

# **Should I Stay Or Should I Go? Family Influence on Entrepreneur's Wellbeing and their Business Exit Experience**

**Aisha Abbas<sup>1</sup>, Fiona Wilson<sup>2</sup>**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the influence of an entrepreneur's family on the entrepreneur's well-being, their business experience and vice versa. Set in a relatively under-research context of business exit, the study has analysed the entrepreneurial journey of 46 cases of business exits using gender as a bio-cultural construct. Empirical findings reveal the underlying causal mechanisms that mediate the work-family interface of an entrepreneur's life and consequently their business exit decision. Gendering is not confined to social dynamics but shapes the coping and post-exit recovery mechanisms as well.

**Key Words:** Gender, family embeddedness, business exit, social capital, entrepreneurial well-being, entrepreneurship, qualitative, psychological capital

## **Introduction**

In the past research, an entrepreneur's personal life and their business journey have primarily been treated as two separate entities assumed not to influence each other. More recently, studies have regarded this disjunction as 'unnatural, acknowledging the strong need to address the pervasiveness of an entrepreneur's context into their business value creation and sustainability (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Justo et al., 2015; Powell & Eddleston, 2008; Shepherd et al., 2019). This evolved and humanized view confirmed that apart from the institutional and commercial context, entrepreneur's non-work context - social, cultural and familial

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<sup>1</sup> University of the west of Scotland, [Aisha.abbas@uws.ac.uk](mailto:Aisha.abbas@uws.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, [Fiona.M.Wilson@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Fiona.M.Wilson@glasgow.ac.uk)

structures - also shape the landscape of the business in terms of emergence and recognition of new opportunities; by influencing venture creation decision; and also by facilitating resource mobilization. In this paper, both positive and negative family embeddedness will be explored. While a large portion of existing research has highlighted family as a hindrance in business performance, particularly studies assessing female entrepreneurs who cited inter-role conflict i.e. the role pressure from work and family domains became mutually incompatible in some respect (De Clercq et al., 2021; García & Welter, 2013; Heilbrunn & Davidovitch, 2011); contrasting discourse has challenged the assumption that family is a hindrance to entrepreneurs highlighting family participation's positive influence on the business, on entrepreneurial growth intentions and expansion plans (Eddleston & Powell, 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Powell & Eddleston, 2013; Zhu et al., 2017). This positive influence has been termed as 'family to business enrichment', where enrichment means that experience in one role improves the quality of life in another (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). The positive emphasis on family-to-business enrichment stresses the importance of family to entrepreneurship and suggests that participation in the family role may enrich an entrepreneur's well-being. However, these studies confirmed that the processes by which the family nurtures the work-family balance of entrepreneurs differ according to the entrepreneur's gender.

There is no denying that the attention towards social and family structures has primarily been given by the entrepreneurship research exploring family firms (Chrisman et al., 2021; Zellweger et al., 2019) or the life course of female entrepreneurs (Jayawarna et al., 2020; Merluzzi & Burt, 2020; Thébaud, 2016). These studies confirm that family embedded enrichment and interference are not mutually exclusive. Both enrichment and interference are conceptualized as bi-directional. That is, the business can impact the family and the family can impact the business. This paper argues that apart from associating childcare and domestic responsibilities with women as the primary cause of the gendered patterns in the business-

family interface, a nuanced exploration of the causal mechanisms triggering these patterns is largely missing in the literature. To evaluate the argument, the entrepreneurial journey of 46 entrepreneurs who exited their businesses have been qualitatively analysed to address the gendered patterns across their experiences. The analysis shows that family embeddedness, whether positive or negative comprised of 3 primary influencing constructs (i) family culture (ii) family support (iii) work-life balance, where family support was mediated by the family culture and the work-life balance. To understand the family's bi-directional relationship with the entrepreneur's business, their role in business start-up decision has been assessed, followed by the family to business enrichment, its impact on entrepreneur's and family's wellbeing and the exit motivation. It has emerged that the work-life balance is further mediated by influencers such as entrepreneur's work ideology, family's gender role dynamics and the presence or absence of children. The paper concludes by developing a framework of family embedded structures and causal mechanisms that have a direct influence on the family to business and business to family enrichment. The findings make several contributions to the gender in entrepreneurship, and business exit literature. First, the framework contributes new theoretical and empirically grounded insights in explaining the causal structures triggering work-family conflicts in an entrepreneurial journey which not only impacts the entrepreneurial performance but also exit decisions. Second, the findings complement the emerging 'entrepreneurial well-being' literature (Abreu et al., 2019; Bhuiyan & Ivlevs, 2019; Engel et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2018) by exploring the social and familial structures influencing the well-being of entrepreneur and their families. Extending our understanding of these causal structures will help to develop a more comprehensive view of micro and small business contexts, which includes the role of family in contributing as social and psychological capital, affecting entrepreneur's subjective well-being. Third, building upon the quantitative findings of Jayawarna et al. (2020) and Justo et al. (2015) as well as the

theoretical work of Marlow & Dy (2018), Welter, Brush & Bruin (2014) and Gherardi (2015) this paper presents a nuanced view of the emerged gendered patterns through a qualitative investigation under a critical realist lens. The findings also debunk the gender stereotypes largely prevalent in ‘entrepreneurship and gender’ literature.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Contextualizing Family Embeddedness in a business Exit**

Exploring the role of family in a business exit only started gaining attention in recent years (Hsu et al., 2016; Justo et al., 2015; Khelil, 2016; Sardeshmukh et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2017). These quantitative studies empirically investigated the influence of family structures on the exit intentions and confirmed stronger exit intentions for their female sample asserting gendered influence of household determinants on their experience. Family’s impact on life after the exit, i.e. grief recovery and bouncing back after a negative experience remains largely under-investigated.

The intersection of gender, performance and family is particularly relevant to entrepreneurial studies exploring gender. Jennings & McDougald (2007) encouraged researchers to incorporate work-family interface (WFI) to explain performance differences between male and female-headed business ventures. They suggested it is the lack of family embeddedness perspective and the exclusion of work-family interface which is causing inadequate accounts of entrepreneurs’ business experiences. The inclusion of these personal parameters can holistically answer the persistent performance differences regarding firm size, growth, success and closure across gender.

When it comes to family embeddedness in the female entrepreneurship literature, two primary areas have been explored i.e. work-family interface and spousal support. The pervasive influence of roles within family life and the struggle of juggling multiple social identities is a recurrent theme in the work-family interface surrounding women entrepreneurs.

This stance further highlights the gendered nature of socio-cultural mechanisms viewing women's entrepreneurial role being secondary, as a causal explanation of their small-scale, low growth ventures accommodating their primary role which depends on their position in their family. Van Auken & Werbel (2006) highlighted the spouse as a stakeholder in an entrepreneurship decision as they potentially significantly impact family dynamics such as family finances, marital relationships, parenting activities, and leisure time. They proposed spousal commitment to be a crucial factor influencing the financial performance of a venture, developing a set of hypotheses and a model to guide future empirical research. In the work-family interface (WFI), 'children' have been the highlight of the coping challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Neneh, 2017; Sardeshmukh et al., 2021; Welsh et al., 2019). These studies have affirmed any imbalance in the work-family relationship contributes towards experiencing work-family conflict. While this imbalance primarily has been due to the high level of family role demands for the women and the '*bone of contention*' for them, the strong influence of the family on venture performance has also been confirmed. Nikina et al. (2015) conducted their research in Scandinavia, a region recognised for gender equality. They explored the impact of gender role ideology on marriage and psychological contracts and reported significant role emotional support/acknowledgement played in female entrepreneurs' lives. The couples sharing similar non-traditional gender ideologies had a positive influence on the female entrepreneur's businesses. While female entrepreneurs who have an egalitarian setting in their households may benefit from family-to-work support (Eddleston & Powell, 2012), male entrepreneurs are receiving more family to work support than their female counterparts. Furthermore, 'family embeddedness' in entrepreneurship is mainly explored among married entrepreneurs, i.e. entrepreneurs with spouse & children only. This paper proposes inclusivity of any associated family, irrespective of entrepreneur's marital status would give a better understanding of the family-related socio-cultural mechanisms shaping

entrepreneur's business trajectory. This also gives us an insight into other influencing constructs of work-family interface across gender beyond juggling of children and spouse, that moderates support dynamics for entrepreneurs not previously considered.

