

Resilience and Adaptation Impact of Covid-19 on Female Entrepreneurship and Motivation in Gaziantep-Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to thoroughly investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the domestic obligations and commercial ventures of female entrepreneurs in Türkiye. Furthermore, this research aims to examine the motivational variables that propel these women at various stages of entrepreneurship: before, during, and after the pandemic. The study used a qualitative case study methodology involving in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of 25 female entrepreneurs. The data analysis entails using MAXQDA2020 software in conjunction with hermeneutic analysis. The investigation reveals a significant surge in domestic responsibilities for entrepreneurs during the pandemic. However, there is also evidence of increased entrepreneurial motivation and reinforced dedication to their firms. To address the difficulties presented by the pandemic, these women have adopted a range of tactics, including implementation of hygiene protocols and cost-cutting measures, while also embracing digital technology solutions to a greater extent. This study, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, is unique because it focuses on female entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial motivation. This study is the first attempt to explore the entrepreneurial motivations of female entrepreneurs in different types of entrepreneurship. This study provides a new perspective for researchers in this field by synthesizing existing approaches with a hermeneutic and comparative perspective. This research significantly contributes to the realm of entrepreneurship by conducting an interpretive investigation of how the pandemic has affected female entrepreneurs' motivation and adaptive strategies. The results highlight the ability of these women to recover quickly and adjust to new circumstances, providing a vital understanding of how gender, entrepreneurship, and crisis response interact.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Turkish women entrepreneurs, business endeavors, motivational variables, entrepreneurship phases, entrepreneurial motivation, crisis reaction

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1. Introduction

Over the past 4 decades, there has been a shift in the focus of entrepreneurship studies from men to women. This trend was initiated by Schwartz's influential 1976 paper titled "Entrepreneurship: A New Female Frontier." (Greene et al., 2003; McAdam, 2013). However, there is a scarcity of academic studies focused on female entrepreneurship, which is generally analyzed from a perspective that prioritizes male experiences. Substantial social and economic obstacles hinder women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities globally (Bird and Brush, 2002; Greene et al., 2003; De Bruin et al., 2007). Although there has been some research on the challenges and benefits faced by female entrepreneurs, there is still a significant lack of information, especially in developing countries where cultural norms and financial limitations hinder women's ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Allen and Truman, 1993; Santos and Moustafa, 2016; Saviano, Nenci, and Caputo, 2017). Consistent with these findings, the study conducted by Calic et al. in 2023, which incorporated the literature on gender role congruity and risk preference, examined almost 300,000 microloans funded through the kiva.org platform. This study reveals that women need more time than men to obtain business loans of the same value on kiva.org.

The COVID-19 crisis has worsened pre-existing gender inequalities, specifically affecting women's involvement in professional and entrepreneurial activities in Türkiye (Büyükeşet et al., 2021; Yavuz et al., 2023). During the pandemic, there has been a decrease in scholarly output among women in academia, whereas male academics have seen an increase in publishing rates (Parlak et al., 2021). This study explores the effects of COVID-19 on gender dynamics and entrepreneurship in Gaziantep. This study scrutinizes the city's shift from an Aleppo-affected commercial center to a flourishing hub for entrepreneurs since the 1960s. Although women have been active in family enterprises since the 1990s, their involvement in entrepreneurship has not reached the anticipated level. The challenges that women face worldwide further exacerbate this situation. This study examines the impact of the pandemic on the household duties and entrepreneurial drive of women in Gaziantep. This study aims to address a notable research gap in the field of women's entrepreneurship, as identified by Bird and Brush (2002), Green et al. (2003), and De Bruin et al. (2007).

This study examines the impact of the pandemic on female company owners by conducting qualitative interviews with 25 participants. The collected data is then analyzed using MAXQDA2020 and hermeneutic analysis. This study examines the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic using Goffee and Scase (1992) conceptual framework, which classifies female entrepreneurs into four categories: innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneurs. Each category employs distinct strategies to overcome the challenges of the pandemic.

The research question guiding this study is as follows: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the relationship between family responsibilities and entrepreneurial pursuits for women in Türkiye, specifically across the four categories of innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneurs as classified by Goffee and Scase (1992)? What factors have motivated Turkish female entrepreneurs during this period?

This research enhances scholarly discourse on the challenges and perseverance of female entrepreneurs in Gaziantep during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a deeper understanding of gender-specific dynamics in entrepreneurship during periods of strain. The primary aim of this study is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the balance between family responsibilities and entrepreneurial endeavors among women in Türkiye, while also identifying the main factors that motivated Turkish women entrepreneurs during the pandemic.

After the introduction, the essay will discuss 'female entrepreneurship' within the conceptual framework. The next section will examine "motivation for entrepreneurship" to study the intricate connection between gender and entrepreneurial mindset. The methodology section provides a comprehensive explanation of the qualitative study design and processes. The findings and discussion will analyze and evaluate the data, ultimately providing valuable insights into the determination and strategic creativity of female entrepreneurs in response to the global health crisis.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Female Entrepreneurship

R. Cantillon coined the term "entrepreneurship" in 1755, emphasizing initiative and risk-taking (Jonsson, 2017). It goes beyond starting a business to making money during economic uncertainty. Development requires acquiring finance, discovering resources, maintaining commerce, and creating new markets (Drucker, 1985; Gurnani, 2016). Uddin and Bose (2012) described entrepreneurship as the seizing of opportunities to produce value. Entrepreneurs build and operate firms while controlling risks.

