

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP: NURTURING SELF-ESTEEM IN A NEW GENERATION
OF IMMIGRANT ARAB WOMEN IN ROMANIA**

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Biographical Notes

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Abstract

Our paper casts an innovative light on Arab women entrepreneurs, immigrant in Romania, and the changing role of Arab females in a different cultural environment. This is based on a pioneering qualitative research consisting in carrying out in-depth interviewees with five immigrant Arab women entrepreneurs acting on the Romanian market. Aiming to raise awareness about immigrant Arab women entrepreneurs in Romania, in our research we mainly approached personal, cultural, and entrepreneurial issues. Based on our research results, in this paper we highlight a profile of the interviewed Arab women entrepreneurs and a series of business particularities of their entrepreneurial ventures, focusing on factors affecting entrepreneurship. The challenges Arab women face when starting a business, from family, moral, and financial support to adapting in a European country, are thoroughly approached in our study.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, Arab women, immigrant, Romania, immigrant entrepreneurship

JEL Classification: J60, M10

1. Introduction

In an extremely interconnected world, migration raises various challenges and opportunities for both the host and origin countries. If, generally, one of the most negative impacts refer to involvement in illegal activities, tensions on the labour market, especially correlated with unemployment, or pression on the housing market, the positive ones are mainly connected to cultural exchanges, solving vacancy issues on the labour market, or remittances (Grosu, 2015a).

Approached as “any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business” (Bosma et al., 2012, p. 9), entrepreneurship may represent an adequate tool for increasing the positive effects of migration and for alleviating the negative ones. Considered as two main forms of connection between migration and entrepreneurship, immigrant and returnee entrepreneurship might become important generators of economic and social development for both the host and origin countries (Grosu, 2015b). More precisely, as our paper focuses only on immigrant entrepreneurship, this is highly acknowledged as a key development generator, especially “through knowledge and information transfer, global trade, job creation, and other benefits” (Xavier et al., 2013, p. 9).

In an auspicious and supportive environment provided by the host country, immigrants

may exhibit entrepreneurial behaviours translated into the development of businesses, usually in the area of services, agriculture, music, arts, or IT, positively impacting immigrants' social and economic status (Dinu, Grosu and Saseanu, 2015; Rauhut and Rauhut Kompaniets, 2018).

Immigrant Arab women represent a category of immigrants with entrepreneurial characteristics untapped to their real potential, especially because of cultural constraints; in such a context, the scientific literature in the area is very scarce. Entrepreneurship amid the Arab women of Romania is not a well-thought subject, in fact, it is more disregarded than avoided due to the common knowledge that Arab women were educated to stay at home and put family demands as a priority. This is a misleading, yet popular notion on Arab women. Much of the attention has been drawn to Arab people due to their differences in culture and their uncommon practices in a European country. They're easily distinguishable based on their language and physical traits. Women, of course, wearing veils to cover their hair, are the ones attracting the most attention to their nations.

In such a framework, we have been privileged to observe and study immigrant Arab women behavior in entrepreneurship as well as to analyze the changing attitude of their lives in a country so different from their origin. Our paper is mainly based on the results of a pioneering qualitative research consisting of carrying out in-depth interviews with five immigrant Arab women in Romania.

The reason behind bringing light to this subject is to allow the world to acknowledge the existence of these immigrant female Arab models in Romania. With this respect, the paper has been structured into three main parts, leaving the introduction and conclusions aside. The first segment addresses the theoretical framework, the second segment represents the research methodology, and the third outlines the research main results.