### **Gender as a construct**

Female entrepreneurship scholars have established that by focusing on gender differences, entrepreneurship research runs the risk of ignoring the social forces that cause these differences. Individual or group-level comparison conflates the analysis into mere comparisons between women and men, instead of focussing on the societal and economic structures influencing these groups differently (Ahl, 2006; Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2009; Marlow and Dy, 2018). To circumvent the secondary positionality of female entrepreneurs in our assessment, this paper explores the phenomenon of business exit around parameters that aim to assess psycho-social, socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions of an exit. Biased gendering in feminist entrepreneurship literature has also been re-evaluated. Marlow, Hicks & Treanor (2019) and Ahl & Marlow (2012) have acknowledged that in previous studies, women actively perform their gender. Whilst critical for revealing masculine biases in entrepreneurial discourse, the unintended consequence has been that men, masculinities, and how they are performed are removed from consideration. These gaps encouraged this study to explore gender as a bio-cultural construct while analysing the familial context of an entrepreneur deciding on a business exit.

It is acknowledged that exploring the concept of 'gendering' by analysing male and female entrepreneurs concurrently could be deemed as contradictory, as previous feminist literature has challenged the method in question as a gendered approach. However, by borrowing the concept of bio-cultural development of gender identity from contemporary epigenetic and psychology literature (Cortes et al., 2019; Mascolo, 2018; Massimini & Fave, 2000) the aim of adapting this approach is the inclusivity of male entrepreneurs in the field of gender

research. Contemporary studies in epigenetics, psychology and neuroscience of human development have established that sex and gender cannot be isolated from each other. Biological and cultural inheritance deeply influences daily human behaviour. While culture plays an important role in the social construction of gender roles and identities, sex contributes to the bias in this construction and therefore influences the socialization patterns.

To acknowledge 'gendering' requires us to move beyond a polarizing discourse, towards seeking social transformation through an integrative approach. For social conditioning of gender to be recognised, it needs to be shown how it is influencing not just one, but all gender identities. Recently, Marlow, Hicks & Treanor (2017) highlighted that how men 'do' masculinity, within the entrepreneurial context, remains largely invisible, as contemporary analyses remain indifferent to the multiplicities of diverse gender practices, and by extension, to their influence on men and their entrepreneurial activity.

## **Methodology**

Entrepreneurship has been established as a multi-faceted and diversely complex phenomenon (Shepherd et al., 2019). Qualitative approaches can contribute towards a comprehensive understanding of its unique, volatile, mundane and heterogeneous characteristics (Van Burg et al., 2020). Nuances of family embeddedness at micro and meso-level can be holistically identified explaining the cause of certain outcomes in a specific context, which in this study is a business exit. In gender and entrepreneurship review studies, qualitative methodologies are encouraged for field development as prior studies have substantially been quantitative (Henry et al., 2015). A detailed literature review conducted for this research until 2017 highlighted that no qualitative studies explored gendering in a business exit. This led to establishing a multiple case study approach as the exploratory tool to assess the causal mechanisms from the field-based data. Guidelines by (Rispoli & Laffitte, 2014) were followed to ensure the research and data quality.

To highlight underlying causal mechanisms of family embeddedness transfactually i.e. (analysing existing causal tendencies that may or may not be detected), a critical realist (CR) stance has been taken. The difference between the deductive approach of positivism and the retroductive (effect to cause) approach of critical realism is hypothesis generation at the causal levels of reality, i.e. identifying the unseen influencers behind people's behaviours. It assesses causality by answering 'what made it possible?', hence is the optimal way to explain reciprocity of behaviours and causal structures.

### **Sampling Strategy**

A purposive sampling approach was taken. The research sample was compiled through correspondence with entrepreneurs who had former micro and small business experiences via social media (LinkedIn) and through snowballing. To highlight the familial relationships which impact the entrepreneur's venture experience, no limitation upon marital status was applied while sampling the participants. Entrepreneurs who exited a micro and small business within the UK, ranging from age 21 to 66 were interviewed using a life history approach (Jones, 1983; Mallon & Cohen, 2001). Rich accounts of this diverse sample allowed the extraction of multiple family embedded structures and mechanisms which have not been highlighted in prior studies. The inclusion of entrepreneurs without spouse/children in the sample has given an insight into the gendering associated more with the marital status than the biological sex itself. The final sample as shown in Table 1, comprises 46 founders/entrepreneurs (former/current) who have experienced a business exit in their entrepreneurial careers. 36 closed their businesses voluntarily and involuntarily (14 men, 22 women), 4 exited (3 men, 1 woman) and 6 sold their businesses (3 women, 3 men).

**Table 1 Research Sample**

<b>Exit Type</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Involuntary Cessation	3	4
Voluntary cessation	19	10
Owner's Exit from the firm	4	6

Prior studies emphasised business exits as gendered caused by the household determinants (Jayawarna et al., 2020). The bio-cultural gender lens encouraged the analysis of this aspect categorically. The sample was subdivided into 4 subcategories to ease the analytical process (i) female respondents with children (ii) female respondents without children (i) Male respondents with children (ii) Male respondents without children. For ease of identification across the quotes, the pseudonyms assigned are coded according to their exit type e.g. the entrepreneurs who went through ‘Involuntary cessation’ are named beginning with the letter ‘I’, ‘Voluntary dissolutions and closures’ with letters ‘V’, ‘D’ and ‘C’. and ‘Exit from the firm’ with the letter ‘E’. Table 2 presents the entrepreneurs’ demographics and business details.

**Table 2 Participants Information**

<b>Involuntary Cessation</b>						
<b>No.</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Cessation type</b>	<b>Years in business</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>Industry</b>
1.	Ingrid	55	Dissolution	5	2	Construction
2.	Isla	43	Dissolution	(3+1)	2	Hospitality
3.	Irene	40	Bankruptcy	2	1	Luxury Bags
4.	Isaac	45	Liquidation	(10+3)	2	Construction
5.	Ivan	52	Liquidation	(2+4)	2	Mobile accessories Retail
6.	Immanuel	40	Bankruptcy	9	2	Confectionary
7.	Idris	57	Bankruptcy	6	4	Real Estate
<b>Voluntary Cessation</b>						
8.	Victoria	21	Closure	2	No	Baking
9.	Violet	25	Closure/ Dissolution	2	No	Social media/jewellery
10.	Valerie	28	Dissolution	1	No	Food Supplier
11.	Vanessa	37	Dissolution	2	No	Digital Dating
12.	Vivienne	37	Dissolution	2+1	No	Health & Fitness
13.	Valentina	37	Dissolution	2+1	No	Health & fitness
14.	Vera	41	Dissolution	2	No	Social media consultancy
15.	Veronica	42	Dissolution	8	No	Research consultancy
16.	Vanellope	44	Dissolution	11	No	Training & Coaching
17.	Vidya	52	Dissolution	5	No	Café/Food
18.	Vicky	60	Dissolution	9	No	IT consultancy
19.	Diana	43	Dissolution	2.5	1	Confectionary
20.	Carol	45	Closure	2	3	Catering
21.	Daniella	48	Dissolution	3	3	Uni spin-off- medical devices
22.	Demi	49	Dissolution	2+2	1	Childcare/Interim management
23.	Dakota	52	Closure	10	4	Hairdressing
24.	Donna	54	Dissolution	18	3	Fashion/Clothing
25.	Catherine	55	Closure	4	2	Gift baskets
26.	Debra	64	Dissolution	9+ 9	1	Accounting and finance, business consultant
27.	Danial	24	Dissolution	2	No	Social media