The term "female entrepreneur" refers to women who independently start firms in unpredictable markets (Carranza et al., 2018; Gomes & Leite, 2023). These entrepreneurs sometimes leave their jobs due to financial constraints and grow their businesses slowly. This cautious approach prioritizes work-life balance and avoids high-risk activities (Carranza et

al., 2018). Life stages, career paths, family roles, personal preferences, and core values motivate female entrepreneurs. Understanding how these factors affect decision-making is vital (Solesvik et al., 2019; Latifi, 2022). Second-wave feminism has raised questions about workplace bias and cultural influences on business ownership (Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015). De Vita et al. (2014) studied the global challenges that female entrepreneurs face, their impact on development, and their impact on poverty reduction. However, Agrawal et al. (2023) and Sharma et al. (2023) found significant hurdles for female Asian and African entrepreneurs. Despite these challenges, female entrepreneurs employ different methods (Nziku & Struthers, 2018; Franzke et al., 2022), and African and Asian nations are increasingly supporting female entrepreneurship (Muhumad, 2016). Despite facing barriers to employment such as leadership, financial, professional, and gender prejudices (Cho et al., 2020), women continue to pursue entrepreneurship while managing family obligations.

Female entrepreneurs in Türkiye face obstacles such as obtaining funding and managing the demands of running a business while fulfilling family obligations and societal norms (Halac & Celik, 2019; Koyuncu et al., 2012; Yenilmez, 2018; Özdemir, 2010; Karataş-Özkan et al., 2011). Notwithstanding these obstacles, Maden's (2015) demonstrated that Turkish female entrepreneurs demonstrate tenacity, resolve, resilience, foresight, and ingenuity. Their choice to engage in entrepreneurship frequently arises from grabbing distinctive opportunities, making contributions to society, and embracing autonomous decision-making (Maden, 2015). Kacar et al. (2023) emphasized the current social, political, and institutional circumstances in Türkiye that provide favorable conditions for women to engage in business. Specific policies have had a beneficial effect on the rates of women's employment, indicating a favorable climate for female entrepreneurship (IKV, 2019). Nevertheless, women's participation in the workforce encounters a variety of complex obstacles, encompassing legal and political impediments as well as household and psychological limitations (Durukan, 2021).

In 1992, Goffee and Scase created a classification system to categorize female entrepreneurs into four distinct types: innovators, radicals, traditionalists, and housewife entrepreneurs. Innovators place high value on achieving exceptional quality in their enterprises, whereas radicals want to question and challenge societal expectations and assumptions about gender roles. Traditionalists adhere to cultural norms and expectations, whereas homemaker entrepreneurs emphasize family objectives over commercial endeavors. This study uses this framework to examine female entrepreneurs' incentives and attributes.

2.2. Motivation for Entrepreneurship

According to Johnson (1990), entrepreneurial motivation refers to the drive to independently start and oversee new company endeavors, which is a fundamental element of entrepreneurship. Fayolle et al. (2014) categorized motivational forces into two categories: intrinsic, stemming from internal urges to overcome personal challenges, and extrinsic, spurred by external incentives like monetary rewards or public recognition. Nathalie et al. (2014) discovered disparities in entrepreneurial motivation based on gender, specifically noting discrepancies in passion and confidence levels among male and female students studying entrepreneurship. These findings mirror wider gender-related professional stereotypes and disparities in confidence.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Conduct (1992) suggests that a combination of motivational resources, including financial, temporal, and skill-based resources, along with strong behavioral intentions may increase the probability of engaging in entrepreneurial conduct. Zeffane (2012) observed that individuals with elevated entrepreneurial goals are more inclined to initiate new company ventures. Nevertheless, there is a disparity between genders when it comes to these aspirations, as women generally demonstrate a lesser tendency toward entrepreneurship compared to men (Wilson et al., 2004; Gupta et al., 2008; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). Regional differences exist in the perception of women's entrepreneurship. Urban narratives often portray such endeavors as courageous and daring endeavors, whereas rural ones tend to associate them with strength in the face of challenges and hardships. Key motivational reasons for female entrepreneurs include financial attainment, fervor for their profession, enthusiasm for invention, aspiration for independence, and the desire for artistic self-expression (Kagider, 2019).

3. Method

This study uses a case study design with qualitative methods, specifically adhering to Creswell & Poth's "Single Instrumental Case Study" technique (2017). This study specifically focuses on female entrepreneurs in Gaziantep aged 18 and older who have experienced the impact of COVID-19. The objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences by evaluating a diverse group of participants within a specific environment.

This study examines various business strategies and obstacles encountered by female entrepreneurs during the pandemic. The study employs meticulous data collection techniques, such as conducting semi-structured face-to-face interviews while wearing masks and strictly following safety precautions. We use the MAXQDA program for analysis to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, focusing on concepts like credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as outlined by Cypress (2017). This study combines MAXQDA with hermeneutic analysis by applying theme-based coding. It then interprets individual codes and themes in relation to the entire range of data using the hermeneutic circle technique (Grondin, 2017). This method recognizes wider cultural, societal, and individual factors that influence the interpretation of written content, thereby improving comprehension. Furthermore, the inclusion of a "rich description," as described by Geertz (1973), and a comprehensive recording of the study process, as recommended by Green et al. (2007), improves the significance and practicality of the findings.