2. Theoretical framework

The concepts of immigrant entrepreneurship and of women entrepreneurship are widely debated in the scientific literature. Many topics have been explored in the area of immigrant entrepreneurship, recent research efforts being oriented towards the relationship between self-employment and immigration, focusing also on its economic impact, shifts in intergenerational mobility of immigrant entrepreneurs, the social dimension of immigrant entrepreneurship, the implication of immigrant children in business activities, comparison with native-born entrepreneurs, various financial aspects, etc. approached on different groups of immigrants and in different regions (Chavan and Taksa, 2017; Clark, Drinkwater and Robinson, 2017; Golob and Giles, 2017; Moghaddam et al., 2017; Villares-Varela, 2017). On

the other hand, in what regards women entrepreneurship, recent research approaches are focused, for example, on women entrepreneurs' ambition, working conditions, life standards, business opportunities – especially related to the digital area – policy implications, gender discrimination, networking, etc. in various branches and regions where they run entrepreneurial ventures (Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017; Pettersson et al., 2017; Sharafizad and Coetzer, 2017; Steel, 2017; Welsh, Kaciak and Minialai, 2017).

However, when combining the two concepts – immigrant women entrepreneurship – the literature is not so generous with studies in the area. For example, Azmat (2013) investigates various factors that act as barriers or enablers to migrant women entrepreneurs coming from developing to developed countries outlining that human capital, culture, family, institutional factors, gender and social capital may represent important barriers in women entrepreneurial path. However, culture, family, social capital and gender are also perceived as enablers for immigrant entrepreneurship.

Aharon (2017, p. 288) studies the self-employment of immigrant women in the United States from the perspectives of the country-of-origin and family-related policies outlining that “immigrant women compare the attractiveness and anticipated costs of working as entrepreneurs in the contexts of both the origin and destination welfare states, and decide whether and how to participate in the labor market on the basis of their ability to alleviate the tension between home and work duties”.

Verheijen, Nguyen and Chin (2014) analyze migrant women pathways to entrepreneurship in New Zealand. The same region is also explored by Pio (2007a; 2007b) that investigates Indian women entrepreneurs, focusing on their reasons for entering entrepreneurship and their bittersweet entrepreneurial process, underlining a series of issues related to ethnicity, barriers for entering the job market, underemployment, or setting up and developing a venture.

The same group of migrants is also investigated by Azmat and Fujimoto (2016). They tap the entrepreneurial process of Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Melbourne, Australia from a family embeddedness perspective finding that “entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon influenced by their being an Indian, a woman and a new Australian, all of which interact and influence their family dynamics and entrepreneurial experience”. Australia is also approached by Njaramba, Chigeza and Whitehouse (2015) in their research regarding the financial literacy of migrant African-Australian women entrepreneurs in the Cairns region outlining interviewees' high level of financial literacy.

In Europe, Domboka (2012) investigates the ‘acquisition process’ of entrepreneurial

resources, both financial and non-financial, among migrant African women entrepreneurs in Britain, while Forson (2013) investigates “the work-life balance experiences of migrant women entrepreneurs active in the hairdressing sector in London, revealing that ability of women to manage their work-life balance was shaped by power relations and social interactions between and within cultural, structural and agentic dimensions of small business ownership”. Besides the United Kingdom, other European countries are explored in terms of women immigrant entrepreneurship. For example, Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop (2013) approach “various forms of identity work of female business owners of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands revealing how they use a variety of cultural repertoires to negotiate and manipulate the family norms and values in order to seek and hold their position in the public domain effectively”. Hopp and Martin (2017) investigate income effects of self-employment for females and migrants in Germany focusing on differences resulting from gender and immigrants’ country of origin. Webster and Haandrikman (2017) study Thai women entrepreneurs in Sweden outlining a gender approach to understanding their business activities and revealing that family structure, migration length, education and partner’s labor market status are key players in their entrepreneurial process. Munkejord (2017a; 2017b) analyses networking practices of immigrants who start businesses in areas where co-ethnic communities do not exist and rural and gender gaps in immigrant entrepreneurship literature emphasizing the case of female immigrant entrepreneurs in a rural context in Norway.