28.	David	29	Dissolution	1	No	IT
29.	Dylan	36	Dissolution	3	No	Confectionary
30.	Damien	38	Dissolution	3	No	IT Consultancy
31.	Dean	42	Dissolution	4	No	consultancy
32.	Dave	65	Dissolution	5	No	Smart materials
33.	Vincent	36	Liquidation	3	2	Mobile Retail
34.	Varun	41	Dissolution	17	3	Retail, Takeaways, Real Estate
35.	Val	44	Dissolution	1	3	Digital marketing
36.	Vikram	47	Dissolution	1	2	Consultancy
37.	Vladimir	63	Dissolution	4	2	Consultancy
<b>Firm Exit</b>						
38.	Elizabeth	34	Independent Sale	5	No	Tourism
39.	Evelyn	48	Firm Exit	3	2	Retail
40.	Ella	60	Independent Sale	18	3	QuickPrint
41.	Eleanor	66	Merger	22	2	Recruitment
42.	Ethan	41	Independent Sale	6	1	Hospitality
43.	Edward	50	Independent Sale	8+1+2	2	Sales
44.	Edgar	52	Voluntary Firm Exit	2	1	Digital Agency
45.	Elijah	52	Independent Sale	9	3	Hospitality
46.	Eamon	56	Involuntary Firm Exit	1+2+1	2	Professional Services

It was found that the differences within the same gender were based on the presence of children more than their marital status. Also, this classification ensured inclusivity of otherwise neglected group of female entrepreneurs when studying family embeddedness, i.e. single mothers and single women, the limitation which has been previously highlighted by (Marlow et al., 2008).

### Data Analysis

Limited literature exists on critical realist analysis conducted qualitatively. Guidelines by Fletcher (2017) were followed to carry out the process. A template analysis proceeded in 4 stages. First, familial structures (the demi-regularities) were extracted from the dataset and were clustered into themes, i.e. family support, family culture, work-life balance and so on. In the second stage, these structures were segregated into positive (enrichment) and negative (spillover/conflict) constructs. These were explored for underlying causal mechanisms and the contextual conditions developing them. In the third stage, gender was assessed across these themes and causal mechanisms. In the final stage, research findings were developed into a conceptual model illustrating the causal mechanisms between these structures and

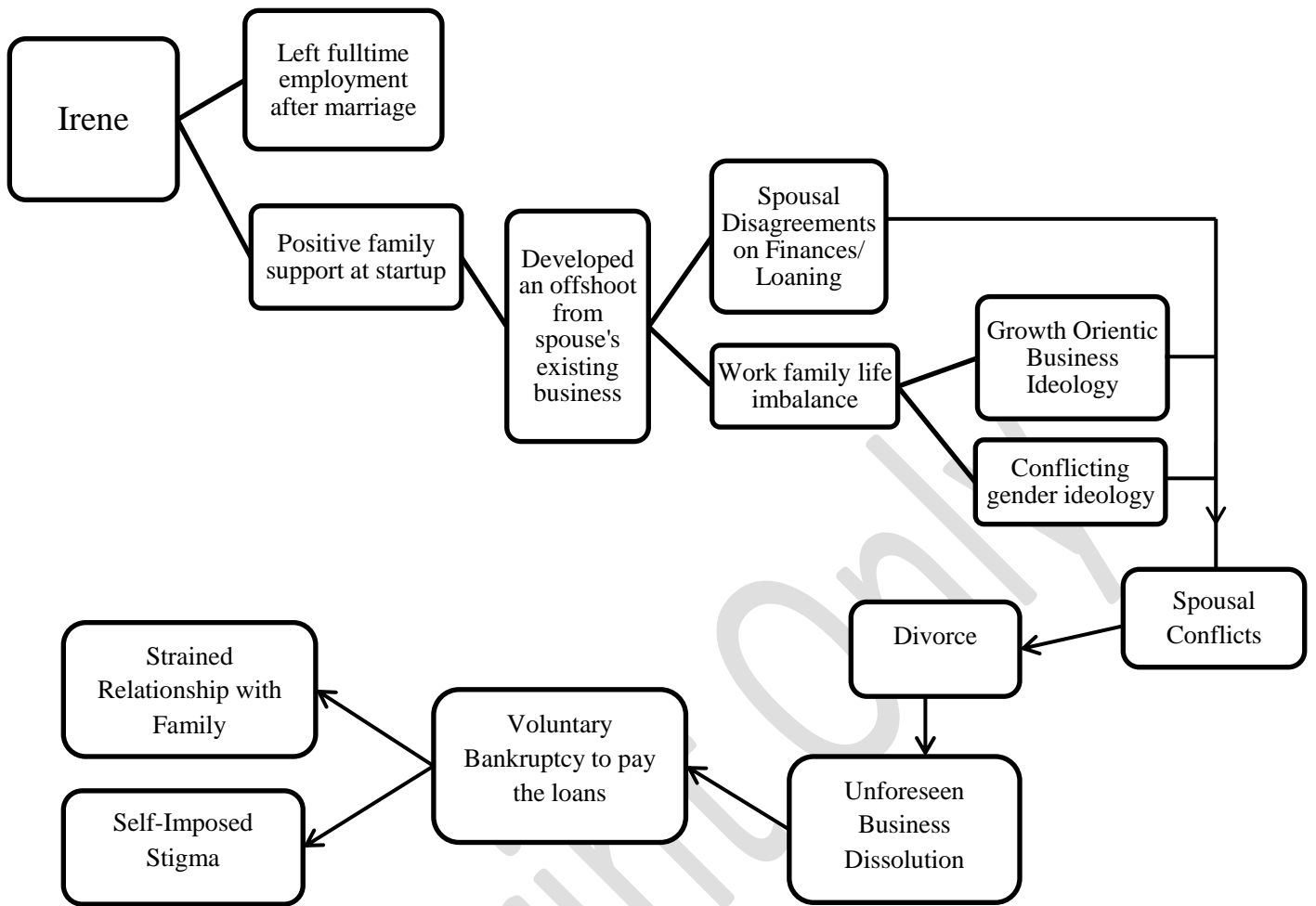
substructures that influenced the entrepreneur and their business venture. Data coding was conducted in Nvivo 10 that developed the nested cluster of family structures across the business lifecycle.