The validation process was conducted by employing triangulation approaches, which involved cross-referencing interview transcripts and incorporating the insights of multiple experts in the fields of qualitative research and management (Stahl and King, 2020). The rigorous technique employed ensured a comprehensive analysis of the data, thereby ensuring the overall validity of the study.

This study employs an analytical framework to classify female entrepreneurs into four distinct groups: innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneurs. This study investigates the effects of COVID-19 on these groups and examines the factors that motivate entrepreneurship. The study analyzed six specific subthemes, which encompassed the obstacles posed by the pandemic, tactics employed to cope with these challenges, the availability of possibilities, lessons derived from experience, changes in behavior, and motivation to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors after the pandemic. Twenty-five female entrepreneurs in Gaziantep were interviewed using the "criteria sampling method" inside purposive sampling. These entrepreneurs were selected based on specific criteria, such as owning a micro-enterprise and actively participating in entrepreneurship (Palinkas et al., 2015). Out of the 29 initial interviews, 25 were selected for thorough examination, while a few were omitted due to inadequate information, possibly affected by voluntary participation or time limitations.

Between March 1 and March 31, 2022, the study upheld participant anonymity and rights with significant importance. The duration of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to slightly more than an hour. Kaiser (2009) suggested a coding technique that we employed to maintain anonymity. Each interviewee received a unique code for ethical considerations, which signified their unique style of entrepreneurship and numerical identity. For example, the first innovative entrepreneur is labeled I1 and the fifth traditional entrepreneur is labeled T5. This ensured the systematic organization of data while preserving the identities of individuals. The Ethics Committee of Hasan Kalyoncu University approved the study, which adhered to ethical standards. This study admits the restricted applicability of qualitative research but offers useful perspectives on entrepreneurship (Kaiser, 2009).

4. Findings

The findings are categorized in alignment with the following research question: "How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the relationship between family responsibilities and entrepreneurial pursuits for women in Türkiye, specifically across the four categories of innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneur as classified by Goffee and Scase (1992), and what factors have motivated Turkish female entrepreneurs during this period?" The study classifies its findings into four main categories: innovative female entrepreneurs, traditional female entrepreneurs, radical female entrepreneurs, and housewife entrepreneurs. Among the 25 female entrepreneurs surveyed, 13 were classified as innovative, 9 as traditional, 2 as radical, and 1 as a domestic entrepreneur.

Based on the interview responses, the basic classifications were further divided into subcategories to obtain a deeper understanding of the research question. These subcategories include demographic information, entrepreneurial motivation, the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and coping strategies, perceptions of equal opportunity, behavioral changes, and post-pandemic entrepreneurial motivation. We will assess the female entrepreneurs in each category comparatively based on the characteristics outlined in these sub-titles.

4.1. Innovative Entrepreneurial Women

Among the 25 participants, 13 were identified as innovative female entrepreneurs. Aligned with the classification system created by Goffee and Scase, these individuals place significant value on achieving exceptional quality in their enterprises. They exhibit a strong self-identity that is closely tied to their professional achievements and demonstrate a high level of dedication to their goals. These entrepreneurs primarily work in female-dominated fields, are mostly aged under 50, and many hold university degrees.

Table 1 demonstrates that a substantial proportion of young, creative female entrepreneurs who are under the age of 50 and possess a strong educational background in areas such as tourism, esthetics, and business administration are leading the way in diverse industries. The high prevalence of college degrees among these entrepreneurs indicates a connection between higher education and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Table 1. Demographic Structure of Innovative Entrepreneurial Women

Codes	Occupation	Birth Date	Educational Status	Number of Employees	Date of establishment of the company	Monthly Turnover (TL)
Innovative1	Tourism Operator	1981-1990	High school graduate	3	2009	8.000 -10.000
Innovative2	Beautician	1981-1990	High school graduate	4	2012	10.000+
Innovative3	Beautician	1961-1970	High school graduate	1	2009	5.000
Innovative4	Business Manager	1981-1990	Bachelor's degree	25	2010	10.000+
Innovative5	Furniture store owner	1991-2000	Associate graduate	1	2016	4.000-6.000
Innovative6	Hairdresser	1981-1990	Bachelor's degree	3	2015	8.000-10.000
Innovative7	Shopkeepers(Bagger)	1981-1990	Bachelor's degree	2	2016	-
Innovative8	Nursery Operator	1971-1980	Bachelor's degree	14	2009	8.000-10.000
Innovative9	Confectioner	1981-1990	Associate graduate	10	2000	10.000+
Innovative10	Cafeteria Operator	1-1980	Bachelor's degree	8	2010	6.000-8.000
Innovative11	Beautician	1991-2000	High school graduate	2	2013	10.000+
Innovative12	Beautician	1991-2000	Bachelor's degree	15	2012	10.000+
Innovative13	Nursery Operator	1981-1990	Bachelor's degree	8	2017	10.000+

Innovative female entrepreneurs prioritize financial freedom, personal fulfillment, and adaptability. They value independence and expertise. The pandemic caused financial losses, operational disruptions, health concerns, and psychological stress. They responded by using government subsidies, enhancing web presence, decreasing costs, and taking safety precautions. These enterprises faced cultural and familial demands that were exacerbated by the pandemic. These experiences taught them about efficacy, innovation, fiscal administration, and crisis management, which led to increased savings and work-life balance. After the outbreak, committed business owners plan to expand, use new technology, and access untapped markets, resulting in a bright prognosis for economic recovery.