Narrowing even more the investigation community, focusing only on Arab immigrant women entrepreneurship, outlines the fact that studies are in an incipient phase, while placing the research topic in Romania studies are almost inexistent. For example, Abu-Asbah and Heilbrunn (2011) are approaching various patterns of entrepreneurship of Arab women in Israel, focusing more on ethnic entrepreneurship aspects. It is worth emphasizing that in this paper, we do not use the terms of ethnic, minority and immigrant entrepreneurship in an interchangeable way, as often encountered in the scientific literature. We approach immigrant entrepreneurship from Basu’s (2006) perspective – immigrant entrepreneurs are immigrants who initiate and develop a business in their host country – no matter if immigrants are first or second generation.

Arab women are poorly investigated in relation to entrepreneurship even in their home countries. The few studies identified in the scientific literature approach women entrepreneur growth development and new ways to close the gender gaps in entrepreneurship, focusing on modern technologies, factors that explain the entrepreneurial success, personal characteristics, motivation factors and driving forces, satisfactions and frustrations, business opportunities

and challenges, perception on entrepreneurial behaviors, sources of knowledge and support in starting and operating an entrepreneurial venture, business description and entrepreneurs' profile in countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates (Naser, Wojoud and Nuseibeh, 2009; Weeks, 2009; Mathew, 2010; Itani, Sidani and Baalbaki, 2011; Zamberi Ahmad, 2011; Danish and Smith, 2012; Welsh et al., 2014; Ameen and Willis, 2016).

3. Research methodology

Our qualitative research was represented by carrying out in-depth interviews with immigrant Arab women in Romania, aiming to raise awareness about this phenomenon in Romania and to promote the interviewees as invaluable role models in their community. The main research objectives refer to:

- *Designing a profile of an immigrant Arab woman entrepreneur in Romania.*
- *Analyzing the business particularities of the entrepreneurial ventures developed by Arab women, immigrant in Romania.*
- *Identifying the key factors affecting these women.*

Many obstacles were faced when carrying out the research, the most important being the difficulty of identifying a proper sample for the research. The lack of connections among the Arab women in Romania held us back from finding more entrepreneurs. Many of the Arab women in Romania between the ages of 27 to 40 have chosen a career in Dentistry, General Medicine or Teaching while those about to enter their first years in university prefer taking after their male role models such as their older brothers or fathers by picking Architecture or Business Administration.

In such a framework, by applying a snowball sampling technique we have generated a pool of only five interviewees. This represents the major limitation of our research. Arab women in Romania are grouped by countries and those most accessible were Syrians. Most of these Syrian women have dealt with charity cases and organizations rather than businesses, all of which are non-profit and unofficial. An exemplary organization would be the Romanian Arabic Women Association (RAWA) a charitable, non-political, non-religious, and non-profit organization that originated back in 2006 with currently 283 members of different nationalities, including Romanian women married to Arabic men. The interviewed women come from both Syria and Iraq, known to take part in high social circles.

The interviews took place in Bucharest, in every interviewee's workshop, during April 2017. The interviews were recorded, only after the approval of the interviewees. The

recordings were then put into a printed form and analyzed separately. Every interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes, with no interferences. Due to the lack of respondents, it was very important to gather as much detail about their business and personality as possible, to create a clear image of what it means to be an entrepreneur as an immigrant Arab woman in Romania.

The in-depth interviews were carried out with five very different women. All with different social backgrounds, religious views and university degrees. Their participation in the research was not forced, nor associated with any type of prejudice. Considering confidential reasons, their identity is not revealed.

Taking into consideration the qualitative character of the research and the small size of the interviewed sample, it is very difficult and inappropriate to generalize the research findings. These only refer to the investigated Arab females. However, the implications of the research results and discussions for better understanding the role of the immigrant Arab female entrepreneurs in Romania might be considered. These results and discussions are outlined in the following section of the paper, supported by similar findings in the entrepreneurship-related literature.

4. Research results

Romania was not chosen as host country by the interviewees as choice but rather as a consequence of political stability. These women's parents fled their own country for better opportunities and chose Romania when their country was under the ruling of dictators. Two of the respondents had come to Romania during the year 1991, two years after the fall of the communist regime. And as two respondents have mentioned, Romania is seen as a country with stability in its economy, continuously developing and offering opportunities for many of those searching.