### **Stage 1: Extracting and clustering family Structures**

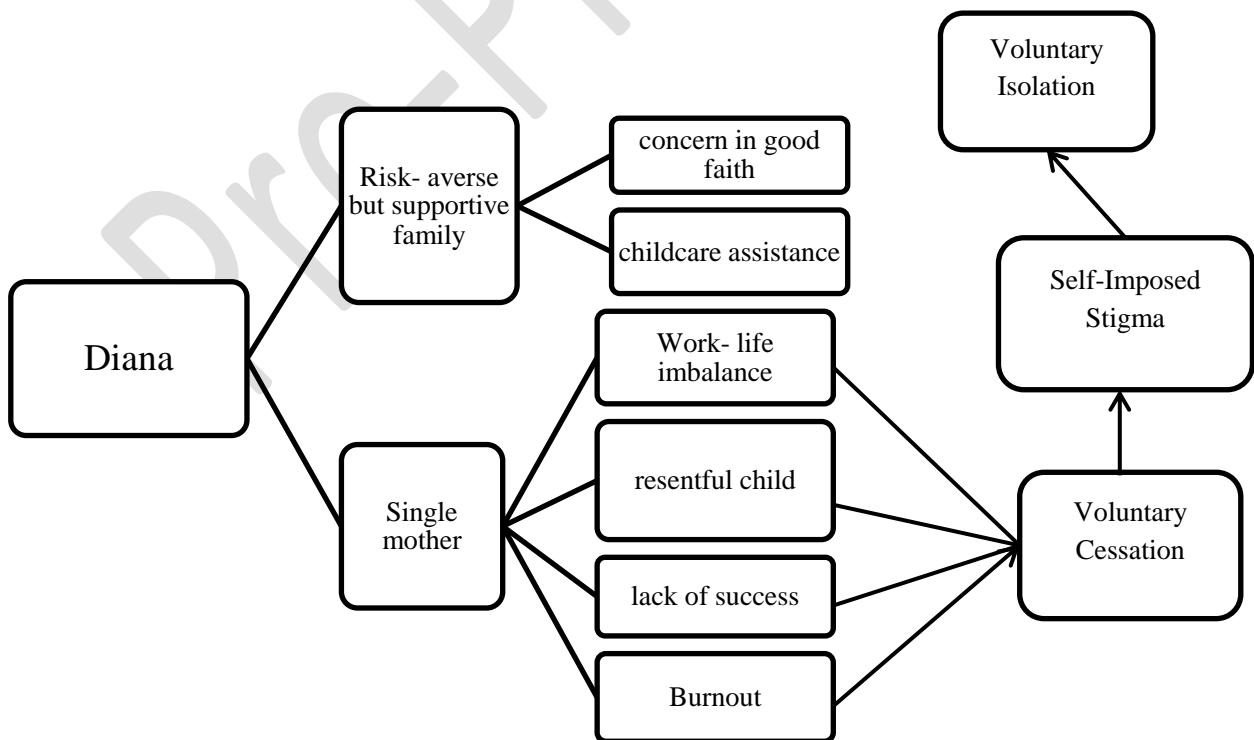
The first step of analysis started from 'microanalysis' as termed by (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) which involved the detailed reading of the complete data to identify relevant texts. Each interview was read in detail, and the relevant data citing family's influence on their business journey and business's influence on their family was extracted and clustered into themes, accounts involving how much their family contributed towards their business decision making, what level of support they offered, how much they contributed towards the business exit, how the entrepreneur felt about it and managed the business and family. This stage created a list of family-related structures and sub-structures in the template.

### **Stage 2: Categorizing positive and negative Causal Mechanisms**

In the CR literature, retroduction and abduction have been used interchangeably (Chamberlain, 2006; Mirza et al., 2014). Abductive logic involves a consistent interplay between existing theory and the data to redevelop the theory. In the second stage, the interview texts were explored abductively to seek underlying causal mechanisms from entrepreneur's narrative, to determine entrepreneur's unperceived social, cultural and psychological mechanisms which influenced their attributed family embedded structures (i.e. family to business enrichment/ family to business depletion). At this stage, each interview was summarised into a graphical illustration in the form of a tree diagram which branched it into positive and negative structures and highlighted an overall familial influence on the individual entrepreneur and their venture exit. A couple of case examples are illustrated in Figure 1a and 1b. This led to clustering entrepreneurs with positive and negative family embeddedness in separate categories.



**Figure 1a - Case Example 1**



**Figure 1b - Case Example 2**

### **Stage 3: Assessment across gender and the type of exit**

The goal of retroduction is to identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and to result in the empirical trends observed. At this stage, across the positive and negative family embeddedness, the influence of gender was explored. This stage led to studying the gendered patterns across their socio-cultural environment and also gave a new insight into ideological differences across the male and female entrepreneurs which were caused by their contextual, socio-cultural norms practised by their family.

### **Stage 4: Framework Development**

For illustrative purposes, research findings are summarised into a graphical representation (see figure 2) which serves as a conceptual framework for future research. Extracted adverse outcomes and related causal mechanisms from stage 2, ideological structures from stage 3 combine and present a holistic view of family's support being affected by deep-rooted contextual conditions.

### **Research Findings**

In qualitative CR research, participants' experiences and understandings can challenge existing scientific knowledge and theory (Fletcher, 2017). Family Embeddedness and household determinants have been regarded as a gendered structure, but at the same time, they have been associated with higher exit rates for women (Jayawarna et al., 2020; Justo et al., 2015). The data analysis explored the ways family is embedded in entrepreneur's business journey and their exit decision. This section summarises the research findings into themes, which contribute towards shaping up their business trajectory.

Out of 46, 31 entrepreneurs were married at the time of their business, out of which 25 had children as well. Six entrepreneurs (3 women and three men) experienced a marital breakup, where all three women cited closing the business as a result of the divorce (2 involuntarily, one voluntarily) while the men mentioned divorce followed after the financially challenging

times in their business. Other participants reported multiple cases of relationship breakdown (with family/with partners) as a result of work-family conflicts. It undoubtedly influenced the entrepreneurs psychologically for an extended period.

Family embeddedness, whether positive or negative comprised of 3 primary influencing constructs (i) family culture (ii) family support and (iii) work-life balance, where family support was mediated by the family culture and the work-life balance. To understand family's relationship with entrepreneur's business, their role in business start-up decisions has been assessed initially.

The findings showed that in most cases entrepreneur's start-up motivation had a significant influence on how and why the business was exited. In contrast to Kirkwood (2009) who found "male entrepreneurs started the business with assuming family support is forthcoming and female entrepreneurs contemplated it and sought encouragement, emotional support and advice from the spouse before starting it", this analysis established that entrepreneurs with intrinsic motivation of self-employment primarily due to their need for autonomy and growth ambitions started the business assuming support is forthcoming from the family regardless of their gender. They autonomously decided to leave their successful employment career and start a business assuming their family would be supporting their decision. Most of these entrepreneurs experienced high levels of work-family conflicts during the business journey, particularly during the difficult times of financial uncertainty. They also experienced conflict in maintaining the work and family life balance due to their growth-oriented work ideology which was driven by their intrinsic motivation.

Entrepreneurs who were pushed into self-employment by their circumstances, -redundancy, and lack of employment opportunities - had a robust familial decision-making setup. They sought emotional support, encouragement and advice from their family before starting up.

This pattern not only shaped their business at the beginning but also during challenging times. They were somewhat quick to wrap up the business within months again citing the family's suggestion to do so.

### 1) **Business Ideology**

The three forms of exits among the participants were (i) voluntary cessations (ii) involuntary cessations (iii) exit of the owner from the firm. The exit of the owner from the firm did not have family embedded influence towards the exit decision except for one case which sold his business to regain his entrepreneur's work ideology of running their business. Two patterns appear among this structure (i) growth-oriented ideology (ii) quality of life-oriented ideology.

As exhibited in table 3, for entrepreneurs having the **growth-oriented business ideology**, their focus was more towards growing the business and their imbalanced approach towards maintaining their families and business caused negative family embeddedness and resulted in facing resentment from the family and was conceived as family's lack of support. No evidence of growth-oriented ideology being affected by gender was found.

Entrepreneurs who had this ideology conflicted with the traditional gender role expectations of their family, which defined their subjective work-life imbalance, and affected the family support for both genders. However, a contradiction in the sense-making of this attribute emerged across genders. This gives interesting insights into culturally embedded gender ideology, where women referred to it as a restrained autonomy, whereas men acknowledged it as their shortcoming. Growth-oriented business ideology caused conflict among married entrepreneurs only.

For entrepreneurs having the **quality of life-oriented ideology**, their focus was more towards earning enough to support their lives, and the work-life imbalance caused due to business

challenges made them resent the business, and despite some entrepreneurs having family support towards their business, begrudged the imbalance it caused to their personal life.

The majority of female entrepreneurs had a quality of life-oriented ideology regardless of their marital status, but this ideology was only apparent in a few married male entrepreneurs. Overall growth-oriented work ideology caused work-family conflict in entrepreneurs' lives.

