

Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurs – Stages of Economic Development

Adapa Sujana*

UNE Business School, University of New England, Australia

Yarram Subba Reddy

UNE Business School, University of New England, Australia

Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a much debated research area globally, as the concept is linked to economic growth and prosperity. In order to promote entrepreneurship, it is important to understand the barriers to entrepreneurship; however there has been little research on the barriers to entrepreneurship from the perspective of stages of economic development. Secondary data in the form of qualitative text that is available from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) website are analysed using NVivo software. The next level of analysis followed upon data triangulation resulted in the emergence of meso level contextual factors and micro level individual factors resulting into case studies. The gendered nature of entrepreneurship as experienced by male and female venture owners are investigated from within case and cross-case analyses. The findings obtained indicate the existence of certain similarities and differences between male and female respondents' perceptions of barriers to entrepreneurship in factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies. Both male and female respondents identified macro categories of economic, political, legal, regulatory, socio-cultural and technological barriers to entrepreneurship. Some differences between male and female respondents' perceptions of the barriers to entrepreneurship were observed in the micro categories that emerged from the study. These findings are important for national governments to focus on effective interventions to reduce the identified barriers at the macro, meso and micro levels in order to promote entrepreneurship and economic development.

Keywords: Barriers; Entrepreneurship; Factor-Driven; Efficiency-Driven; Innovation-Driven

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*Corresponding author: Adapa Sujana

E-mail: sadapa2@une.edu.au

Address: UNE Business School, University of New England

1. Introduction

The concept of entrepreneurship has gained global attention due to its relevance to several stakeholders. Entrepreneurship is not only important to the business community, but also to government organisations, non-government organisations, financial institutions, non-financial institutions and the private sector. Studies on global entrepreneurship have attracted continued academic attention for many years due to the ever-changing business environment in the global context (Bosma and Levie, 2010; GEM, 2015), and the last decade, in particular, has seen an upsurge in studies relating to entrepreneurship. For example, in the United States the number of start-up businesses have increased by 15 per cent in the past few years. This increase in the entrepreneurial activity has attracted academic attention in exploring and researching various dimensions of entrepreneurship globally. Women, millennials and minorities have attributed to the increase in the entrepreneurial activity by the uptake of new enterprises (CNBC, 2016). This trend seems to showcase a demographic shift from the traditional male-oriented uptake of entrepreneurial activity.

The data gathered by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) for the seventeenth year in a row measure the rates of entrepreneurial activity. The recent GEM data confirm the finding that the level of global entrepreneurship has increased, and that more women have entered the entrepreneurial arena, with a record 126 million women starting businesses across the globe and 98 million women operating established businesses (HBR, 2013; GEM, 2015). However, to date, the concept of entrepreneurship lacks a proper definition and is much debated within the academic community. Academics have proposed several definitions of entrepreneurship that are structured around the terms opportunities, creativity, innovation and risk-taking (Tanveer et al., 2011). The skills, capabilities, traits and personality characteristics of individual entrepreneurs have also attracted academic attention in the past decade (Hayton et al., 2002).

The definition proposed by Hisrich and Peters (2002) seems to be the most relevant in the context of global entrepreneurship. They proposed that the core aspect of entrepreneurship involves creating new value that involves time and effort. Entrepreneurship results in independence, monetary rewards and personal satisfaction by factoring in financial, physical and social types of risks (Hisrich and Peters, 2002). Being entrepreneurial is challenging and, in reality, only a small percentage of individuals engage in pursuing entrepreneurial activities (Bosma et al., 2008; Bosma and Levie, 2010). Existing literature on entrepreneurship is heavily biased towards the Western and the North American context and largely ignores the cultural, social and economic differences of other countries and regions (Thomas and Mueller, 2000). Studies that explore the factors that promote and constrain global entrepreneurship are limited (Terri, 2016); therefore, a recent call has been put forward in academic circles to undertake more in-depth research of entrepreneurship based upon the stages of economic development (Ozaralli and Rivenburgh, 2016).

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report (2001-2002) classifies the economies into factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven on the basis of the stages of

economic development (Porter et al., 2002). Factor-driven economies are subsistence-oriented and rely heavily on labour and natural resources. The development in factor-driven economies is based upon public private partnerships, workforce and infrastructure. Efficiency-driven economies are competition-oriented and the process of industrialisation enhances the capital intensive nature of businesses. The competitiveness within the efficiency-driven economies is driven by domestic and foreign investments and labour market. Innovation-driven economies are knowledge intensive and rely more on service sectors. The innovation-driven economies sustain sophisticated production, innovativeness and measures associated with standards of living (Porter et al., 2002). The criteria that broadly follows in the allocation of countries on the basis of stages of economic development relates to income levels and the gross domestic product (GDP) percapita rates.

