaned girls are considered to be a burden and are discouraged. There are made to realize that need the support of a "strong pillar" to move forward in life. To support the needs of the family and to pursue my dreams with all these problems is not easy especially during the time of high inflation in the country." (Miss. C)</i></p> <p><i>"I could feel the situation of their lives and I wanted to help. I want to do a lot more for them but I don't have the resources."(Miss. C, Mrs. J)</i></p> <p><i>"I had financial problems in the start but I couldn't ask anyone due to self respect."(Mrs. A, Miss. E)</i></p>
<b>Religious Extremism</b>	<p><i>"In 2012, I received a letter from the Taliban (Terrorist groups working in Pakistan at that time). In the letter I was threatened to close my Training Academy soon otherwise there will be serious consequences. They stated that my work and my academy are against the very principles of Islam and it dishonors the religion so it must be closed down otherwise they will blow the academy (Bombing)". (Mrs. A)</i></p> <p><i>"My father was kidnapped by the Taliban (Terrorist group) in order to stop us from our work." (Miss B)</i></p> <p><i>"Due to APS incident (130 students shot in school by terrorists), the parents were scared to send their children to schools. It also creates constraints for us in terms of security related issues."(Mrs. F)</i></p>

<b>Immediate Family unsupportive</b>	<p><i>"My husband also doesn't like my business. He is not supportive about it. According to him I should spend my time to look after my home and children as that is my main responsibility". (Mrs. H)</i></p> <p><i>"Being a topper and a position holder in my school, I was forced by my elders to opt for medical as according to them, a student as intelligent as me should not go for arts. I was always interested in Painting and Baking but my elders never allowed me to go for these fields. Such pressures increase further if a daughter doesn't have her father beside her". (Miss I)</i></p> <p><i>"Then I observed that in the living colony that I live, some of the parents of the girls won't allow them to go out of the house. Even for education. Even after some primary education of class 1, 2 and 3 they would make them sit at home"(Miss G)</i></p>
<b>Institutional Corruption/ Bureaucracy</b>	<p><i>"The tax department also created difficulties for me. Most of the tax department employees demand bribes in order to stop creating difficulties."(Mrs. A, Miss C, Mrs. F)</i></p> <p><i>"The things that needed to be taken care of outside which men can handle in our society. It's difficult for a woman to go out and go to different places and government offices to get things done. Weather big or small. So, you need a man to go out and solve these problems. I still cannot figure out that all these schools still running in residential areas, how are they still operational" (Mrs. F, Miss C)</i></p>
<b>Confused Systems</b>	<p><i>"PDA (Peshawar development authority) sent us notices to move to commercial area within one month otherwise we will be penalized. I have been operating in residential area for the last 16 years, and now they realize that I am doing something illegal." (Mrs. A)</i></p> <p><i>The problem with PDA was reported from 60% of the participants. They also argued that this isn't right as in KP womens do not easily get permission to work outside of their homes due to societal and cultural barriers, and now they cannot in residential area due to legal issues. (Mrs. A, Miss B, Miss C, Miss E, Mrs. F)</i></p>
<b>Lack of Government support</b>	<p><i>Only two participants reported government support. (Mrs. A, Miss F)</i></p> <p><i>The rest had support of NGO's operating in KP.</i></p>