**Table 3 Some examples reporting the impact of entrepreneur's work ideology on work-Life balance**

Business Ideology	Women	Men
Growth-Oriented business ideology	<p>"when I was away, I was away for two weeks at a time, the expectation was when I would come home, I would be just free to go back to being a good wife but of course when I came home, I had to deal with the business I generated when I was away...there wasn't an awful lot of support of that" - <b>Irene, 40</b></p> <p>"I was very kind of passionate about it, it wasn't like a reluctant thing there, but I think the people around me noticed that it was difficult for me to switch off from work and it was kind of all-consuming really."- <b>Veronica 42</b></p> <p>"I would say I worried more about the business rightly or wrongly, than I did about the family. But saying that, my sons were teenagers at the time anyway, they weren't young. I just took the boys to work during holidays."- <b>Ingrid, 52</b></p>	<p>"it was all quite interesting and you kind of get mesmerized by that. A family becomes less and less...not less and less important at heart, less and less important in their eyes, because you don't spend time with them so I felt I was becoming quite a hypocrite, I didn't feel like I could support them and I wanted to support them physically and I felt as if there was a lack of integrity....my wife used to say why do you want to make all this money? We have got enough, you have got enough"- <b>Idris, 57</b></p> <p>"When you are working for yourself there is no personal life. Because if you are really passionate about the subject you are dealing with, the line between personal and business become very blurred."- <b>Dean 42</b></p> <p>"Obviously my wife was a little annoyed because we were not having enough cash flow and I was working all the time, in the end I was working FOR THEM. I wanted a better life for my wife and my kids, so she understood that. I was putting more effort and more time, I was sacrificing my time for their future, so she understood that and she supported that." – <b>Varun, 44</b></p> <p>"the business experience had a major impact on &lt;wife's name&gt; and how she felt about me. I think it particularly guided me to become a kind of person who is perhaps more focussed and driven and who was less tuned into my wife's needs."- <b>Eamon, 56</b></p>

Quality of life-oriented business ideology	<p>“It was really hard because as it was a new business so basically I was working like... 13 hours a day and I was also working Saturdays and my sister was not there all the time and I was the one working the most. So it was really really hard for me because I didn’t have time for myself, I was just working, waking up early...and when I was at home I just wanted to sleep and not go out or talk to someone, and it did create problems in the family.”- <b>Valerie, 28</b></p> <p>“I was doing my business for me but I was also doing it for my son, I wanted to be able to do it for several reasons, one is flexibility....I think I underestimated how much of my time would be taken away from him in that. Even when he was at home, I would be distracted, running my own business and maybe not giving him my full attention”. – <b>Diana,43</b></p> <p>“It’s too much for one person and I need to find a balance between my work and my personal life. I was 33, I want to live my life to the full, I want to surround myself with those I love and I want to be laughing, dancing, socialising and not working myself into the ground. I believe that life is for living. I want to grab it with both hands, stand at the edge and jump right in.”- <b>Vanessa, 37</b></p> <p>“my advice to mums is design models and business ways that always put your children first. Or you can do a smarter model as soon as your work supersedes the priority of your children then you stop enjoying your work”.- <b>Donna,52</b></p>	<p>“I had to make a real sort of agreement with myself that I would stop working at 6 o clock at night because I was just keep working and working and working and working so I had to stop” ...- <b>Vikram, 52</b></p> <p>“it wasn’t a financial decision to do that, I took the money out of the business, when we sold...It was about life....and personal happiness...and family....quality of life...that sort of things” <b>Elijah, 52</b></p> <p>“I went too far to push myself until my body gave out, so I had a complete physical and emotional breakdown... If it was a broken arm, I would have understood it and accept it, but when the body’s broke, and you are physically and emotionally wrecked, you just have got to take the realization. Once you have got that realization, then we get the strength to carry on...I got that realization much later in life.”-<b>Dave, 65</b></p>
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While observing work ideology patterns across married entrepreneurs, one can easily conclude that it is the gendered household determinants and deep down their gender ideology, which shaped the business ideology/ work ethic of female entrepreneurs. However, it was the difference in work ideology between the unmarried male and female entrepreneurs without any family responsibilities, which confirms a stronger tendency of “quality of life-oriented ideology” among female entrepreneurs leading them to keep their business a certain size voluntarily.

This trend should be further explored while exploring growth patterns across their businesses.

## 2) Family Culture

Family culture served as a robust environmental structure in entrepreneur's life which not only influenced the entrepreneur's business but the entrepreneur as well. Two underlying causal mechanisms emerged constructing this structure (i) Family's risk propensity (ii) family's gender ideology.

(i) **Risk Propensity** of entrepreneur's family resulted in discouragement from the family, and both married/unmarried entrepreneurs were affected by their relative families, - parents, siblings, wives and children. While they acknowledged this discouragement showcased their concerns in good intentions, and it was 'financial uncertainty', and in a few cases a 'lack of faith in their abilities' associated with running their own business which transpired in the form of resistance from their families restraining them from making a choice. Lack of support and getting on with their decision strained their relationship with their families.

Only two females cited the risk-averse attitude of their family (spouse/parents) getting in the way of their business which eventually caused a relationship breakup. Whereas it was a prominent emerging trend across male entrepreneurs which shows that their 'breadwinning' social identity and their income being the primary income caused more pressure associated with its uncertainty causing their families to resist their idea. Few male entrepreneurs also quoted their families accusing them of being 'irresponsible' and 'not having enough competencies'.

In this regard, another gendered influence of this risk-averse family culture was the level of autonomy experienced by the entrepreneurs. Female entrepreneurs displayed more decision making freedom regarding starting and closing their business, which shows the peripheral positioning of their business on the financial landscape of their household, hence attributing more domestic responsibilities to them.

**Table 4 Notable examples highlighting family's risk propensity affecting the entrepreneur**

Risk Propensity	Women	Men
Risk-averse family	<p>“He obviously being a joint director, shareholder had to be involved in all the key decisions and in terms of borrowing money, obviously that had to be signed off by both of us. He was very uncomfortable about borrowing money...”- <b>Irene, 40</b></p> <p>“My dad openly had doubts about me coping with it. I don’t know it’s probably a cultural thing... this war generation of people and war children are sooo doubtful and thinking about the worst possible scenario and this really really drags you down and is not encouraging at all”.- <b>Isla, 43</b></p>	<p>“My family was very conventional on both sides. It’s you get educated, you find a job, you have a family and that’s your responsibility and then I came along, now looking back I can see I was really messing with their world view” – <b>Dean, 42</b></p> <p>“I wanted to carry it long term...but as I said, the knowledge of the other areas of business running, I didn’t have the experience of...it was probably my wife’s decision to wind it up.”- <b>Val, 44</b></p> <p>“I just lost all quality of life except for being successful in my job. And I decided then that the only way I could recapture that was to work for myself.. she was less concerned about my quality of life than her security and she saw permanent job as being secure...I felt a lack of sympathy and concern from her. She was just seeing it from perspective of her personal security and part of the family.”- <b>Eamon, 56</b></p> <p>“One of the reasons I didn’t tell my parents was because I had decided I am not listening to you and I am just going to do it.”- <b>Edward, 50</b></p> <p>“my wife didn’t particularly support me in it, because she didn’t think it was my value base”- <b>Idris, 57</b></p>

(ii) **Gender ideology** functions as a lens through which inequalities in the division of household labour are viewed (Greenstein, 1995). It was the most crucial contextual structure which shaped multiple sub-structures and in-depth causal mechanisms as summarized in table 5. The family embedded structures influenced by the gender ideology include (a) gender role dynamics (b) coping mechanism (c) spousal expectations across the entrepreneurs.

**Table 5 Traditional Gender Ideology as a significant influencer**

Gender Ideology	Women	Men
Biased Gender Ideology/Sexism	<p>“There were a few negative views but that’s what you would expect, especially my sons they would look at me like are you mad? My younger son was the worst regardless of what I had done in the past and I am doing now, he is probably the only one who would sit</p>	<p>“I was really kind of pushed towards the family business which was 150 years old and I didn’t have any awful lot of choice as far as ...when I went to school and when I came back I didn’t know what the opportunities were so all my folks said well the opportunity is there in the family construction business.”-</p>

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down and say well women don't do that mum you know"- **Ingrid, 52**

"It was almost considered radical.... my father was born in Finland and brought up in Estonia in that way...people from my culture have specific roles for each gender. Very visible category like this is woman's job and this is a man's job... It is just Soviet people chauvinist mentality; I don't even consider it as an insult. I just acknowledge that these people are just brought up like this". - **Isla, 43**

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**Isaac, 45**

"We like to stick to our basics which are over household and order, we feel proud in this. My wife can do this but I think it's more important than she bringing in a £1000 or £2000 a month and I would have a £1000 or £2000 less than she looking after the house, kids and the family matters, to me this means more." – **Varun, 44**

### **a) Family's gender roles dynamics**

This causal mechanism was prominent primarily across the married entrepreneurs and was structured by the gender ideology that positioned their entrepreneurial contributions in their households.