Entrepreneurship is directly related to personal and economic growth. Entrepreneurship not only offers employment opportunities but also fosters greater independence and innovation (Terri, 2016). However, the entire process of entrepreneurship is complex and therefore it is important to understand the motive, benefits and barriers to entrepreneurship before embarking on entrepreneurial activities (Terri, 2016). Being an entrepreneur is challenging and may not result in a regular income, thus, there seems to be a general fear of the future for individuals pursuing entrepreneurial activities (Tanveer et al., 2011). The failures of entrepreneurship are not only related to financial constraints, but also to the lack of general business knowledge (Smith and Beasley, 2011). The inability to attract investments and prevailing market conditions also pose significant problems for the uptake and promotion of entrepreneurial activities (Jafarnejad et al., 2013; Tanveer et al., 2011). Lack of appropriate support and assistance from public and private sectors is also seen as a major hurdle for the uptake of entrepreneurial activities (Tanveer et al., 2011).

Although the concept of entrepreneurship offers many benefits, due to the complexities associated with the access of capital, resources and funding, there seems to be a limited uptake of entrepreneurial activity globally (Jafarnejad et al., 2013). In light of this discussion, some studies have explored the concept of entrepreneurship by taking a gender perspective (Ahl, 2006; Staniewski and Awruk, 2015); however, the results obtained from these studies are inconsistent in determining the gendered nature of entrepreneurship. For example, Staniewski and Awruk's (2015) study found no significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of how they perceive various barriers to entrepreneurial activity. However Ahl's (2006) study found that male and female entrepreneurs show differences in terms of their skills, capabilities and access to networks in pursuing entrepreneurial activities.

Following the research calls put forward by Staniewski and Awruk (2015), Ozaralli and Rivenburgh (2016) and Terri (2016), this study aims to understand the barriers to global entrepreneurship. This study also aims to understand whether or not global entrepreneurship is gendered. Therefore, the present study makes an attempt to answer the following research questions:

What are the barriers to entrepreneurship in the factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies?

Do male and female respondents perceive barriers to entrepreneurship differently on the basis of the stages of economic development?

Are there similarities and differences that exists in terms of constraints faced by male and female venture owners in business initiation and continuity in factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies?

The next section of the paper presents a synthesis of the existing literature by outlining key theoretical concepts that are relevant to the identified problem. The following section outlines the methods adopted in the present study, and explains the relevance of the qualitative data analysis and the use of NVivo software for analysing the qualitative text data and the in-depth interview data. The results from the data analysis are then presented in the form of emerged macro and micro categories of importance, followed by a meaningful discussion. In the concluding section, the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of the study are highlighted, the limitations of the present study are presented and avenues for further research are discussed.

2. Literature review

The existing political, social and cultural environments within the economic environment are vital for the promotion of entrepreneurial activity within a country. Thus the external environment is important in fostering the nation's productivity and growth (GEM, 2015). The impact of the external environment in progressing the entrepreneurial climate in the global context is better explained through the institutional theoretical framework (GEM, 2015). The institutional framework draws on the disciplinary areas of economics, sociology and political science. The institutions are proactive in formulating policies, laws and programs that involve the government and public sector (Lin et al., 2006). Institutions generally tend to set formal rules and informal norms that are enforced on businesses (North, 2005), and these formal and informal rules and/or norms generally promote the economic well being of a society (North, 2005). Although entrepreneurs do not favour the existing institutional frameworks, it is generally understood that some sort of control imposed by institutions is essential for shifting the enterprises from an unproductive to a productive phase (North, 2005).

Knowledge of the prevailing political environment is important for understanding the laws of governance and policies that promote or hinder entrepreneurship. The social environment is better explained as entrepreneurs tend to engage more in start-ups, nano, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Therefore the social interactions and the networks that these businesses develop are critical for business growth. The cultural environment relates to the enterprise's value system and looks for a feasible liaison between internal and external environments (Scott, 2001). The institutional framework within the global environment tends to align the economic, political, social and cultural norms and rules by way of taking into consideration large enterprises while ignoring the fact that

other enterprises are limited by size and growth (Lee, 2013). A majority of new start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises operate on an informal basis; yet tend to be bound by excessive regulations, government policies and legislation.

The connection between the external environment and how this impacts on the exact needs of entrepreneurs is not well established in the extant literature (Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994). Knowledge of the institutional dimensions is also important for understanding how they tend to promote an institutionalised economic environment (Parto, 2005). Aligning with the institutional framework and conforming to set rules may potentially allow organisations to access rewards, while those that do not conform to rules and norms face constraints that lead to institutional isomorphism (North, 2005). Institutions promote thoughts of action and foster social structures (Carlsson, 2002). Institutions operate in an uncertain environment and, even though the institutional framework takes into account the wider disparities of different national contexts, entrepreneurial acumen largely tends to depend on the existing political, social and cultural environments, which have a direct impact on the economic environment (Raco, 1999).

The theory of social gender roles posits that both men and women perform at the same levels, but assume different social status (Eagly, 1997). The reasons for differential social status is attributed to gender stereotyping that harms women more than men (Gupta et al., 2009). The theory of hegemonic masculinity portrays that men and women lead lives dictated by gender (Connell, 1998). Although women occupy key professional roles in the contemporary business environment, lack of recognition impedes women's contribution to the economy and to the society (Diaz et al., 2011).