Between 1991 and 1995, Arab immigrants have continuously flowed into Romania for business or study purposes. Ever since then, families between Romanians and Arabs have mixed and now these immigrants consider Romania their country as equally as their own nation. Even so, many women take pride in being Arabic, and even more pride in terms of national origin, either Syrian, Lebanese, or from Iraq. They see no shame in being the women that they are, or shame in their culture. For Arabic women to attain a certain level of entrepreneurship is an admirable achievement, unless they reached the top dishonorably. Many women may have felt somewhat pressured back in their home countries into wearing the veil in order to cover their hair. Romania's way of living had minimized these tendencies

enforced by family, or occasionally social circles.

The interviewed women entrepreneurs were between the ages of 29 to 51 years and all were highly educated. Their parents took great interest in their studies however in contrast, all five of the interviewees have studied a different area than what their current business is about, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Due to fast evolvments in the attitude within the borders of Europe, high education amongst the women of the Middle Eastern has become a trend. Unfortunately, many of these women were pressured by close relatives to pick more profession-oriented university degrees, such as medicine, and were discouraged when wanting to start a business. This lack of support usually came from fathers and partners. Many of these women want to blend in within the territories of Romania's borders, to show the world that they are no different from the successful women entrepreneur people look up to.

All five interviewed women speak fluent Romanian, with second and third languages such as English and Spanish or French. This shows how much a European country has taught these women to self-develop and grow. In an Arabic country, students are known for having difficulty learning foreign languages, particularly Latin languages such as French, Italian, Spanish. This is one of the limitations the education in Arab countries creates. Women would have to adapt, but adjusting to the Latin language would be difficult. This causes parents to insist upon letting their children learn multiple languages, starting with English.

Table 1. Interviewees' profile

<i>AGE</i>	<i>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</i>	<i>MIGRATION LENGTH</i>	<i>UNIVERSITY DEGREE</i>	<i>PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE</i>
30	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>16 years</i>	<i>Foreign Languages and Literature</i>	<i>None</i>
29	<i>Syria</i>	<i>25 years</i>	<i>Architecture</i>	<i>Free-lancer in multiple areas (arts)</i>
36	<i>Syria</i>	<i>21 years</i>	<i>Medicine, Pharmacy with specialization in industry and cosmetics</i>	<i>Family business</i>
29	<i>Syria</i>	<i>26 years</i>	<i>Fashion and Design</i>	<i>Family business, International retail chain</i>
51	<i>Syria</i>	<i>24 years</i>	<i>Foreign Languages and Literature</i>	<i>None</i>

Source: Created by the authors

There is no doubt that entrepreneurship offers opportunities to those with different

professions. But for these women entrepreneurs, family support stood out to be one of the most important aspects to motivate them to start up their own business. “Family moral support can empower the family members to interfere with the work, create conflict, and exacerbate the women entrepreneurs’ problems” (Welsha, Memilia and Kaciakb, 2016). Two of the married interviewees stated that they had gained much of their support from their partners, and one of the respondents almost considers him, her partner in her business. With no children, entrepreneurship had been her sole focus and this is a very rare situation concerning Arab women. Especially since most of them have been taught to put family first before anything else. Two of the interviewees had worked in their family business, and this could have been another motivating factor. This not only proves the point of family supporting the women in their family as working women, but also building a strong background as employees. The working experience helped the interviewed Arab female entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial career. Three of the five interviewed women have had previous experience through employment or other businesses opened by themselves that turned out to be unsuccessful (Table 1). One of the respondents has had experience by working in an international Dutch chain of fashion retail clothing during her university years, while another respondent went independently with her business from the start by freelancing in several areas. Their families had a significant impact on their career choice, all five women have had parents with self-owned businesses. One of the respondents’ father works in production which led her to work in creative industries, which has to do with producing personalized and designed notebooks, while another of the respondents’ father owns a textile shop selling fabric, and after being an administrator in his company, she started her own business revolved around her most passionate hobby.