4.2. Traditional Entrepreneurial Women

The nine study participants were classified as “traditional entrepreneurs” according to the classification system created by Goffee and Scase. These individuals adhere to cultural norms and expectations, follow social standards, and work in gender-specific fields such as culinary arts and cosmetology. Unlike innovators, traditional entrepreneurs are older and less likely to earn academic degrees. Their adherence to conventional gender roles characterizes them as “traditional.”

Table 2 presents these traditional female entrepreneurs’ trends. It shows that many are above 50 years old and few have gone to college. This shows a link between education and entrepreneurial behavior.

Table 2. Demographic Structure of Traditional Entrepreneurial Women

Codes	Occupation	Birth Date	Educational Status	Number of Employees	Date of establishment of the company	Monthly Turnover (TL)
Traditional1	Goose farmer	1961-1970	High school graduate	1	2018	4.000
Traditional2	Food factory owner	1971-1980	High school graduate	12	2009	10.000+
Traditional3	Hairdresser	1991-2000	High school graduate	4	2011	6.000-8.000
Traditional4	Waffle shop owner	1971-1980	Elementary school	6	2013	4.000-6.000
Traditional5	Homemade food shop owner	1961-1970	Bachelor's degree	3	2013	10.000+
Traditional6	Beautician	1981-1990	High school graduate	4	2018	6.000-8.000
Traditional7	Dress shop owner	1981-1990	High school graduate	12	2013	4.000-6.000
Traditional8	Beautician	1971-1980	Elementary school	2	2012	6.000-8.000
Traditional9	Bag shop owner	1981-1990	High school graduate	4	2016	4.000-6.000

Self-sufficiency and social recognition motivate traditional entrepreneurs, with financial independence serving as a significant driving force. The pandemic's economic impact varied across sectors, with some sectors experiencing minimal disruption while others facing significant challenges. Entrepreneurs adapt by implementing new health measures, embracing digital marketing, and adjusting operations. Innate social attitudes influenced mixed perceptions of equal opportunities. The crisis highlighted the importance of health, family bonds, emergency preparedness, and prudent management. Changes in behavior included a heightened focus on cleanliness and a more cautious approach to business strategies. The emotional responses ranged from increased stress to a deeper appreciation for personal and professional lives. Looking ahead, traditional entrepreneurs maintain a cautious yet optimistic outlook, aiming to maintain or improve their businesses, with some considering incorporating family support into their strategies.

4.3. Radical Entrepreneurial Women

The study classified a small subset of participants, specifically two individuals, as "Radical Women Entrepreneurs" according to the classification system created by Goffee and Scase. These individuals are characterized by their desire to question and challenge societal expectations and assumptions about gender roles. Their involvement in nonconventional business models and their challenge to traditional gender norms distinguish them as radicals. As Table 3 illustrates, both radical entrepreneurs belong to the same age group, born between 1991 and 2000. However, their educational backgrounds differ, with one holding a high school diploma and the other completing a bachelor's degree.

Table 3. The Demographic Structure of Radical Entrepreneurs

Kids	Occupation	Birth Date	Educational Status	Number of Employees	Date of establishment of the company	Monthly Turnover (TL)
Radical1	Oil station owner	1991-2000	High School Graduate	8	2018	10.000+
Radical2	Next-generation digital marketers	1991-2000	Bachelor's Degree	4	2019	10.000+

Radical female entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated to challenge traditional male-dominated sectors. For example, R1 entered the oil station industry, which is traditionally dominated by men, while R2 pursued digital marketing opportunities. The pandemic brought both challenges and opportunities. R1 encountered operational disruptions during lockdowns, while R2 saw increased demand for digital marketing services and adapted accordingly.

In response to the pandemic's impact, both entrepreneurs expanded their services. R1 incorporated a convenience store and demonstrated adaptability and flexibility in business management. The adoption of digital technologies was pivotal in sustaining and growing businesses during the pandemic. These radical entrepreneurs encountered amplified challenges compared to their male counterparts, especially in societies with rigid gender roles that became more apparent during the pandemic.

In the post-pandemic era, both entrepreneurs displayed an optimistic shift in their business and personal outlooks, with renewed purpose, expanded teams, and diversified business scopes, demonstrating resilience. These insights highlight radical female entrepreneurs' firm commitment to sustaining and growing their businesses after the pandemic, underscoring their strong entrepreneurial drive.

4.4. Housewife Entrepreneurs

Housewife entrepreneurs often pursue entrepreneurship to achieve goals beyond traditional employment. According to the classification system created by Goffee and Scase, housewife entrepreneurs prioritize their family's objectives over their commercial endeavors. Utilizing their skills and proficiency, they create their own job opportunities, with family priorities preceding career advancement. In this study, one participant exemplified these traits.