3. Methods

Qualitative text data were retrieved from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) website. GEM is considered a credible data bank as its contributors are academics, government bodies and small business associations from different countries. From this website, the researcher obtained qualitative text data on the constraints of entrepreneurship that had been collected from a global sample of 393 respondents (of which $n = 130$ from developed context; $n = 125$ from the newly industrialised context; and $n = 138$ from the developing context). The respondents provided the qualitative text in English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish and Croatian languages, and the researcher used the Google translating facilities to convert the data to English. The researchers also engaged native speakers of the respective languages to check the authenticity and meaning of the translated data in English. The researchers were interested in understanding whether or not any similarities and differences existed between the constraints to practising entrepreneurship identified by male and female entrepreneurs in their respective countries. Therefore, when the qualitative text data was extracted from the GEM data site to an Excel spreadsheet, the gender variable was included. The gender variable was coded '0' for female entrepreneurs and '1' for male entrepreneurs. The researchers exported the translated clean data to NVivo qualitative data analysis software and progressed with the coding process, which helped to identify categories of importance that would

assist with understanding the major constraints to practising entrepreneurship in the global context by male and female entrepreneurs (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

For the next level of analysis, the researchers then identified case study methodology to be important in understanding the prevailing dynamics and complexity of human behaviour (Kelly, 1999). Case study method is deemed to be appropriate for describing, analysing and understanding the everyday living experiences of the male and female entrepreneurs alongside the formal and informal processes existing within the business ventures (Yin, 2003). Case study type of methodology helped the researchers to plan a thorough investigation of the real-life phenomena by way of taking into consideration the contextual influences (Hartley, 2004) exerted within the factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies. The researchers conducted 15 in-depth interviews with male and female small-business owner-managers and/or entrepreneurs in India, Malaysia and Australia to align with the identified three categories of stages of economic development (Naude, 2013). A total of 45 in-depth interviews (15 in each location) were conducted by the researchers in three countries India, Malaysia and Australia. The respondents were recruited to participate in the interview process following the convenience and snowball sampling procedures. Each interview lasted for an hour to hour and a half. Laddering process was followed by the researchers that allowed respondents to share as much information as possible on the topic under investigation. The interviews were conducted mostly at the respondents' business ventures and sometimes at cafés nearby, in a more informal setting. The interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed by the researchers.

The researchers followed triangulation techniques in combining the information obtained from the in-depth interviews with document analysis and direct observation. The researchers analysed available documents such as the business ventures web sites, annual reports, policy handbooks, newsletters and manuals. The researchers also had the opportunity to engage in the process of direct observation. As such, the researchers were able to observe the business ventures formal and informal meetings and team briefings. The process of triangulation allowed for more meaningful and contextual understanding of the data under study. Data triangulation also allowed the researchers to test the validity of the findings obtained from different sources through the processes of convergence and divergence (Fielding, 2012). The researchers were able to conduct within case and cross-case analyses to look beyond the familiarisation of the data at hand and make meaningful sense of the evidence obtained through multiple lenses. The researchers used the NVivo qualitative data software to analyse the content from in-depth interviews and identify themes of importance on the basis of conceptual coherence from within case and cross-case analyses. The following section presents the results obtained from the qualitative data analysis in the form of categories/themes of importance. The results obtained are further discussed in relation to the review of the extant literature, and the main findings obtained from the study are outlined.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis of the qualitative text data using NVivo qualitative data analysis software resulted in the emergence of macro and micro categories of importance. The first level of analysis resulted in the emergence of the macro categories of economic, political, legal, regulatory, socio-cultural and technological environments. The second level of analysis identified micro categories of importance within the emerged macro categories, and any differences and similarities observed between the responses of male and female respondents and stages of economic development were highlighted. The third level of analysis resulted in the emergence of themes of importance on the basis of within case and cross-case analyses by taking into consideration the gender of the respondent and the country category. The results obtained are discussed in relation to the existing theory, and a framework is proposed for coherently understanding the barriers to entrepreneurship in the global context.

4.1.

The economic environment has been identified by both male (225 references coded; 14.29% coverage) and female (106 references coded, 7.34% coverage) respondents globally as the second major constraint to promoting entrepreneurship. The economic environment includes infrastructure factors, funding factors, resource factors and competitor factors. The infrastructure factors are 'lack of access to industrial land', 'infrastructure problems' and 'poor physical infrastructure'. The funding factors are 'lack of access to funding', 'lack of access to affordable funding', 'low inflow of foreign investments', 'poor access to capital' and 'lack of collateral business funding'. The resource factors that pose constraints to the promotion of entrepreneurship are 'poor access to raw materials', 'lack of access to venture capital', 'lack of association with angel investors' and 'limited availability of resources'. The competitor factors are 'market inefficiencies', 'monopoly oriented situations' and 'international competition'. Male respondents additionally identified that the prevailing economic environment globally provides poor support for start-ups and microenterprises, and expressed favourability towards the development of an outsourcing industry.

Respondents from factor-driven economies identified infrastructure, funding and resource factors as the major constraints for promoting entrepreneurship. However, respondents from efficiency-driven economies elicited funding, resources and competitor factors within the prevailing economic environment as barriers to entrepreneurship. Respondents from innovation-driven economies outlined only competitor factors as the major constraint for entrepreneurial prosperity. Economic growth and development provides a favourable environment (Carree et al., 2002; Carree et al., 2007) and opportunities for fostering entrepreneurial activity (Van Stel et al., 2007). The extant literature also highlights that economic development of the country is integral to the entrepreneurial orientations of the public (Wennekers et al., 2005). The availability of alternative sources of funding has been identified as a major obstacle to promoting entrepreneurship (Gros and Steinherr, 2004), and a strong economic environment reduces the funding-related constraints for entrepreneurs (Mickiewicz, 2005).