I had a little bit of experience before starting my own business: as an employee, most of the time as a freelancer. I’ve been a freelancer in photography, videography, graphic design, interior design and that’s it. (Interviewee B)

I started working at the age of 15 during the summer break at my father’s shop. Now that I remember, I was pretty young to be trusted with a shop for a few months. I interacted with customers and helped the other employees. I gained some experience [...] I can say it helped me. (Interviewee D)

For immigrant Arab women, getting hired is never usually the option, especially if they’re

married. It is said that it takes away their focus from what matters most, their family. For women to get hired, it takes more than just their university diploma, especially if they're recent immigrants. Some women may have language barriers, or others may have difficulty adapting to their working style, which is why through their partners or families, capital, labor and social resources come easier once they set up their own business and self-employ themselves. For other people of a "higher class", being employed by someone may seem degrading and an insult to their reputation and family by answering to a higher authority. Therefore, setting up a business, especially a high-class one, would keep their reputation intact.

No matter their educational attainment and their work experience, through entrepreneurship they wanted to reach a high level of personal development and a different social status and aimed to bring innovative businesses on the Romanian market. In this context, Table 2 highlights, among other aspects, the type of business they own and the products they provide. The selected branches are usually more accessible for business start-up, being strongly connected to the entrepreneurs' passions. "This is fairly typical of sectors for women's enterprises, in which the initial investment is relatively small and life experiences/hobbies are developed into businesses." (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011)

I've majored in Architecture and I've had this thing, I've always had this thing. [...] If I'm going to do something, I don't want to be good at it, I want to be the best. I knew at architecture that I loved it, it was amazing and I would've been good at it but I wouldn't have been the best. It wasn't really the passion of my life. I went through a journey of five years in different areas trying to figure out myself, trying to figure out what I loved the most and that is where I developed my business. (Interviewee B)

I wanted my business to be different in Bucharest, to be luxurious but also accessible to every type of person. The idea was to bring something big in terms of luxury and quality. But, at the same time, I wanted people to be satisfied. (Interviewee A)

Table 2. The profile of the interviewees' businesses

<i>BRANCH OF BUSINESS</i>	<i>TYPE OF PRODUCT</i>	<i>LAUNCHING DATE</i>	<i>TARGET CUSTOMERS</i>
<i>PRODUCTION</i>	<i>Refillable Journey notebook</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Professionals and Entrepreneurs</i>
<i>RETAIL</i>	<i>Uniquely designed clothing and accessories</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>Women of all categories</i>
<i>DISTRIBUTION</i>	<i>Distribution of accessories and textiles for interior decorations</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>Middle to high class people</i>
<i>SERVICES</i>	<i>Luxurious beauty services</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Middle to high class people</i>
<i>PRODUCTION</i>	<i>Hand-made accessories (bracelets)</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Middle class people (mostly men)</i>

Source: Created by the authors

Arab women are facing various challenges in a country such as Romania. Aside from the fact that there are cultural and language differences, the country itself seems like a different world. They stated that Romania was as much of a different world as the Arabic countries were to Romanians. If it was difficult for Arab women to start their own business in their own countries, then Romania would unmistakably not be easy, especially with a market so competitive. Their target customers would be a wide segment as many shared the same tastes and traditions; this could go from music to clothing in their country of origin. By moving to a country such as Romania, these cultural principles and ideas are usually left behind in the country of origin, unless of course they would much rather target a small group of individuals in Romania. So what most ambitious business women do, they try to adapt and fit into this new society. Access to labor and information resources is almost impossible without knowing the language. The interviewees owning their businesses have been Romanian citizens for at least 10 years, most of which had completed their university studies in Romania. Make no mistake there are women whom have recently moved to Romania and started their own businesses through their partners' resources and financial aid, but those determined to be independent or not married may have difficulty in lacking investments.