<b>Cultural/Societal Barriers</b>	<p><i>"Being a young single working mother in a Pukhtun society is the worst situation of all and has a certain stigma attached to it. In such society divorce is associated with dishonor and shame" (Miss E)</i></p> <p><i>"of course because of the conservative mindset of our society. People think that those who appear on media or work outside homes are not good women."(Miss E, Miss B)</i></p> <p><i>"My relatives make fun of me and my work. They constantly try to demotivate me. they think that I should be a house wife and refrain from such ventures"(Mrs. H)</i></p> <p><i>"We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century, a century of advancements and opportunities, where women have even gone into the space, whereas in KP Pakistan seeing a woman driving on the road is still a surprising view for us".(Mrs. A)</i></p> <p><i>Almost 80% of the participants reported cultural societal issues as constraints.</i></p>
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Kabeer in [53] argued that women empowerment is the “ability to make choices” (p.436). The data shows that many women in KP lack the ability or choice to make decisions, because of the patriarchal structure of the society. Nonetheless, five respondents enjoyed immediate family support which had a strong influence over their success. Two others had immediate family support, but they believed that this is because their immediate family consists only of women (mother, sisters). They explained that when the male head of their family was alive, they lacked approval to work. Feminism advocates the rights of humans on the grounds of equality of the sexes. This appeared to be the case in three extreme cases where the respondents simply chose to ignore the constraints and opt for “don’t care”(strategies of avoidance) approach. Table 6 presents a view of that approach in the respondents’ own words.

Another recurring strong theme in the data was the dedication and effectiveness of the NGO sector in KP. The majority of interviewees greatly appreciated the role of NGOs and ranked it as much better than the government support for women social entrepreneurs. The interviewees stated that NGO sector has been a blessing for them and they had learnt a lot through working with them.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

Women entrepreneurship is a maturing field of enquiry. In particular, understanding the role of the institutional environment and the ensuing gendering of roles is rapidly advancing in the literature. This deepening of knowledge has resulted in a solid theoretical foundation for understanding women enterprise. Our findings are consistent with several recent streams of entrepreneurship research that suggests the usefulness of a multi level research design [1,4,13,22,37]. Our focused research questions centred on the identification of enablers and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The respondents’ entrepreneurship was studied from institutional and feminist perspective embedded in its context. Consequently, the respondents’ experiences allowed us to build an informed account of the impact of institutions and also to be able to describe how and why some women overcame the constraints.

Previous research [10,32,49,54] has showed that institutions do present difficulties for entrepreneurs, but literature on the reasons for such difficulties is fragmented. Due to the multi level research framework, we were able to identify reasons for such difficulties in this developing country context. This framework allowed us to identify the role of the institutions at play, which would not have been possible without treating institutional theories as feminist theories. The findings show that these difficulties arise because both institutions and women entrepreneurs have conflicted roles, as the theme “Confused systems” suggested. The women want institutions to treat them equally with men. Formal institutions have adopted these rules of equality and *formally* treat everyone similarly. However, informal institutions construct a different and constrained perspective towards “Women” relegating them to subordination. In the presence of strong value of traditional norms, religion and culture in KP, Pakistan, the liberal state of formal institutions becomes questionable, and rarely applied in practices. This creates difficulties for

women entrepreneurs as they cannot enjoy the liberty of formal institutions due to the strength of the informal institutions, thus resulting in greater difficulties and conflicting roles.

Religious extremism, lack of resources and family support were also found as constraints thus showing consensus with the findings of Rehman and Roomi [10], Roomi and Parrott [49], Mahmood, Sohail, Khalid and Babak [34], Pakeeza, [31] and El Harbi. Anderson and Mansour, 2009 [58].

A consequence is the power of gendered informal institutions and their influence upon these women social entrepreneurs. Moreover, this is compounded as religious extremists target women and creating further hurdles to be overcome. Moreover, family support is crucial for their existence as entrepreneurs, which is not the case for the opposite gender. Treating these cases through feminist theories highlighted the power of gendering within both formal and informal institutions; such that its importance cannot be ignored. The findings also highlight the problem of institutional corruption in Pakistan as a barrier to entrepreneurship development. Dvoulety and Blazkova [52] similarly acknowledged corruption as a potential barrier to entrepreneurship in a developing country context. Here, we saw that even corruption was gendered. Government officials took advantage of women entrepreneurs, because they were aware of their subordinate and fragile situation. Furthermore, they were aware of the entrepreneur's lack of awareness about rules and regulations which led them take advantage of the situation. Due to such institutional constraints, women entrepreneurs face many hurdles which challenge entrepreneurial sustainability in the long run.