4.2.

The legal environment prevailing globally has also been identified by both male (40 references coded, 1.98% coverage) and female (18 references coded; 1.13% coverage) respondents as a constraining factor in the promotion of entrepreneurship. The influence of the legal environment as a barrier to promoting entrepreneurship has been related by both male and female respondents to legislative factors and labour factors. The identified legislative factors are 'legislative procedures', 'unstable legislative environment', 'complicated legislation' and 'impractical legislation'. The labour factors that act as barriers to entrepreneurship are 'labour laws' and 'labour legislation'. Additionally, the female respondents highlighted that a secure, diverse and unified legal system poses additional constraints to practising entrepreneurship.

Respondents from factor-driven economies identified both legislative and labour factors within the prevailing legal environment to hinder the process of entrepreneurship. However, respondents from both efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies appreciated the strengths associated with the existing legal environment. Federal and state laws are often ambiguous and lack effective mechanisms for enforcement, which creates a problem for the growth of entrepreneurship (Sutton and Dobbin, 1996). For example, professionals engage in the process and tend to make sense of changing laws. Professionals also have abilities to understand the changing situations and are often identified as strong advocates for legality by way of constructing the meaning of ambiguous laws (Edelman and Suchman, 1997). However, the changing legal environment poses a significant problem for entrepreneurs, as they may have difficulty understanding the legal implications of ambiguous laws to their business context and making sense of the labour markets (Dobbin et al., 1993). In the entrepreneurial context, legal changes often become institutionalised, resulting in the firms' environment becoming ritualised (Edelman, 1992).

4.3.

The political environment has been identified by both male (198 references coded, 11.16% coverage) and female (90 references coded, 5.58% coverage) respondents as a constraint in the promotion of entrepreneurial activity globally. The respondents associated the influence of the political environment with government factors and procedural factors. The government factors are 'presence of corruption', 'excessive red tape', 'nepotism' and 'inefficient government policies'. The procedural factors are 'poor administrative processes', 'centralised procedures' and 'bureaucratic procedures'. Additionally, the female respondents identified that subcontracting, provision of subsidies and state support may enhance entrepreneurial activity.

Respondents from factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies irrespective of the stages of economic development reported the barriers associated with the existing political environment in the promotion of entrepreneurial ventures. The influence of the government environment is pervasive in the promotion of entrepreneurial activities. A strong political environment with efficient government policies and simplified processes promotes entrepreneurship

(Hodler, 2009), while excessive bureaucracy, corruption and red tape significantly reduce business opportunities and growth (Baumol, 1990), as well as discourage entrepreneurial potential (Aidis and Mickiewicz, 2006).

4.4.

The regulatory environment has been identified by both male (60 references coded, 2.92% coverage) and female (24 references coded, 1.13% coverage) respondents as one of the constraining factors in the promotion of entrepreneurship globally. The influence of the regulatory environment on entrepreneurship has been related by the respondents to financial factors such as ‘banking regulations’, ‘resistance from financial institutions’ and ‘limited access to banks’. Similarly, the regulatory environment has been identified as a constraining factor in promoting entrepreneurship due to bureaucratic factors such as ‘tax burdens’, ‘taxes and tariffs’ and ‘excessive taxation procedures’. The market factors identified by the male and female respondents include excessive regulations related to ‘market entry’ and ‘market competition’.

Similar to the political environment, irrespective to the stage of economic development, respondents from all three economies identified bureaucratic and market factors to limit the process of creating entrepreneurial ventures. In addition, respondents from factor-driven economies identified financial factors within the prevailing regulatory environment as a major hindrance to entrepreneurship. The regulatory environment is negatively correlated with entrepreneurial activity (Glaser et al., 2003). For example, a weak institutional and high regulatory environment increases the operating costs for entrepreneurs (Parker, 2007), thus reducing entrepreneurial activity (Hodler, 2009). An enhanced regulatory environment also poses significant constraints for business expansion both nationally and internationally, thus limiting entrepreneurial activities. For example, excessive taxes and complex taxation procedures directly influence expected returns, which is not perceived by entrepreneurs to be favourable (Parker, 2004).

4.5.

The socio-cultural environment has been identified by both male (301 references coded, 24.04% coverage) and female (120 references coded, 9.65% coverage) respondents as the major constraint in enhancing entrepreneurial activity globally. The socio-cultural environment is identified through social, cultural and entrepreneurial factors. Social factors are ‘lack of education’, ‘enormous work’, ‘business failures’, ‘lack of joint initiatives’, ‘poor social perceptions’, ‘low social status’, ‘retaining younger talent’ and ‘systemic inefficiency’. Cultural factors identified by the respondents are ‘lack of business culture’, ‘prevailing traditional culture’, ‘national culture’, ‘lack of risk taking culture’, ‘family culture’ and ‘cultural barriers’. The identified entrepreneurial factors are ‘lack of entrepreneurial acumen’, ‘lack of support for entrepreneurial activities’, ‘lack of entrepreneurial spirit’, ‘poor entrepreneurial image’, ‘lack of entrepreneurial awareness’, ‘lack of entrepreneurial programs’, ‘lack of entrepreneurial training’ and ‘lack of entrepreneurial education’. Additionally,

female respondents stated that lack of appropriate mentoring and lack of access to business incubators act as barriers to entrepreneurial activity.