Many of these women have adapted to the cultural environments by mixing the two cultures to create a completely new one that fit their lifestyle best. It's important to mark that the Romanian market continues in attempting to bring older traditions back by combining them with the modernized world. A relevant example in the clothing industry would be the traditional shirts they called "Le" (it's called "ie" in Romanian), also known as the

“Carpathian shirt”. As reference to this, one interviewee claimed she had tried to mix the Arab culture with the modern culture in Romania by reinventing the “Abaya”, the traditional women clothing, a dress to cover the body till the ankles, to make it wearable for a day-to-day basis. She had done this to spread the culture, but also to bring more light to the different traditions their countries hold.

Everything I do in terms of clothing, the traditional clothing, I try to bring it here in Romania, to fashion fairs. As design, I want to mix it with the modern clothing. I wanted to bring our specialties here and make them wearable in Romania, by mixing our cultures. (Interviewee C)

Both push and pull factors in entrepreneurship were identified in the interviewees’ stories, such as: lack of job opportunities, need for independence, for achieving all the targeted aims, for having high degrees of flexibility, for having a high social status, correlated with power, and for being respected. Unsuccessful applications to jobs, limited one interviewee’s opportunities in the working field, opening this away, an entrepreneurial career path. She started her business as a way to advance. However, this was not the only cause of her entrepreneurial process. A need for independence and self-accomplishment had developed and motivated her to continue, even when many difficulties needed to be faced at the launch of her business idea. Another respondent, being a mother, saw in entrepreneurship the most adequate career option for responding to her need for flexible hours to meet the demands made at home but also in her own business. While motherhood may take up a large amount of time, some women have adapted to do both. Due to family obligations and relationship status, this interviewee chose a more general area for her business where dedication was not as necessary as in case of the businesses based on doing hand-made things or personalized products. Whether they’re married or not, matters in terms of sharing work with their personal lives. A woman that is both working and married would have to leave work at their workplace instead of bringing it home, especially as an Arab woman. Their roles as married women require a lot of dedication, due to their common expectations that women must take care of the house and husband. This includes cooking, cleaning, laundry etc. Without doubt, women instinctively lower their performance in work during times when commitment at home is mandatory.

Before having a child, I used to be at the store from the morning to the closing hours. Now I can't stay at the store as much. I have my children waiting for me at home. After six o'clock, I spend time with my children. (Interviewee D)

Parents can have a significant influence on their children's career choice, there's no doubt they may have the most influence. Their parenting style affects their attitudes as children all the way to being adults. They can either be very limiting or very encouraging, or in some cases neutral by not taking interest in their children's lives. There are two opposing examples that stood out the most during the interviews. One of the women stated that without the support of her mother, she wouldn't have opened her business, while another respondent said that by constantly being brought to her father's workplace, and lightly pressured into having to take over his legacy, she saw no other option than to end up doing what her family had been doing for so long. This shows how much those years of growing up mean to someone's career. Furthermore, family plays also a key role in financially supporting the nascent entrepreneur. One of the interviewees emphasized the strong support received from her mother. She relied on her mother's financial help as means of startup capital, but she would pay it back once her business got on its feet. It is quite common for mothers to play a big role in an Arab woman's life as an entrepreneur. Fathers usually rely on their sons to continue their legacy; if not sons, any other male descendant in the family. Men are having difficulty adapting to the changing world where both genders equally contribute to the economy because they think woman qualities are considered a drawback in the harsh world of business. But even with this in mind to prove their fathers wrong, women still ask the men of the family for inspiration and guidance; it's quite rare for men to do the same.

Sometimes when you feel, not weak, but going through bad moments, it is good to receive support. I rely on my brother for help and advice. Without his help, everything would have been a lot more difficult, especially in the first month after my business was opened. It was a lot of hard work in the beginning and he supported me, he came up with ideas. (Interviewee A)

Ever since we were kids, we were educated to follow the family's business, to continue what our dad was doing. I was lucky because I liked this segment, even though I majored in something completely different. But in my family, the business runs because my uncles also do the same. (Interviewee C)

Other interviewees found support in various organizations or business hubs. For example, such a hub was the one that helped one of the interviewees the most, beside her friends and family. The 29-year-old Arab female entrepreneur holds a small company with the plan to expand internationally. Refillable notebooks have apparently been very appealing to Romanian customers, and the Syrian entrepreneur claimed she relied on nothing more than the supports that came along on her journey to success, but more importantly on a non-profit organization that has made her own company a social enterprise.