Consistent with the literature, all married male entrepreneurs cited their income to be the primary source to run the household, contrary to the married female entrepreneurs who confirmed their business to be complementary to their spouse's income which primarily ran the house. Only three married female entrepreneurs cited business generating sufficient profits leading their spouses to leave their jobs and join their businesses. Among the male entrepreneurs, only six had working wives and just one entrepreneur cited sharing an equal share in the family's household with his wife who was full-time employed. He was the only one who shared an egalitarian setup in domestic responsibilities.

As exhibited in Table 6, this gendered pattern confirms that male entrepreneurs had a traditional gender role dynamic in their household where they were the breadwinner of the family, and the majority of them had their wives taking care of the domestic responsibilities giving them the freedom to invest more time into their business. Although the prior literature has associated childcare responsibilities as interference to female entrepreneurs, our research found insignificant evidence in this regard. All the women entrepreneurs who created work-family synergies around their children were satisfied with their business dynamics. Most of

them did confirm an imbalanced distribution of childcare with their spouse, highlighting the gendered household dynamics but none of them attributed it to be conflicting with their business. They also acknowledged their spouse's 'significant help' in this regard, which shows they conform to the socially constructed gendered dynamics because the primary income of their household was their spouse's responsibility.

**Table 6 Gender Role Dynamics as a contributor towards work-life balance**

Structures developed by the Gender Ideology		Women	Men
Gender Role Dynamics		<p>"Yes I was emotionally overall encouraged because my husband simply encourages me to fulfil my professional ambitions but only to a degree, because he was not in the business".-<b>Daniella, 48</b></p> <p>"I was married and my husband worked quite long hours in his family business of construction, and made it clear to me when I first went back to work that I was going back to work full-time but actually <b>he wasn't going to be giving up a lot of his time</b> so either we would be going to have some childcare...<b>I wouldn't say we shared the childcare, that's not true</b> but we brought in, for a while we had live-in au pair who came from the north and worked for us the next 8 years"- <b>Eleanor,66</b></p> <p>I think it was slightly easier for me because my husband's business was quite successful and I knew... I mean I didn't ever think about 'failure' but I knew if it didn't work, it wouldn't ruin us financially"-<b>Catherine, 55</b></p> <p><b>Outlier:</b> "Yes...but I am different because I am the second eldest of nine children and I was taught by a mother who was a superwoman so I am very organized and very strategic and I have a very modern relationship because both me and my husband are very supportive and my husband takes equal role in the family so I had a great advantage over many other women."-<b>Donna,52</b></p>	<p>"I was quite exhausted. Obviously...I wasn't able to fulfil my family obligations as much as I would have liked. However when I had time, there were weeks of reward for my labour, so I think it worked okay."- <b>Val, 44</b></p> <p>"It wasn't too bad a balance and it was what I did before we met as well, so she understood the situation and we were prepared for it. Had I started a business when she was pregnant, then it could have been a surprise. But she knew what I wanted to do, So we were quite happy with the work-life balance." – <b>Immanuel, 40</b></p> <p>"Principally what I did was for my children to provide a better life for them...to help them pay through private school and etc. so the brand success was good. But also I wasn't really attentive as I should have been if I was at a normal job. That was again a bit of a learning experience."- <b>Ivan, 52</b></p> <p>"In the early days I worked late hours 4 days a week or so, and then I would be doing stuff at the weekend, and then when I would come home I would help, spend some family time, put kids to sleep and then generally after 8 o'clock when the kids are sleeping, I would from home do more work"- <b>Vincent, 36</b></p> <p><b>Outlier:</b> "Oh yeah...I am a hands-on dad of two. So caring for children was 50-50. Yeah definitely... Apart from when my wife was on maternity leave, it was 50-50. So yeah with all of that, children and the dog, its 50-50.They take a lot of time"- <b>Isaac, 45</b></p>

## b) Gendered Coping Mechanisms

Powell & Eddleston (2013) suggested that men and women may differ in coping strategies (women create work-family synergies while men may not benefit from any due to the abundance of resources available to them hinting their male gender role is preventing them from pursuing it). From our empirical evidence, while the access to social capital was equally available to both genders in the sample, the female entrepreneurs were noted using and benefiting from them more than the male entrepreneurs. This paper would suggest it is their gendered ideology shaping their coping mechanisms. To comply with the socially constructed image of men being macho enough to cope with their emotions and challenges, led male entrepreneurs to not only isolate their families from the business challenges, but also in other social circles where they put on the act of having it all together, irrespective of how it took a toll on them psychologically. Table 7 presents the accounts that illustrate this pattern which was very strongly present in all-male entrepreneurs' cases. On the other hand, even the women who had an egalitarian gender dynamic in their household, expected their spouse to be emotionally involved in their business and sought their interest and guidance while running their business even if the spouse was not part of it. Ingrid is one case who actively sought her husband's informal support in business advice, but resented her husband when he wanted to be a part of it formally. Though they ended up managing it well, it was their marital breakup that resulted in the company's dissolution to distribute the assets. A similar possessive pattern was observed in Ivan, whose wife was on the board of directors which restrained his autonomy in decision making. Liquidation of the business led to financial problems and eventually their divorce; with him inferring conflicting business operation strategies to be the cause of it.

### **c) Gendered Expectations of Support**

There was a striking difference across genders in coping with business challenges and family expectations regarding getting emotional support. A common pattern amongst male

entrepreneurs was shielding their family from business worries, though admitting struggling to conceal. However, it was revealed in stressed emotions. In contrast female entrepreneurs actively sought advice and expected emotional support from their spouses. These findings brought a new light to a gendered construction of coping mechanisms across genders, which may not only contribute towards both the family to business enrichment and entrepreneur's wellbeing literature.

**Table 7 Gendered expectations from spouse creating gendered coping and sense-making patterns**

Gender Ideology	Women	Men
Gendered Expectations of Support from Spouse causing Gendered Coping	<p>"Yes my husband was supportive as long as it didn't impinge on what he was doing, on the other hand to be fair to him, there were a lot of things that we did share, he wasn't able to give time during the day particularly, but once he was home in the evening, then it was his job to make sure that kids went to bed and shared things like that and actually he was also great to talk to about business issues"- <b>Eleanor, 66</b></p>	<p>"I would disguise a lot from my wife because I didn't want her to worry. I told her everything was in hands and things."- <b>Damien, 38</b></p>
	<p>"My husband has a very big career of his own, so he is very much focussed on that. he was not contributing in any form of discussion on business, it was solely my own professional activity, and in this sense I felt there was lack of support"- <b>Daniella, 48</b></p>	<p>"the wife...she is very worrier as a person.... I always kept this positive that if something doesn't work out, there is other stuff happening, and we are doing all this...you know just trying to sail it, some things that I said would work, didn't work but it doesn't mean we are buried in water. So I try as much as possible make her feel positive and that's because her mind-set is very ...negative....I would plod to myself I would be very quiet, lonely and that that comes from dealing with everything myself cause I would tell wife 'everything's going fine, it just takes time', am just trying to stay positive but inside just working the way through."-<b>Vincent,36</b></p>
	<p>"I used my husband quiet a lot to ask things because he had the experience of running his own business."-<b>Catherine, 55</b></p>	<p>"of course trying to distance the family, well my wife from that was really difficult, she didn't have a clue mostly what was going on which is fine....cause then she worries and she worries needlessly"- <b>Isaac,45</b></p>
	<p>"He just didn't want to talk about the finances or the plans or the orderings and things like that. He made me feel very isolated"- <b>Irene, 40</b></p>	<p>"I try quite hard not to let these things impact the family because that's for me to deal with."- <b>Edward, 50</b></p>
Gendered Sense-Making	<p>"well nobody stood in my way because they weren't allowed to but....i didn't get an awful lot of support....I didn't ask for any financial support. Emotional support, words of encouragement...I didn't get much of that. I didn't get much negativity but I didn't get much of positivity either." – <b>Demi, 47</b></p>	<p><b>Outlier;</b> My wife and I owned the business and a friend of mine was one of the directors, so they were all quite philosophical ...I took it the worst... for me it was like bereavement...for me personally it was bereavement... I was absolutely destroyed...I actually was physically crying at one point myself when it actually happened- <b>Ivan, 52</b></p>
	<p>"But also my husband became very jealous and very....he didn't want me</p>	<p>"My wife was COMPLETELY against it. And that was a real lesson for me. If your partner,</p>