Respondents from both factor-driven and efficiency-driven economies identified prevailing socio-cultural environment and associated social, cultural and entrepreneurial factors as constraints for the promotion of entrepreneurial ventures. However, respondents from innovation-driven economies has not related the existing socio-cultural environment to limit entrepreneurial activity. The prevailing social environment potentially creates or destroys entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Wiedenmayer, 1993), and the existing cultural environment also potentially affects entrepreneurial ability (Gasse and Tremblay, 2011). The national cultural context aligns with specific social norms and valuations that may generate significant differences in the public perception of entrepreneurship, thus limiting the entrepreneurial climate (Burton et al., 2016; Lent et al., 2000).

4.6.

The technological environment has been identified as a constraining factor in the promotion of entrepreneurship. The number of male respondents that identified technology as a constraining factor for entrepreneurship received a coverage of 0.94% (with 9 references coded). The male respondents related the technological environment to technology factors such as the 'lack of access to technology', 'lack of technological resources' and 'lack of technologies with true potential'. The male respondents also identified the technological environment as a constraint to entrepreneurship from the perspective of individual factors such as 'lack of capabilities' and 'lack of performance in computing'. Other physical factors associated with the technological environment identified by male respondents as a constraint to promoting entrepreneurship relate to 'insufficient support for technological development', 'poor technology infrastructure for small businesses' and 'inability to promote technology businesses'. The number of female respondents that identified the technological environment as a constraint to entrepreneurship received a coverage of 0.41% (with 5 references coded). The female respondents related the influence of the technological environment on entrepreneurship only to technology factors such as 'lack of software', 'lack of technology' and 'lack of databases for data exchange'.

Respondents from factor-driven economies identified prevailing technological environment and associated technology, individual and physical factors as constraints to the promotion of entrepreneurial activities. Respondents from efficiency-driven economies noted the variability in individual factors in the usage and application of technology within the business ventures as a barrier to entrepreneurship. Respondents from innovation-driven economies outlined issues pertaining to access and integration of technology in business ventures in rural, remote and regional locations. Entrepreneurship is associated with innovation and technological change, and/or advancements in technology are positively correlated to the promotion of innovations (Wennekers et al., 2010). Irrespective of the size, entrepreneurial firms tend to perform in an advanced technological

environment (Lee, 2013; Van Praag and Versloot, 2008). Block et al. (2013) also noted that a favourable technological climate fosters entrepreneurial growth.

The following framework (Figure 1) is proposed on the basis of the macro and micro categories that emerged from this study. The proposed framework will be useful for enabling a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to global entrepreneurship. Identification of the constraints to global entrepreneurship is not only meaningful, but also extremely useful for the various stakeholders involved in the promotion of entrepreneurship. This study has identified barriers to entrepreneurship from the macro perspective, and government and non-government organisations involved in the support of and promotion of entrepreneurship may potentially look into possible interventions to minimise or even eradicate these constraints in order to create thriving entrepreneurial business acumen. Reducing the macro level barriers to entrepreneurship encourages more individuals globally to look favourably into entrepreneurial success, and adds to global economic growth. Few gender differences were identified in the present study, as it was found that both male and female entrepreneurs primarily perceive the same type of barriers to entrepreneurship, at least from the macro environmental perspective. The similarities and differences in terms of the influence exerted by the identified macro environmental factors on entrepreneurship as perceived by respondents across factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies were highlighted.