Demographic Overview: The individual under spotlight in this segment is a female entrepreneur under 40 who holds a high school diploma and has started a business specializing in the production and sale of handmade balaclavas.

Starting with support from her spouse, she began her enterprise by marketing her hand-knitted goods, eventually extending her operations into her garage. Many women who manage households have embraced entrepreneurship as a means to achieve objectives that traditional employment may not fulfill, using their innate talents and artisanal skills to generate employment opportunities for themselves while still prioritizing their family responsibilities.

Her business unexpectedly flourished during the COVID-19 lockdown, as the craft of knitting saw a resurgence. The pandemic also heightened consumer appreciation for handcrafted goods, which resonated with their personal tastes. Moving beyond the pandemic, her dedication to her venture has intensified, with ambitions to establish a café that showcases hand-knitted products. She reflects on the pandemic as a period that not only reinforced her drive for entrepreneurship but also transformed obstacles into avenues for expanding her business.

4.5. Entrepreneurial Motivations

Entrepreneurial motivations vary significantly according to the type of entrepreneurship. For example, the motivations of innovative entrepreneurs generally focus on achieving success by emphasizing professionalism through strong personal identity, and they exhibit a motivation to work with dedication to reach their goals. In this context, for instance, I1 states, "After mastering my role... I decided to establish my own business," highlighting a critical transformation based on self-confidence and skills. Similarly, I2 reflects the ambition to transition from an employee to an employer by saying, "After working, I decided to open my own salon." For I6, environmental influences, personal circumstances, and financial challenges lead to entrepreneurship. I12 sees entrepreneurship as the realization of a childhood dream. Family and role models shape goals; as I10 noted, "A meaningful interaction with a successful businesswoman inspired me to start my venture." On the other hand, the desire for social appreciation motivates traditional entrepreneurs without significantly disrupting social norms. For instance, T4 finds motivation in the pursuit of public recognition and financial independence. However, the motivation for radical entrepreneurs focuses on demonstrating that women can succeed in various jobs by challenging traditional gender roles in society. Radical entrepreneurs such as R1 and R2 challenge societal expectations; R1 is motivated by the success of women in the oil industry, while R2's interest in digital marketing stems from a lifelong entrepreneurial spirit. We find that these motivations significantly shape each individual's entrepreneurial narrative, specific to their type of entrepreneurship.

4.6. Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses and Coping Strategies

Entrepreneurs face significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges had a substantial impact on nearly every type of entrepreneur, but they developed different methods to cope with them. For instance, despite acknowledging their significant impact, innovative entrepreneurs expressed their inability to implement numerous creative strategies to manage the crisis. This is generally reflected in their responses. For instance, I3 stated, "We were severely affected," expressing the financial stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic's restrictions. I5 similarly underscored the economic challenges, stating, "Our impact was substantial." After my business closed, I used my savings to pay the rent." These stories highlight financial disadvantages caused by the loss of primary revenue sources. I7 emphasized the dual impact of the crisis, saying, "COVID-19 devastated my business. The increasing number of cases and curfews had a negative impact on sales," illustrating the situation's complexity.

However, the pandemic did not significantly affect traditional entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, whereas those in other sectors reported experiencing the effects. However, they coped with the pandemic by strictly adhering to government hygiene rules, mobilizing team efforts, or, unexpectedly, for traditional entrepreneurs, using social media platforms and digital tools in an innovative manner. For instance, T1, who works in agriculture, said, "We weren't

as affected by COVID-19," while T3 mentioned, "I was significantly affected. I struggled to pay both myself and my employees during the lockdowns." T1 noted that they "took specific measures to navigate the curfews" and used team management apps. T2 improved hygiene standards, T3 reorganized company practices to align with health requirements, and T3 managed to reach customers by utilizing social media more effectively. T5, who put some employees on unpaid leave and used financial methods to stay afloat, demonstrated financial creativity. T8 understood the importance of digital marketing in increasing online visibility and building consumer trust.

Radical entrepreneurs come from different business backgrounds. One of them mentioned that the lockdowns negatively impacted R1's physical stores, while another, R2, said, "Yes, everything worked out," noting an increase in internet marketing during the crisis.

A homemaker entrepreneur unexpectedly gained commercial benefits from the pandemic. This traditional housewife entrepreneur used social media platforms to sell organic products, thereby expanding her business. These stories highlight the resilience of entrepreneurs and the importance of digitalization and adaptive business operations during the pandemic. Different types of entrepreneurs reacted differently during crises, taking unexpected innovative steps and turning the crisis into an opportunity.

4.7. Perceptions of Equal Opportunity

The study reveals that almost all categories of female entrepreneurs face gender-based inequalities in entrepreneurial opportunities due to societal norms and pandemic-related challenges. They say gender roles have made it more difficult and increased discrimination. Only two female entrepreneurs from the traditional category provided a different response, stating that they encountered a more balanced work environment, which sets them apart from the general trend. However, two other traditional female entrepreneurs share the common view that discrimination and biases have intensified. For instance, Entrepreneur I1 emphasizes the dual burden of managing both home and business, while I2 highlights the issue of insufficient recognition for female entrepreneurs. I7 underscores the persistent challenge of gender inequality. Institutional biases are evident, and entrepreneurs like I10 face skepticism in the face of systemic structures. Patriarchal norms further hinder progress by introducing more barriers for women, as noted in I6. Traditional female entrepreneurs have differing views on equality. T1 and T9 believe that biases have increased during the pandemic, whereas T5 and T6 perceive a more balanced entrepreneurial environment. Radical entrepreneurs in male-dominated sectors face even greater challenges. R1 acknowledges the challenges within the industry but emphasizes the importance of support. R2 describes the struggle to balance business and family, especially during crises like the pandemic.