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travelling and <long pause>...you know...The big irony of it was the whole story of the business, and the story I was basically selling was his story, it was his family and his traditions and I became really proud of that and became really emotionally involved in that...so he being unsupportive was really hard because it felt like he didn't appreciate what I thought of him so it was really really difficult"- **Irene, 40**

"It was more or less personal ...my new relationship broke down again so I felt like oh god...I failed at my first marriage, and now I got somebody else and I have a son from him and it collapsed again so ...so many things and I was like Okay...you can't work a relationship, so maybe you can't work a business either." – **Carol, 45**

"I had tried to have anybody to have relationship with here, they cannot grasp that first and foremost is my business because that's been my life alright...and I can understand their point that they should be... but it has been my life for so long that it has got to come first but I think it's a major major issue with men and women....and even though men can be very supportive I do find somewhere along the route they are not always supportive"- **Debra, 64**

your spouse, your most significant other is against what you are doing, it's a COMPLETE waste of time...to do any of this business."- **Idris, 57**

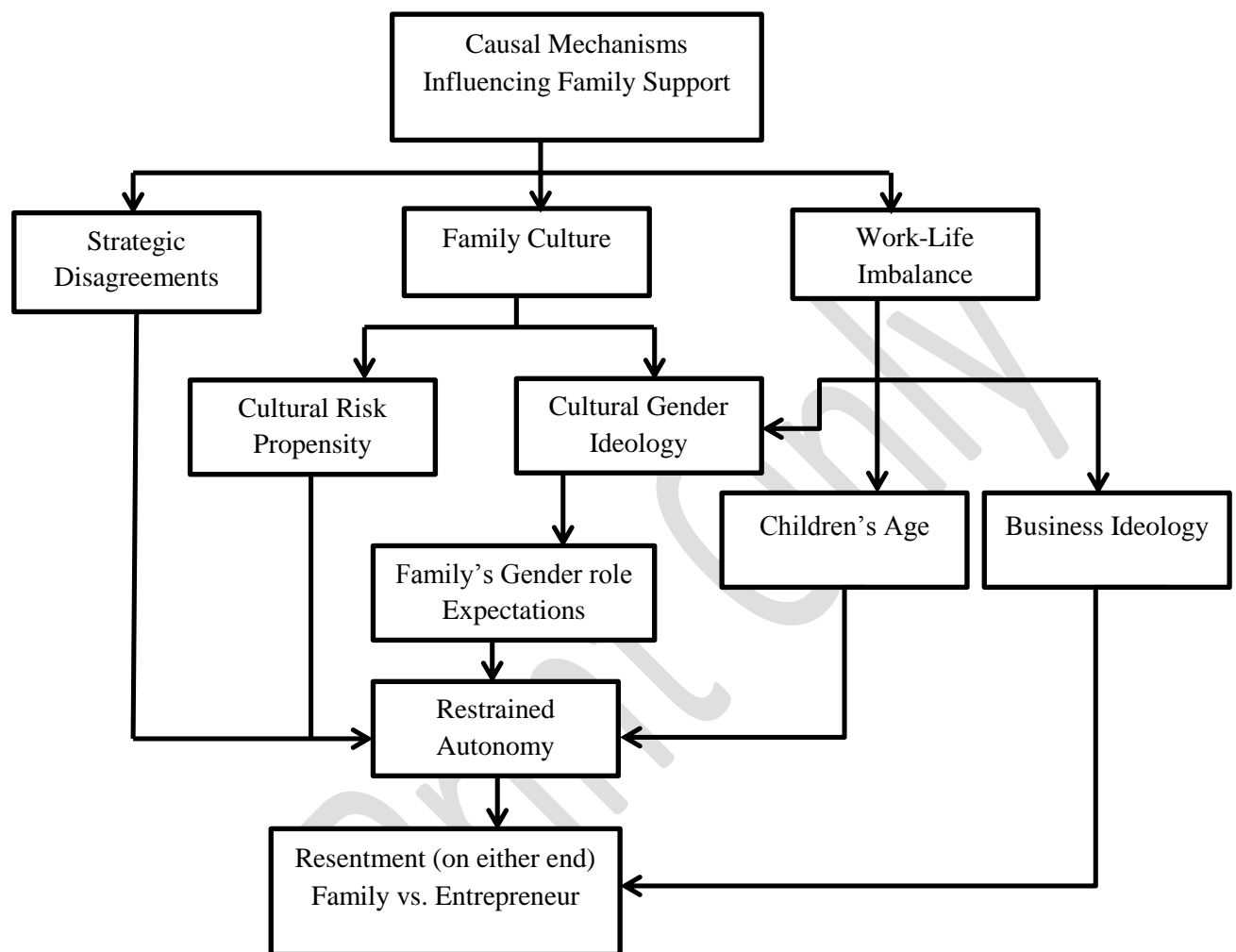
"It was difficult, it really was difficult and not just with the business closing, it was the effect the business closing had perhaps on my wife, and that in turn had an effect on me, Emotionally it became quite difficult during the whole process because I think my wife was affected by it...The worst time was when I wasn't coping mentally at all, but more with the domestic situation...<pause> I could deal with the work situation but <laugh> I don't know it became a bit difficult in the house, I'll put it that way.."- **Isaac, 45**

"I won't say I'm over it, part of me still sometimes wake up and regret about it. And it also ultimately contributed to end up my marriage so <chuckle> it's been last few years my wife and I... soo...that didn't help because we were seeing financial problems to pay off our debts so we ended up with long term financial problems so it had impact on my personal life- **Ivan, 52**

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Irene's work-life imbalance due to her growth-oriented work ideology (see table 7) exhibits the powerful influence of the challenges faced by ambitious women to run and grow their businesses, which suggests patriarchal expectations hinder their ambitions. It was straightforward to associate this with the female gender, had the exploration been done across female cases only, but further investigation of male entrepreneurs cases highlighted similar interference faced by them too. They did not associate this with 'jealousy' or envy on the spouse's part but to 'lack of work-family life balance' or to 'financial uncertainty' causing the negative, particularly strong influence of work-family life imbalance which has been underestimated in the entrepreneurship research. Figure 2 illustrates these emerged findings

and shows a rounded view of family's support being affected by deep-rooted contextual conditions.



**Figure 2 Causal Mechanisms and Influencing Factors affecting Family Support**

Table 8 summarizes the emerged structural patterns of the data that did not have a direct influence on the 'exit' agency of the entrepreneurs, but impacted on them and influenced their business experience. Apart from 'painful recovery', the rest were moderated by the entrepreneur's gender and their social position associated with it. The table further suggests that entrepreneurial experience across male and female entrepreneurs is gendered as well. Varying cognitive and behavioural patterns affirm gender's strong (not necessarily positive) influence on entrepreneur's sense-making, which in result impacted their well-being - a finding which was not expected but strongly emerged for the research data.