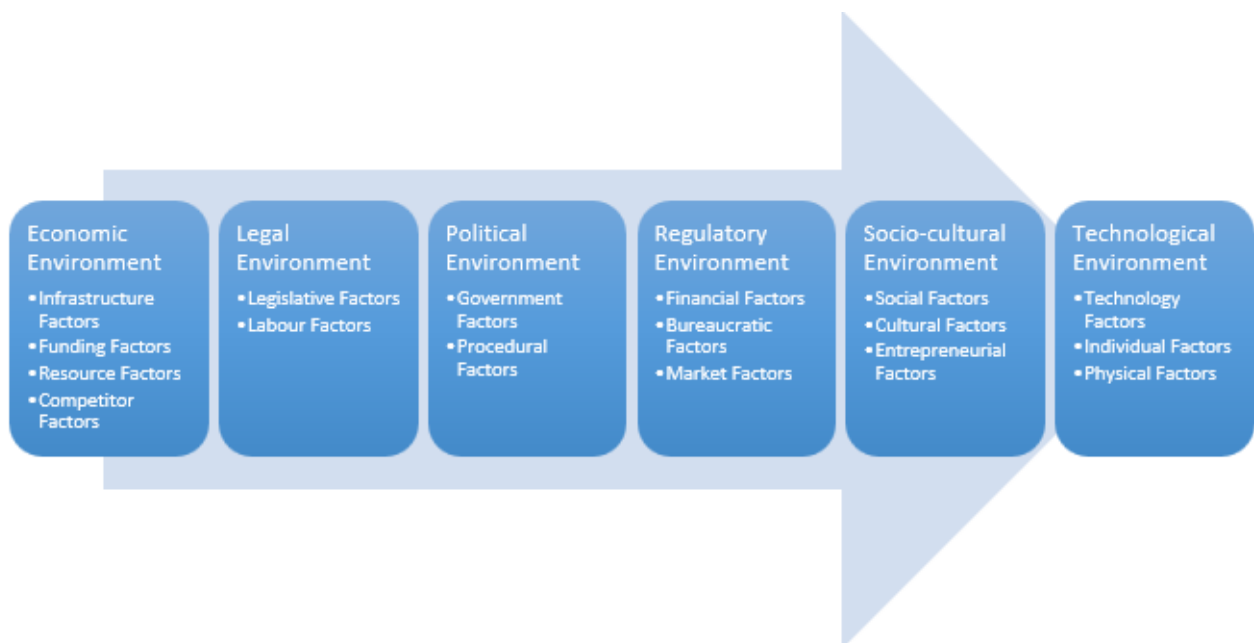


Figure 1. Barriers to global entrepreneurship

Third level of analysis identified the following emergent themes of importance from data triangulation process. In addition to the macro environmental factors that emerged from the secondary data analysis, meso level contextual factors and micro level individual factors emerged as prominent themes of importance that exert significant influence on the process of entrepreneurship in factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies. Table I presents the emergent themes categorised on the basis of the stages of development and the gender of the respondent.

Table 1. Themes X Stages of economic development X Gender of the respondent

Themes/ Develop- ment	Factor-driven	Efficiency-driven	Innovation-driven
Macro Environ- mental Factors	<p><i>'The existing infrastructure for doing business seems to be poor. Added to this, there are limitations on resources and available funding. Access to finance is problematic with existing corruption. The government policies keep changing from time to time with an impact on the way the business is conducted. The existing legislative procedures are not straightforward. The labour laws are complicated impacting the wage system. Banking and business regulations are stringent with bureaucratic influence. Access to technology, individual capabilities and technological relevance to business are significant issues as well. Socially, small business</i></p>	<p><i>'Resources are limited and access to funding seems to be a major problem. In addition, entrepreneurial ventures face stiff competition in the market place. Also there exists red tape with procedural limitations that hinders the entrepreneurial process. Taxes and tariffs seem to be changing from time to time and whenever there is a change in the ruling government. Certain businesses face religious restrictions. Socially, starting a business is something that is perceived to low status related. Entrepreneurial support exists but the information seems to be highly fragmented. The existing state of technology in the country is quite good. It all comes back to the variability in terms of individuals' capabilities and skills'</i></p>	<p><i>'Way too much regulation. The paperwork seems to be horrendous. Often the government policies relating to small business and start-ups are inefficient. Market competition exists and is tough to manage particularly as new businesses enter the market place. It is hard to run a business from regional locations, as access to internet seems to be problematic. The laws in the country are well laid out. No problem with the existing legislative system' (Male Respondent#16).</i></p>

ventures are not appreciated and lack support' (**Male Respondent#6**).

'Many restrictions for women to access finance, capital and other resources. Poor infrastructure. Understanding the existing legal and regulatory frameworks and how they operate within the small business environment takes lot of time. Existing government policies also limit women from doing business. Corruption, red tape and nepotism are integral to the system. The way that the system operates and sets out the business taxes seems to be bureaucratic. State support is minimal. Moreover the country's culture limits women from doing business. Other social aspects such as class, caste and religion dominate the business environment. Entrepreneurial support exists. But it

(**Male Respondent#10**).

'The support that women receive in terms of entrepreneurial ventures varies on the basis of their ethnic background and religion. This has implications on capital access and other resource related issues, as borrowing is not permitted in some religions. The competition is intense and it is hard to compete with the male counter parts. For a majority of women owner-managers, understanding of how the taxes, regulations and legal processes work seems to be daunting. Women also tend to have minimal interaction with the government organisations and banks as far as possible. Women in business generally lack access to expert advice and software technology' (**Female Respondent#32**).

'I think the way women do business is very different to what men do on a day to day basis. Women tend to depend on accountants, tax agents, legal advisors, solicitors etc., who can carry out work on their behalf. I always find understanding these processes to be tedious. Competition in the business environment seems to be tough. Regulations, paperwork and government policies seem to change without business owners' knowledge. The associated administrative processes are time intensive and costly. It is also often hard to understand how much technology related knowledge and skills are essential for running a business or a venture' (**Female Respondent#40**).

seems to be hard for women to access the entrepreneurial knowledge. Women generally are competent with the usage of technology but lacks resources related to the usage of databases' (**Female Respondent#25**).