4.8. Behavioral Changes

The pandemic triggered significant behavioral changes and mental recalibrations among entrepreneurs, with women in different entrepreneurial categories developing various responses. During the pandemic, women in the innovative entrepreneur category exhibited behavioral changes by becoming more attentive to intensified hygiene conditions, but they also experienced psychological issues related to their work and lives. Because these innovative women view their personal identity and work as intertwined, the crisis led them to reflect, causing them to experience personal impacts. They learned about the importance of agility when adapting to market fluctuations, as well as the role of digital infrastructure. The pandemic emphasizes the necessity of preparedness and adaptability for business resilience. Women belonging to the traditional category also experienced personal impacts. However, radical female entrepreneurs responded very differently, showing behavioral changes that were geared toward more positive thinking and a more proactive approach. For example, Entrepreneur I13 stated, "Heightened hygiene... became second nature during the pandemic," highlighting the emergence of increased hygiene practices. The crisis reinforced the value of efficiency and crisis management. I10 incorporated crisis planning into her regular business strategy, stating, "I've integrated crisis planning... to optimize budgeting." T5 recognized the need for careful resource management. T3 discussed the psychological strain, saying, "I encountered panic attacks and tension, but this reinforced my dedication to my business and the essence of our life's norms." In contrast, radical entrepreneurs displayed positive shifts; R1 spoke of releasing negativity, while R2 noted proactive expansions, indicating a positive adjustment in her approach.

4.9. Post-Pandemic Entrepreneurial Motivation

Entrepreneurial women have different strategies for improving their post-pandemic jobs. While innovative women try to ensure continuity by improving the variety of products and the diversity of technologies they use, traditional entrepreneurs focus more on measures to limit spending with savings and ecological measures. Radical entrepreneurs, on the other hand, develop their strategies by following global trends and acting accordingly. For example, innovative

female entrepreneurs are making resilient plans for the future after a pandemic that seeks to expand their product lines and enter new markets. I7 continued: "Despite passing this stage, the risk continues. My goal is to expand my products and increase sales through more advertising." Their determination signaled potential growth. "I plan to invest in new machines and expand my workshop, and I hope that this will benefit more people." Traditional entrepreneurs are carefully optimistic. T5 continued: "As we continue to come, we aim to maximize the use of products with minimal waste and try to manage our spending more sensitively. For now, we've decided to involve the family in our business." The constant growth continues to motivate radical entrepreneurs. "With the ever-changing online world and technology, new opportunities will continue to emerge," he said. This reflects their resistance and willingness to embrace new opportunities. In general, female entrepreneurs are strategically preparing for the post-pandemic business environment, each with different hopes and plans for the future.

Table 4. Comparison of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Female Entrepreneurs by Characteristics

Dimensions	Innovative	Traditional	Radical	Housewife
<i>Entrepreneurial Motivations</i>	External factors influence entrepreneurial motivation (economic reasons, individual and familial factors)	The desire to be visible in the public sphere and to stand on one's own feet have influenced entrepreneurial motivations.	Internal factors have influenced entrepreneurial motivations (they emphasize that they engage in entrepreneurship by nature, and the reasons that draw them to entrepreneurship are their own characteristic features rather than external pressures)	Supporting family and economic reasons has influenced entrepreneurial motivation.
<i>Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses and Coping Strategies</i>	Implemented hygiene protocols, adopted cost-saving strategies, leveraged digital tools, and made various adjustments in their workplaces.	Reduced the service capacities of their businesses.	Seized opportunities to manage crises.	Seized opportunities to manage crises.
<i>Perceptions of Equal Opportunity</i>	They face more difficulties than male entrepreneurs because of gender, societal prejudice, family roles, and the patriarchal structure of society.	The gender composition of the market (whether it is male-dominated or female-dominated) affects traditional female entrepreneurs' perceptions of equal opportunity.	Women in entrepreneurship struggle with time management because of their meticulous and rule-oriented nature and the familial responsibilities they bear.	Women struggle more than men entrepreneurs.
<i>Behavioral Changes</i>	They developed behaviors such as saving, maintaining hygiene, understanding and patient in the face of events, and living life to the fullest.	The uncertainty of the pandemic has caused negative psychological effects among female entrepreneurs, including anxiety, stress, panic, and a tendency toward controlling behaviorsç	Negative behaviors and emotions were transformed into more optimistic and strategic approaches with the onset of COVID-19.	They are worried about their family's health and financial situation.
<i>Post-pandemic entrepreneurial motivation</i>	They aim to grow their business volume, favor a cautious approach, show a preference for online sales, and are focused on maintaining the current state of their operations.	They intend to preserve the current state of affairs.	The increase in entrepreneurial motivation is expected to persist.	The pandemic has boosted entrepreneurial motivation.

5. Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's entrepreneurship, utilizing the classification framework proposed by Goffee and Scase (1992) as a perspective. This study investigates how female entrepreneurs, categorized as innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneurs, have effectively addressed the economic, operational, and psychological challenges of the pandemic.