The biggest support was from a hub, a co-working space in Bucharest, through their 'Hubcelerator' program, a very intense 3-month-program. You go there, and they give you all the tools you need to start a business, besides that, they give you mentoring. (Interviewee B)

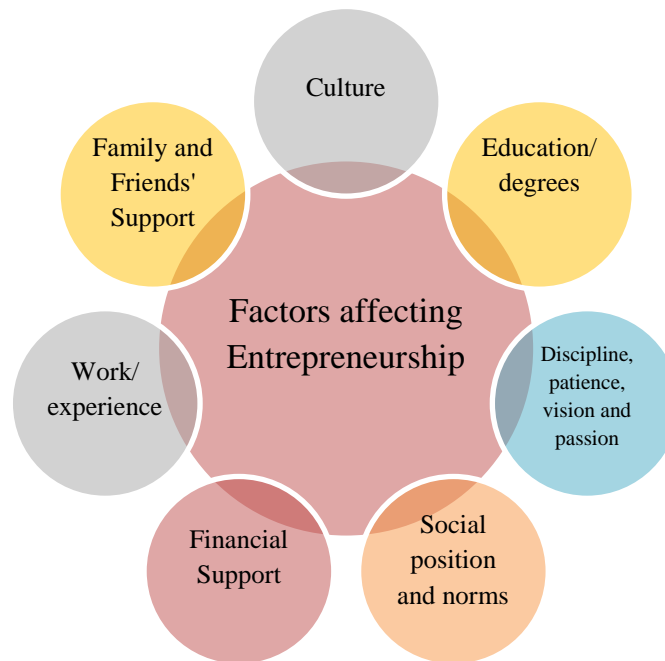
Some would say it's hard doing business in Romania. [...] I think that if my product sold like crazy in Romania, it's going to sell even crazier on the international market. I think the greatest validation is having a product that people want, and you don't even need to advertise it. I was in the prototyping process and I was just telling people what I do and they were telling me how they want one too. I thought "I'm not even trying to sell it and people want it." The idea of refillable notebooks was always there, not so much in Romania but a refillable notebook that can be archived as well, that's not something you can always get. And we also have dotted paper, that's something you don't find a lot in Romania. (Interviewee B)

Many Arab women try to maintain a certain image of themselves among those of the same culture. Now, as times have modernized them, a woman's value increases through her studies and right-doings to the community, especially the Arab community. No family would "look" at a woman without a degree nowadays, and much of these choices related to marriage are made by their potential fiancé's family. Entrepreneurship empowers Arab females giving them a feeling of independence and respect from other's part. Their fair and honest character attracts the respect of their partners, customers, and employees.

In interviewees' opinion, entrepreneurship requires many sacrifices, but the outcomes are extremely satisfying. Discipline, passion, patience, the existence of a clear vision, support from the family and friends, both financial and moral, cultural factors, education, or work

experience were one of the most mentioned aspects affecting the entrepreneurial process of the interviewed Arab women entrepreneurs, immigrant in Romania. (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Fundamental needs and views influencing the entrepreneurial process, as perceived by the interviewed Arab Women Entrepreneurs



Source: Created by the authors

For instance, financial and moral support was extremely necessary to the interviewed Arab female entrepreneurs. These women needed to be believed in, and their ideas were supposed to be given some kind of value as a way of motivation. Patience was an important aspect for those in a hurry to make profit from the very beginning. Assuming things start well from the very beginning would only make things worse for an entrepreneur, especially if their hopes would lay in numbers rather than qualitative progress such as building a community in the workplace and assimilating future goals to meet their self-actualization needs. With that came discipline, the act of being a leader, motivating and bringing people together to create a friendly working environment in order to achieve the same goals. Without passion, their business itself would not exist, and the satisfaction that comes with doing what they liked most and seeing customers appreciate the work. Aside from all these concepts, putting clients first and offering the best possible services for repetitive purchases was also important, through distributing their goods and services in a proper manner and offering the best possible goods and services yet with accessibility in terms of price.