Meso Contextual Factors	<p><i>'I have started a unique business venture (industrial metal spare parts). The business venture has been running successfully for over 10 years now. I have knowledge of metallurgy because of my educational background. In the first two years of starting the venture I managed to gain adequate information about various functional aspects of the business by moving closely with the solicitors, accountants, suppliers and marketing intermediaries'</i> (Male Respondent#4).</p>	<p><i>'I have been managing two related ventures with decent profits for sometime now. The business context in Malaysia is different. For example, the borrowing ability or the access to capital/finance has restrictions in terms of the religious background. Male owned ventures are the most popular in the country. Male networks and friendship/family groups help the male business owners to effectively navigate through the existing restrictions around access to finance. For women business owners lack of access to effective networks and existing social</i></p>	<p><i>'The business context and encouragement provided to small businesses and start-up initiatives is quite impressive in the country. The major problem seems to be associated with the information overload. Therefore, the business owners have the difficulty in making sense of the available information that is actually useful for the business venture. Usually networking with other business owners is not a commonality that exists due to lack of time'</i> (Male Respondent#20).</p>
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norms seem to be major constraints for business start-up and business continuity'

(Male Respondent#13).

'In my perspective, running any successful business needs not only excellent communication skills, but also an overall understanding of various functional areas. So, it is not only customers/clients but you need to understand the roles of suppliers, service providers, accountants, authorities etc., It is not enough to have skills and know the business alone. As a woman, I need to deal with clients and other actors on a day-to-day basis who are typically men. There is no respect for women managing a business or a venture. Men are always associated with business and entrepreneurship. Men are readily associated with risk-taking and innovative. It also

'Business ventures in Malaysia are typically male dominated. The prevailing perception is that men usually have creative ideas and therefore have the ability to start a venture. Women usually are associated with caring and family responsibilities so are never encouraged by the family members to even think about starting a business venture. Entrepreneurial ventures with female owners became somewhat popular only in the past few years. The common belief is that managing a venture is stressful and risky. It is assumed that women cannot take stress and women managed businesses do not make profits. Also, it is perceived that women managed ventures or businesses

*'I am familiar with the business context and I try to incorporate innovations from time to time. This practice has generated new clientele to the business. However, what I have learnt over a period of time is that it is not enough for a woman to have business expertise. A businesswoman managing a business venture needs to understand how to penetrate through male networks as women based business networks are rare. Women managing non-traditional ventures are perceived by the society as exceptions to common practice as they are judged not only on business creation, but also on the basis of profit generation and the extent of differentiation in comparison to their male counterparts' **(Female Respondent#44).***

seems to be easy for men to understand various functional aspects. Even access to finance needs support of a male family member for seeking approval from various institutions' **(Female Respondent#30).**

sustain only for shorter periods' **(Female Respondent#35).**

Micro Individual Factors	<p><i>'I have the passion to do business since young age and I pursued the dream. I never even thought of working for others and wanted to be my own boss. I am confident, driven and I like taking risks. My family is also wealthy so there was adequate support. Once I acquired necessary business related qualifications I was able to start the business that I wanted to'</i> (Male Respondent#5).</p>	<p><i>'I never thought of working for others. I have pursued business education with passion. I used to work in the family business since I was young and acquired practical skills while learning the theory in the classroom. I run three businesses now and I enjoy the challenges that these businesses present to me. I like to play in the market place and come with new strategies to overcome competitors' pressure. I can proudly say that all my businesses are highly profitable'</i> (Male Respondent#12).</p>	<p><i>'I am entrepreneurial and I knew it! The drive has been there all along. I wanted to do something different. I started very young. I have been in the business for over 15 years and I had multiple businesses over many years. I also liked to manage more than one business. I am confident, risk taking, venturesome and have the right attitude to run multiple businesses'</i> (Male Respondent#22).</p>
	<p><i>'I have professional qualifications and I have worked for another firm before</i></p>	<p><i>'I struggled to get a decent job with my educational qualifications. My</i></p>	<p><i>'I have started the retail business four years back. I was not academic oriented. I acquired</i></p>

for nearly five years. I found that I was never able to make it to the senior positions even though I am better qualified and educated than my male counterparts. Male colleagues who are much younger to me and much less qualified than me took on to senior roles. The prevailing culture within the firm seems to be male dominated. Therefore, I have decided to start my own firm, as I believed that I have necessary skills and knowledge to run my own business. I like the flexibility with work as the owner-manager and the ability to take my own decisions' (Female Respondent#28).

family were into business and I decided to start my own professional service firm and up skilled my qualifications further. I offer accounting solutions to other firms but there seems to be restrictions on the basis of the ethnic background and the religion that I follow particularly in terms of sourcing the right clients. It is important to follow these practices as I do not want to lose the business. My husband is a partner in the business. I must admit that my decision-making is restricted, but I have the flexibility in terms of the number of hours that I spend in managing the business. This is helpful in managing the family' (Female Respondent#33).

Certificate qualifications through TAFE in retail and set up the business. I had prior experience of three years working for a different retail business. I source unique products and keep the business differentiated from the existing competitors. I have confidence in running the business. I may not make huge profits but I like the flexibility I have in running my own business. I have two young children going to primary school and I like the way that I am able to manage my family and work. I am not planning to expand the business and I am happy the way it runs' (Female Respondent#43).

4.7.