These findings indicate that the motives and experiences of entrepreneurs during the pandemic varied significantly depending on the type of business. Resolute and innovative entrepreneurs driven by a strong professional identity and commitment to excellence have demonstrated their capacity to adjust and surmount financial obstacles by embracing novel technology and digital approaches. Traditional entrepreneurs, particularly those in gender-specific businesses, adhered to cultural norms and made prudent yet effective adaptations, with a focus on cost control and improving hygiene protocols. Radical entrepreneurs who challenge existing social norms and gender stereotypes face greater challenges, especially in male-dominated industries, but they remain determined to overcome these obstacles. Housewives entrepreneurs tendencies are influenced by variables such as family support and economic considerations.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses and strategies for mitigating its effects with a focus on innovative entrepreneurs. They developed hygiene protocols, adopted cost-saving measures, employed digital technology, and made various improvements in their workplaces. Traditional entrepreneurs reduced the operational capacities of their businesses. Entrepreneurs who are both radical and housewives actively seek opportunities to efficiently manage crucial events.

When it comes to conceptions of equal opportunity among innovative female entrepreneurs, they face more difficulties than their male counterparts because of issues such as gender, societal bias, familial duties, and the patriarchal structure of society. The gender composition of the market-male or female-affects the perception of equal opportunity among traditional female entrepreneurs. Radical female entrepreneurs face challenges in managing their time because of their precise and rule-oriented personality and the familial duties they carry. Female entrepreneurs face more significant obstacles than male entrepreneurs.

This paper highlights significant changes in the behavior of entrepreneurs who have increased their focus on hygiene, resource allocation, and strategic disaster preparedness. In light of the worldwide health emergency, companies are being forced to reevaluate their approaches, giving greater significance to sustainability, efficiency, and adaptability. Women entrepreneurs who independently operate their enterprises from their homes. They are concerned regarding the welfare and financial situation of their family.

As the first impacts of the pandemic begin to decrease, the demand for entrepreneurship remains strong. Innovators seek to expand their product offerings and explore new, unexplored areas, while traditionalists prioritize sustainability and appropriate financial management. In contrast, radicals are strategically positioning themselves to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the constantly evolving digital domain.

The findings highlight the resilience and adaptability of female entrepreneurs in navigating the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This valuable insight can be used to support and enhance women's businesses in the post-pandemic era.

Leveraging Heidegger's hermeneutics, the study interprets the complex relationship between the personal experiences of entrepreneurs and the pandemic's economic impact, integrating new insights to refine the understanding (Grondin, 2017).

The literature underscores obstacles hindering women's business entry and sustainability, including a lack of management skills, access to capital, networking opportunities, skilled workforce, infrastructure, gender discrimination, and fear of failure (Cho et al., 2020). Specialized entrepreneurship education is crucial for overcoming these challenges (Cho et al., 2020). Balancing work with family responsibilities and societal gender expectations further increases complexity (Halac & Çelik, 2019; Koyuncu et al., 2012). These challenges intensified during the pandemic, posing greater difficulties for female entrepreneurs. Despite this, the pandemic has spurred women, particularly housewives, to start new businesses that leverage online platforms with minimal capital. This has prompted innovation and the exploration of new market niches. In Gaziantep, most female entrepreneurs fall into traditional and innovative categories, reflecting a balance between pushing social boundaries and maintaining traditional roles.

During the pandemic, businesswomen reflected deeply, reassessing their priorities. For many, it underscored the importance of well-being and family ties. As noted by Cho et al. (2020), managing professional ambitions alongside domestic responsibilities poses challenges that contradict societal gender norms. One radical female entrepreneur responded, R2, "Balancing our businesses and personal lives has become tougher in this health crisis."

During this challenging period, female entrepreneurs reevaluated their professional aspirations while reinforcing their commitment to family and personal values. T3 shared, "The stress led to anxiety... but reaffirmed my resolve for my business and the values central to our lives." Emotional responses varied, with some participants experiencing anxiety while others gaining a deeper appreciation for their work and personal lives. Many, especially from traditional sectors, prioritized hygiene to meet family and societal expectations. While balancing hygienic rules at home, managing businesses, and ensuring family health caused significant stress, it also fueled a renewed dedication to both business and family roles. Creative solutions have emerged to address these challenges (Nziku & Struthers, 2018; Franzke et al., 2022).

These women recognized the importance of their businesses in maintaining family stability, fostering confidence through achievements, and engaging with a broader society, despite facing gender inequality. This research echoes findings by Abdulla & Albattat (2023) findings, shedding light on the social, familial, and structural barriers faced by women in business. Experiences shared by I1 and I2 underscore the additional pressure from societal and family expectations. Similarly, entrepreneurs like I10 confront deep-seated biases and social doubts, as highlighted in studies by Agrawal et al. (2023) and Sharma et al. (2023), which also identified similar challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Asia and Africa. The contrasting journeys of traditional and innovative female entrepreneurs in their pursuit of equality illustrate the intricate dynamics of gender roles in business.

Post-COVID-19, Turkish female entrepreneurs are optimistic about the future. Some are committed to sustaining current business models, while others prioritize efficient resource management and family involvement. T5 expressed their outlook, saying, "Our aim is to reduce waste and optimize product usage while managing expenses more prudently. We have also made the decision to involve our family in our business."