Some people asked me why I have opened my business in a street with multiple similar businesses and I told them I wanted to come with something new. Good stuff, good people, good products ... this is supposed to attract people. If they come to a place where they feel comfortable and everything is good (the products, the employees), that should make them come back. Plus, my prices are much lower than those in the surrounding businesses. (Interviewee A)

There are limited role models found in Romania, few to none. When trying to come across Arab women entrepreneurs, two women known for their business had hit bankruptcy leading to closing the business. These kinds of stories discourage many women from starting their own business. Furthermore, if these come in an environment characterized by the lack of business opportunities, lack of experience, weak social networks, inexistence of family support, and poor access to capital, all represent major obstacles in a potential entrepreneurial career for Arab female entrepreneurs. Perhaps, if the notion of Arab women entrepreneurship was more popular, then, maybe, a lot more women would take a chance and start their own business. Romania is a competitive country in correspondence to small sector enterprises, with a competitive market, still providing many business opportunities. But, the fear of failure prevails over their need for success and sense of self-accomplishment.

5. Conclusions

It is important that people understand how entrepreneurship is more than just an economical tendency to these Arab women. Entrepreneurship represents a social aspect that defines their whole purpose in life. There are many particularities behind these women's choice of becoming entrepreneurs, and it all narrows down to education provided by their parents, as well as role-models. Role-models are not necessarily other Arab women entrepreneurs, but also fathers, husbands or brothers; any kind of mentor that could help them evolve. Many of these women were almost raised to live in Romania, but had been surrounded by Arab social backgrounds, forming a combined way of thinking of the economical world.

This study was developed aiming to raise awareness about the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon amid Arab women in Romania. Based on a qualitative research consisting in carrying out in-depth interviews with five Arab women entrepreneurs, our study promotes them as invaluable role models in their community, worth following by other aspiring females to an entrepreneurial career. Powerful entrepreneurs, the interviewed Arab women are an adequate and real example of how to succeed in world dominated by men, in a

country extremely different than the one of origin, with opposite cultural traits.

In this paper we have discussed the factors affecting these Arab women entrepreneurs, with reference to their businesses. Some of these factors include family, playing a major role, financial opportunities and education. Families have interfered with their lives in so many ways, affecting their views on entrepreneurship entirely. These women may have ended up giving more value to what their families had taught them about entrepreneurship as opposed to what they learned during their university degrees, especially since none of the women above had degrees with direct relevance to entrepreneurship. Furthermore, moral support, whether from family, friends or other organizations, was vital for success.

All highly educated and with strong knowledge of various foreign languages, were driven into entrepreneurship by different pull and push factors, such as the lack of job opportunities, need for independence, for achieving all the targeted aims, for having high degrees of flexibility, for having a high social status, and for being respected.

Our research also examined the difficulties behind an Arab woman's decision of becoming an entrepreneur as an immigrant, many of them related to cultural differences and stereotypes.

Since the interviewed women were already well-adapted into the Romanian lifestyle, insights on Arab women's education and thoughts on typical Arab notions were examined in our paper, focusing on how a country like Romania had opened their minds and hearts to opportunities.

The main limitation of our study lays in the small size of the sample. Considering this issue and the qualitative character of the research, the expansion of the results is not aimed, nor adequate. The ideas expressed in the paper are specific only to the investigated sample. However, the implications of the research results and discussions for better understanding the role of the immigrant Arab female entrepreneurs in Romania might be considered. Furthermore, being a pioneering research in the area in Romania, this has a lot of potential for providing future research directions to scholars interested in the phenomenon. Our research might represent an important pillar for future pieces of research aiming at expanding the sample size, at implying quantitative methods, at identifying other particular features of the entrepreneurial process of immigrant Arab women in Romania, etc.

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