Within Case Analyses – reveals that the emerged macro level environmental factors correlates to those that emerged from the secondary data analysis. The meso level contextual factors emerged from the interview data highlights the constraints for business initiation, continuity and success. For example, the respondents' outlined the information scarcity around business start-up and business

continuity in factor-driven economies; funding restrictions due to religious practices and ethnic background in efficiency-driven economies; and information overload in innovation-driven economies as barriers to entrepreneurship. In addition, male respondents' as venture owners highlighted the knowledge and ability to understand various functional areas in factor-driven economies; helpfulness of male networks in business initiation and success in efficiency-driven economies; and conduciveness of the business context to run multiple businesses in innovation-driven economies hinder the entrepreneurial acumen. However, female venture owners outlined the criticality of involving the male family member in business decision-making in factor-driven economies; lack of access to expert business networks in efficiency-driven economies; and non-acceptance of women as venture owners in non-traditional business contexts in innovation-driven economies as major deterrents to the process of entrepreneurship.

4.8.

Cross-case Analyses – reveals that the micro level individual factors emerged across all three stages of economic development to be the same. For example, male venture owners in factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies portrayed themselves as enabling entrepreneurs with entrepreneurial drive to generate profits. The male venture owners and entrepreneurs mainly attributed the business initiation and continuity to pull factors. On the contrary, the female venture owners elicited a combination of push and pull factors to business initiation and continuity. Female entrepreneurs in factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies outlined flexibility to manage the business and family as the most important reason for engaging in the process of entrepreneurship.

5. Conclusion

The present study analysed secondary data available in the form of qualitative text from the GEM website and primary data sourced from in-depth interviews. In addition, document analysis, website analysis and direct observation approaches where possible were pursued. Qualitative analysis of the data obtained from male and female respondents globally showcased certain similarities and some differences in terms of the identification of the barriers to entrepreneurship. The macro categories of importance that emerged from the qualitative data analysis align closely with the macro environmental factors. Socio-cultural factors were identified as significant barriers globally to the promotion of entrepreneurship, followed by economic and political factors. Regulatory and legal factors also pose problems globally, hindering entrepreneurship adoption and continuation. Technological factors seem to hinder entrepreneurship to a limited extent. Several micro categories of importance were identified within the macro categories acting as constraints to entrepreneurship. Both male and female respondents showcased certain similarities in the identification of barriers to entrepreneurship, but the extent of the variation depended on the emerged micro categories. Government organisations, non-government organisations, small business associations, universities and chambers of commerce need to coordinate their efforts in order to reduce the barriers to

entrepreneurship and thus foster economic growth and prosperity. Public and private partnerships need to be encouraged globally to reduce the influence of the identified macro environmental factors that act as barriers to promoting entrepreneurship.

The primary data analysed revealed three prominent categories based upon the conceptual coherence such as macro environmental factors, meso contextual factors and micro individual factors. The identified macro level environmental factors correlated to those that emerged from the secondary data analysis. The meso contextual factors mainly related to the constraints imposed by the existing business context within factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economies and outlined important differences between male and female venture owners. Access to expert advice and entrepreneurial networks and/or ecosystems seems to be problematic irrespective of the stages of economic development, in limiting the processes of business initiation, continuity, success and expansion. In addition, women entrepreneurs faced oppressions due to lack of mentors, absence of role models and non-acceptance if involved in non-traditional business ventures. In order to address these issues and strengthen the business ventures success and expansion, business associations need to work in coordination with the government organisations in building effective entrepreneurial ecosystems. Similarly, the existence of entrepreneurial support needs to be widely publicised and communicated broadly within the business associations. The micro level individual factors seems to be gendered in terms of the existing entrepreneurial orientations and favour male entrepreneurs, thus allowing male venture owners to start serial and portfolio type of entrepreneurial businesses. Female venture owners seems to confine to the flexible work nature irrespective of the stages of economic development and fear for business loss. The business associations, chambers of commerce, government and other relevant non-government organisations need to work cooperatively in strengthening the well-being of venture owners and focus upon creating strategies to promote entrepreneurial resilience.

The present study has certain limitations that needs to be addressed in future studies. For example, the present study is mainly based on the qualitative text available from the GEM website, document analysis, direct observation and in-depth interviews. Future studies need to focus on a mixed methods approach to complement qualitative research with quantitative research, which provides statistical rigour and validity. Also, the present study explored barriers to entrepreneurship only from the stages of economic development and case studies were conducted in representative countries. However, future studies may potentially target transition economies from factor-driven to efficiency-driven and from efficiency-driven to innovation-driven to understand whether or not gendered nature of entrepreneurship exists. Although it falls beyond the scope of this study, a further avenue for further extension of this research is to progress comparative analysis of male and female entrepreneurs in the representative countries and draw upon variables of similarities and differences. The focus of the current study on women entrepreneurs alone and understand the constraints faced by them is triggered by gaps identified through an extensive literature syntheses. The authors understand that such an approach raises the issue of generalisability and the probable selection bias

associated with the recruitment of women entrepreneurs in the study elicits the issue of representativeness. Such issues can be addressed by progressing a comparative study to deeply understand the constraints faced by all genders. Moreover, future studies need to explore the extent of the influence exerted by macro, meso and micro level variables on the promotion of entrepreneurship in terms of business initiation, continuity, success and expansion. Another limitation is that this study has taken into consideration only the influence of the gender variable. Further studies in the area need to explore the moderating or mediating role of other demographic variables.

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