Radical entrepreneurs motivated by a strong desire for continuous growth and sustainability highlight the potential of the ever-evolving technological landscape. As articulated by R2, "Fresh opportunities will continually arise in the dynamic online world and technology," underscoring their readiness to seize emerging prospects and adapt continuously.

T5 expressed a significant lesson learned from COVID-19: "Previously, we may not have given substantial thought to our business development, especially in financial terms. However, we have now recognized the importance of careful planning and resource management for the future." Entrepreneurs such as I6 and T5 have implemented financial tactics like cost-saving measures and rent negotiations. A hermeneutic examination of the unique obstacles faced by women in entrepreneurship, analyzed through theoretical frameworks that consider social, familial, and systemic factors, deepens these insights.

Uddin and Bose (2012) proposed a conceptual framework that views entrepreneurship as a method to mobilize capital and manage risks, highlighting women entrepreneurs' resilience and adaptability during the pandemic. The emphasis on crisis management, resource optimization, and digital technology adoption resonates with the broader entrepreneurial emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability. This study highlights the importance of adaptability and resilience, as illustrated by the multifaceted business crises faced by entrepreneurs like I3, I5, and I7 who encountered significant economic and health-related challenges. Entrepreneurs like R2, who utilized digital marketing for adaptation, underscore the significance of strategic agility in entrepreneurship.

This research demonstrates Turkey's strong drive and motivation for entrepreneurship, drawing upon various theoretical frameworks of entrepreneurial motivation. This study explores factors that inspire female entrepreneurs, from innovating within established norms to completely breaking tradition. Through personal narratives and a broader examination of entrepreneurship, this research a comprehensive analysis of women's business endeavors, particularly during uncertain times like the pandemic. By exploring both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, this study highlights diverse motivations guiding female entrepreneurs, as exemplified by individuals like R1 and R2.

The narrative emphasizes that personal ambition, the drive to overcome challenges, skill mastery, and autonomy are key motivators for entrepreneurial activities. Individuals like I1 and I2 were driven by their aspirations for expertise and independence in their respective fields and transitioned from traditional employment to entrepreneurship, exemplifying this. The influence of family and role models, as seen in the entrepreneurial journeys of individuals like I10, highlights how observing successful businesswomen can ignite entrepreneurial ambition. Additionally, entrepreneurs like T4 pursue entrepreneurship for financial independence and recognition, highlighting the empowering nature. On the other hand, the desire to challenge societal norms and establish themselves in male-dominated sectors motivates trailblazers like R1 and R2.

The hermeneutic circle, with its iterative approach, enhances the reader's understanding by allowing them to integrate their own experiences with the broader socio-economic and cultural contexts presented in the research. The study concludes with an optimistic note, emphasizing a strong commitment to diversity, innovation, and resilience as guiding principles for the future of women's entrepreneurship post-pandemic.

6. Conclusion

Our research unveils the diverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Turkish women entrepreneurs in Gaziantep, classified into innovators, traditionalists, radicals, and housewife entrepreneurs. The results indicate that entrepreneurial motives and experiences during the pandemic were greatly influenced by the type of business. Innovators, motivated by their professional identity and commitment to excellence, effectively adjusted by embracing new technologies and digital tactics. Traditional entrepreneurs followed cultural conventions and used strategies to reduce costs and enhance hygiene. Radicals who challenged established social standards encountered increased obstacles, especially in industries dominated by males, but remained resolute in their determination to surmount these problems. Housewife entrepreneurs effectively managed their business endeavors while also fulfilling their household obligations and considering economic factors.

The pandemic had a diverse impact on perceptions of equal opportunity, particularly affecting innovative entrepreneurs who encountered significant challenges stemming from gender biases and cultural norms. Observable shifts in behavior were evident, characterized by a heightened emphasis on cleanliness, efficient use of resources, and readiness for emergencies. As the immediate impacts of the pandemic start to diminish, there continues to be a strong drive for entrepreneurship in all areas, with an emphasis on sustainability and efficiency and the strategic adaptation of new opportunities in the digital realm.

The use of hermeneutic analysis provided deeper insights into individual experiences in the middle of the broader economic ramifications of the crisis, offering a glimpse into the resilience and strategic adaptability of these women.

By categorizing female entrepreneurs and examining their distinct coping strategies and motivations, this study makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of gender dynamics in entrepreneurship during times of crisis in Gaziantep Türkiye and enriches academic discussions on the subject.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the study's narrow focus on Gaziantep may limit its broad applicability. Additionally, relying primarily on qualitative data may not fully capture the pandemic's broader quantitative impacts on women's entrepreneurship.

Future research endeavors could expand the study's scope to encompass a more extensive geographic and demographic range, providing a more global perspective on the pandemic's effects on women in business. The integration of quantitative methods could provide a more comprehensive statistical overview to complement qualitative insights.

Moreover, investigating the lasting effects of the pandemic on entrepreneurial ventures and the evolution of motivational factors as the world recovers would be a valuable avenue for further research. Analyzing the role of digital technology and innovation in crisis management and business sustainability could provide valuable strategies for female entrepreneurs who face similar challenges worldwide.

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