ENCOUNTERS WITH BUREAUCRACY: THE CASE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ANKARA

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ABSTRACT

ENCOUNTERS WITH BUREAUCRACY: THE CASE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ANKARA

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This study examines women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy in Ankara by conceptualizing bureaucracy not as a neutral chain of procedures but as a gendered structure reproduced through everyday routines. Building on feminist theory, it focuses on bureaucratic encounters across two stages of entrepreneurship, establishment and running, and analyzes how these encounters are shaped by masculine-coded norms embedded in bureaucratic practices. The study draws on 16 semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs in Ankara conducted in September and October 2025 and a thematic, intersectional analysis of these qualitative data.

Findings show that gendered bureaucracy rarely takes the form of explicit exclusion. Instead, it operates through accumulative micro-practices and discretionary routines, including unclear guidance, unexplained referrals, unjustified slowdowns, moralizing or paternalistic communication, flirtation that undermines professionalism, and recurring assumptions that women are not primary decision makers. These dynamics weaken the promise of procedural rationality by making speed, clarity, and outcomes

depend not only on written requirements but also on street-level interpretation, discretion, and the conditional recognition of women's authority. Across both the establishment and running stages, a central mechanism is mediated legitimacy. Women are often positioned as needing male-coded authority to be taken seriously and are at times implicitly pushed toward male intermediaries. Women entrepreneurs respond through strategies to remain visible and credible, including performing authority, managing self-presentation, adopting a more masculinized demeanor in interaction, and using networks and intermediaries selectively.

By foregrounding how rules, discretionary implementation, and everyday interaction intersect across stages, the study contributes to scholarship on women's entrepreneurship and gendered bureaucracy.

Keywords: Gendered Bureaucracy, Women Entrepreneurs, Street-Level Discretion, Encounters with Bureaucracy, Ankara

ÖZ

BÜROKRASİYLE KARŞILAŞMALAR: ANKARA'DAKİ KADIN GİRİŞİMCİLER ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu çalışma, Ankara'daki kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle karşılaşmalarını, bürokrasiyi tarafsız bir prosedürler zinciri olarak değil, gündelik rutinler aracılığıyla yeniden üretilen cinsiyetli bir yapı olarak kavramsallaştırarak incelemektedir. Feminist kuramdan hareketle çalışma, girişimciliğin iki aşaması olan kuruluş ve yürütme aşamalarındaki bürokratik karşılaşmalara odaklanmakta ve bu karşılaşmaların bürokratik uygulamalara içkin eril kodlanmış normlar tarafından nasıl şekillendiğini analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Eylül ve Ekim 2025'te Ankara'da kadın girişimcilerle gerçekleştirilen 16 yarı yapılandırılmış mülakata ve bu nitel verilerin tematik ve kesişimsel analizine dayanmaktadır.

Bulgular, cinsiyetli bürokrasinin nadiren açık dışlama biçiminde ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Bunun yerine, belirsiz yönlendirmeler, açıklanmayan sevkler, gerekçesiz yavaşlatmalar, ahlakçı ya da paternalist iletişim biçimleri, profesyonelliği zedeleyen flörtöz tutumlar ve kadınların birincil karar verici olmadıklarına dair tekrar eden varsayımlar gibi birikimli mikro-pratikler ve takdir yetkisine dayalı rutinler aracılığıyla işlemektedir. Bu dinamikler, hızın, açıklığın ve sonuçların yalnızca yazılı

kurallara değil; aynı zamanda sokak düzeyindeki yorumlara, takdir yetkisine ve kadınların otoritelerinin koşullu olarak tanınmasına bağlı hâle gelmesi yoluyla prosedürel rasyonalite vaadini zayıflatmaktadır. Hem kuruluş hem de yürütme aşamalarında merkezi bir mekanizma olarak aracılanmış meşruiyet öne çıkmaktadır. Kadınlar, ciddiye alınabilmek için çoğu zaman eril kodlanmış bir otoriteye ihtiyaç duyan özneler olarak konumlandırılmakta ve kimi zaman örtük biçimde erkek aracıların kullanımına yönlendirilmektedir. Kadın girişimciler ise görünür ve güvenilir kalabilmek için otorite sergileme, öz-sunumlarını yönetme, etkileşimlerde daha maskülen bir duruş benimseme ve ağları ile aracıları seçici biçimde kullanma gibi stratejiler geliştirmektedir.