**Table 8 Contextual Structures Influencing Entrepreneur and their business journey**

<b>Emergед Pattern</b>	<b>Influencing Tendencies</b>	<b>Underlying Causal Mechanism</b>	<b>Impact on Entrepreneur</b>	<b>Influence of Gender</b>
Gendered Spousal Expectations	Lack of Confidence	Traditional Gender Ideology	Strong	Relevant
Gendered ownership	Gendered Spousal Expectations	Entrepreneurial Identity, Gender Role dynamics	Strong	Relevant
Gendered Sense-making	Psychological Capital, Gendered Spousal Expectations	Religion Cultural Gender Ideology, Family Embeddedness	Strong	Relevant
Gendered Coping	Negative Family Embeddedness	Cultural Gender Ideology Cultural Risk propensity	Strong	Relevant
Painful Recovery	Negative Emotions e.g. Isolation, Betrayal, Regret	Negative Family Embeddedness	Strong	Irrelevant
Entrepreneurial Identity	Perception of business acumen, psychological attachment	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy, Positive family Embeddedness	Indirect	Irrelevant

## Discussion

The study began with several expectations drawn from existing theory and research. First, it was expected that female entrepreneurs would be more strongly affected by the family and face work-family conflicts as found in prior studies (Hsu et al., 2016; Jayawarna et al., 2020). However, CR analysis of the data resulted in very different outcomes. It showed that socially constructed gender identities create coping difficulties for men as well. Surprisingly, male entrepreneurs faced a stronger decisive role from their spouses than female entrepreneurs. As their income was the primary source to run the household, their business decision affected the family significantly. This resulted in a stronger resistance from their spouse. It was expected that traditional gender role dynamics in the household were behind the higher exit rate among women, but it is a complex combination of an entrepreneur's self-employment motivation,

business ideology, family's gender ideology, family's risk propensity that shapes up the business sustainability and exit decision. One of the constructs is indeed the gender role ideology which defined the work-life balance of the entrepreneur, but also the business ideology- whether they had a growth-oriented business ideology or quality of life-oriented, and the type of industry too. One may argue that women entrepreneurs' secondary status in the family income is due to traditional gender role dynamics, which impacts their significance in the household but apart from a few women, all the rest stressed maintaining a quality of life than having a growth-oriented business. Even the single women, without the responsibility of children and families, had their income as their only source of income, preferred to maintain the quality of their life while guarding their autonomy and earning enough to have the lifestyle of their choice.

Findings proved female entrepreneurs tended more to create work-family synergies but also highlighted socially constructed gender identities not only affecting how they coped with their business but also shaped up spousal expectations in gendered ways. These results resonate with (Nikina et al., 2015) who found that spouse contributions partially mirror the traditional roles of women and men among female entrepreneurs with husbands contributing more regarding business planning, budgeting, and technical support. Women entrepreneurs regarded discussing their business with their spouses who were not involved in the business as a part of emotional support getting from spouses, whereas male entrepreneurs did not have any such expectations. They demonstrated the opposite behaviour of isolating their families from the business worries, a pattern which was regarded as deceit and sexist by Ahl & Marlow (2012) who suggested this normative practice positions, women, as impediments and an exemplar of feminine weakness. This paper argues that the socially constructed gender ideology affects entrepreneur's family in an equal capacity as well. Conflicting business

ideology and conflicting gender ideology against traditional gender roles mediate the work-life balance.

Literature exploring entrepreneur's sense-making of their negative exit experiences has indirectly highlighted family's influence on entrepreneur's coping and grief recovery. Singh et al. (2015) found failed entrepreneurs expected negative judgement and social stigmatisation, castigating themselves for disappointing family members. They also reported entrepreneurs feeling ostracised by their friends and family which negatively affected their self-esteem, confidence and intention to re-enter. Cope (2011) confirmed the way social support is embedded in entrepreneur's context impacts their grief recovery process. Entrepreneurs, who tried to hide their business challenges to protect their families reported more isolation and adverse outcomes in the longer run. To the best of our knowledge, no study has explored the gendered influence of family on the aftermath of the business exits. This research makes a significant contribution towards how one perceives an entrepreneurial experience and hence the possibility of remaining in an entrepreneurial career. Our research found that coping and recovery mechanism is gendered as well. Future research can actively explore this gendered coping mechanism which not only influenced entrepreneur's psychological capital but also shaped the kind of support they expected from their families.

### **Limitations**

The main limitation of this research is the opportunistic sampling due to the lack of volunteers who were willing to share their exit experiences which has been confirmed by prior studies conducting negative business exit experiences (Byrne & Shepherd, 2013; Cope, 2011). This resulted in the sample not being controlled by the type of industry. While exploring the family embeddedness structure, results revealed significant differences in work-family interface for entrepreneurs in different industries. Entrepreneurs with their business ventures in the hospitality industry and retail services cited business demanding more time to

run their business to ‘make a profitable living and to run a household’ in comparison to the entrepreneurs running their business in service industries and offered intangible products in the form of their consultation in multiple domains. Future research could control the industry and size of the business to explore if the patterns of similarities persist. Secondly, despite having an in-depth insight into entrepreneur’s life, our results cannot be generalised and only open the possibility of exploring other gendered structures shaping up entrepreneur’s business trajectory. This research substantiates the importance of entrepreneur’s psychological well-being contingent to positive family embeddedness influencing their business survival, coping and possible re-entry after a negative experience. We also acknowledge that gender and family embeddedness has been explored across the male and female sample only, whereas the term ‘gender’ has now been evolved as a non-binary so future research can further delve into the unexplored territories to make the entrepreneurship literature more inclusive.

The empirical evidence presented highlights how associating an emerged pattern with one gender created a gender bias, but assessing it across both genders neutralised that bias by seeking the underlying cause of that pattern which affected both genders in a similar capacity. It further demonstrated how the dichotomy between the two genders disappears as ‘male’ gender, ages, which shows the gendered social conditioning regarding juggling career and family spheres only subsided with time. At an older age, male respondents recognised the strains of imposing masculinity on their wellbeing and happiness, which surprisingly was acknowledged by women from a young age. This highlights the socially conditioned gendering and its influence on entrepreneurial ambitions.

The aim of this study has not been to highlight the differences but to highlight the consequences of these differences. The research design has been exploratory, which

encourages future research to explore 'gendering' further, by empathising and humanizing all gender identities.

## **Conclusion**

The rationale built after reviewing this literature suggests that family embeddedness is particularly highlighted in female entrepreneurship, and to move from a gendered discourse, it is essential if these gendered structures are explored across multiple gender identities.

Qualitative techniques focusing on non-economic aspects of a business experience in this study have opened the research paradigm to areas that have not been researched before. It has provided gender-neutral empirical findings regarding family and business; the aim was to challenge the masculinised normative entrepreneurial persona, which prior feminist research suggested was creating a gender bias by measuring women against masculine values and declaring them deficient. Similarly, affiliating children and other household determinants with women only, also genders the entrepreneurial discourse, reducing male entrepreneurs to objective dimensions, i.e. the normative masculine entrepreneurial persona which we found is fictional. Family embedded structures influenced male entrepreneurs in a similar emotional way as female entrepreneurs. Although the male sample predominantly had the supposed luxury of having traditional gender role dynamics in the household which is gendered and hence assumed to be worked in their favour, what has not been discussed before is, that to fill in the normative role of the breadwinner of the house, increased the financial uncertainty of their household which created more resistance from their families, resulting in gendered 'macho man' coping to fulfil the 'normative masculine persona'. Entrepreneurial behaviour is broader than one categorised as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. This causes further gender division, particularly in how entrepreneur makes sense of their business experience and what they attribute their challenges to. There is a need to neutralise gender by neutralising homemaking or running a business, dissociating it from a particular gender. Media can play a

crucial role in that as Gill & Schraff (2011) confirmed it is the most influential source of contemporary reality construction.

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