Welter and Smallbone [19] argue that entrepreneurs may react to institutional pressures in different ways. Findings of this study suggest that such institutional pressures led some women entrepreneurs towards self actualization, which resulted in it becoming one of a strong entrepreneurial enabler. This was a response to gendered institutional subordination. Women opted for social entrepreneurship because they saw it as a way out, towards liberation and independence and emboldened them to challenge the deep embedded societal structures. It presented hope for them and provided them with an opportunity to bring change, small but effective. Moreover, all of the respondents were committed to actually helping other women in their society. They are committed towards changing women's standing in their society. Independence, motivation to bring change, and women empowerment were also found as women entrepreneurial enablers similar to the study of Roomi [10], Jamali [1], Mahmood et al., [34]. The results of this study can be useful in places with a similar institutional climate (context).

## 5. Conclusion

This research has presented a novel insight to the cultural power of gender and the gendering of women roles and expectations in a developing country context both theoretically and empirically. The research captured the interpretive accounts of women social entrepreneurs in the dynamic interplay of institutional and feminist theory to establish the role played by gender, thus developing the logic through reconciling predictions from these two theories. Here, we also see a

different role for entrepreneurship, as challenging established social norms. The findings suggest this form of entrepreneurship is novel; we see the purpose of our respondents' entrepreneurship as social value creation. Entrepreneurship played a liberating role for women in the context of KP. Furthermore, it made them realize their strengths, value and provided them with hope for change. We have tried to capture a realistic account of the factors at play, one that acknowledges the struggle of women of KP. This research also provides an example of the usefulness and need of an integrated framework reflecting the embeddedness of women social entrepreneurship into its context. Opportunity identification (enablers) lay in the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs; their resilience, self efficacy, financial independence, autonomy, passion about changing womens status created women empowerment. These characteristics were nested in their contours of life, yet open up new possibilities. The research also was able to explore concepts in practice, such as role conflicts, gender, gender inequality and feminism. It was noticed that despite the constant societal pressures and tight structure the entrepreneurs persisted on continuing their journey and work on new ventures that can create positive change in a conservative society such as KP.

Future studies can be targeted towards the research problem as how entrepreneurs strive for survival in conflicted environments, studies could also focus on the different reactions of entrepreneur's towards context related opportunities and constraints, and the strategies they use to tackle them in order to present a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour. Previous studies suggest need for studies in this particular area [4,13.22,55]. This research suggest that KP entrepreneurs opted for strategies of avoidance, negotiation and collaboration with the government bodies or NGO's for survival and success and confirms that entrepreneurs react in different ways to counteract institutional pressures. Thus institutions, although powerful are not deterministic. Future studies can focus on exploring these strategies to further the understanding of the phenomenon. Hence, it can be concluded that Institutions and gendering play a vital role in shaping women social enterprise in KP, Pakistan. Therefore, institutions in combination with gendering may well offer the foundation for a productive general theory of women social enterprise in developing countries.

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## **APPENDIX**

**Table 3 Interview Guideline**

**PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINE**

**Pre-Interview checklist on interview day**

- Reconfirmation of interviewee availability of time and date via phone call
- Stationary and recording device
- Mapping of location

**Organization**                      XYZ

**Name of Respondent**        ABC

**Meeting Time and Date**

**Meeting Location**

**During Interview**

**Icebreaking**

- Introduction of researcher and project
- Ask introductory questions from interviewee
- Agreement on expected time and inform interviewee of conditions of confidentiality
- Ask permission for use of tape recorder

Interview Themes	Subtopics	Notable Points
Drivers	What are the motivation factors that motivated the respondent towards social entrepreneurship, why social entrepreneurship, what drives the respondent towards being social	
Issues & Challenges	What kind of issues and challenges the respondents are facing, why are they facing these issues and challenges, what are they doing about it, and how are they responding towards them. Probe to relate with institution environment with examples	
Barriers	What kind of barriers social entrepreneurs of KP are facing, how they are hindering the respondents capabilities, how can they overcome these barriers, clarification of terms and respondents answers	

**Post Interview**

- Offer to review transcription of interview and findings of research after completion