Kuralların, takdir yetkisine dayalı uygulamaların ve gündelik etkileşimlerin girişimciliğin farklı aşamalarında nasıl kesiştiğini görünür kılan bu çalışma, kadın girişimciliği ve cinsiyetli bürokrasi literatürüne katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsiyetli Bürokrasi, Kadın Girişimciler, Sokak Düzeyi Takdir Yetkisi, Bürokrasiyle Karşılaşmalar, Ankara.

To my beloved grandmother, Afet Koçak, proudly watching over me from heaven…

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Türkiye)
BİGG	Individul Young Entrepreneur
BSc	Bachelor of Science
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KAGİDER	The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Türkiye
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization
MERSİS	Central Registry Record System
METU	Middle East Technical University
MSc	Master of Science
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPG	New Public Governance
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Public Administration
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SGK	Social Security Institution (Türkiye)
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye
TÜBİTAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute
TÜSİAD	Turkish Industry and Business Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VAT	Value-Added Tax
WB	World Bank

İŞKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
TKDK	Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution
KEDV	Foundation for the Support of Women's Work
KADAV	Women’s Solidarity Foundation
MEKSA	Vocational Training and Small Industrial Support Foundation
ABİGEM	European Turkish Business Development Center
ANGIKAD	Ankara Business Women Entrepreneurs and Enchancement Association
TTGV	Technology Development Foundation of Türkiye
TESKOMB	The Central Union of Tradesmen and Craftsmen Credit and Guarantee Cooperatives of Türkiye
COSME	Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, women's entrepreneurship has become a highly visible policy ideal and a widely celebrated route to economic participation. Yet, the everyday realities of "becoming" and "being" an entrepreneur rarely unfold in a frictionless market space. They unfold in offices, counters, forms, permits, signatures, inspections, and negotiations. In these settings, the bureaucracy is encountered not as an abstract institution but through procedures and people. For many entrepreneurs, such encounters are time-consuming and generate uncertainty (Hupe et al., 2015). For women entrepreneurs, they may additionally involve being assessed, questioned, or redirected in ways that reflect gendered expectations about who counts as a legitimate business actor.

This study starts from the premise that entrepreneurial activity is not shaped solely by market dynamics or individual effort but is institutionally embedded, with opportunities and constraints structured by ecosystem conditions and access to resources and support (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2019; Brush et al., 2019). At the same time, entrepreneurship is socially evaluated and differentially recognized within gendered entrepreneurial ecosystems, where norms of credibility and the "ideal entrepreneur" can reproduce masculine standards of legitimacy (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Bureaucracy is one of the key sites where recognition is granted or withheld, especially during the establishment and running stages of a business. Bureaucratic processes shape not only compliance and legality but also access to information, the speed of operation, and perceptions of fairness. These effects often materialize through face-to-face interaction in which authority, credibility, and competence are implicitly negotiated. By bringing women entrepreneurs' bureaucratic encounters into analytical focus, the

study treats bureaucracy not simply as “paperwork,” but as a lived institutional interface where gendered power relations can be reproduced, challenged, or managed.

In this context, this chapter introduces the aim, context, and guiding questions of the research and explains the scope and empirical design of the study. It then positions the study within the broader scholarship on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and gender, outlining why the relationship between the bureaucracy-entrepreneurship is a critical and under-examined dimension of women’s entrepreneurial experience in Türkiye, to be studied specifically in the context of Ankara.

1.1. Aim and Context of the Study

Bureaucracy is commonly associated with neutrality, formal rules, and predictable procedures. In the Weberian tradition, bureaucracy is typically conceptualized, from a purely technical and ideal-typical point of view, as a rational-legal form of authority in which administrative action is guided by written rules, hierarchical organization, and impersonal standards rather than personal preferences (Weber, 1947; Weber, 1978). In this idealized sense, bureaucracy is often imagined as operating in the same way for everyone, as if outcomes were produced simply by applying rules to cases. Yet, it is claimed that bureaucratic practice rarely functions as a purely mechanical translation of regulations into outcomes. Implementation frequently involves interpretation and judgement, i.e. discretion, particularly at the street level, where frontline officials translate general rules into concrete guidance and decisions in specific situations (Lipsky, 1980; Hupe et al., 2015). This discretionary space matters because it shapes how procedures are explained, what information is shared, how quickly processes move, and how legitimacy is practically granted in everyday encounters. Here, it should be emphasized that Weber did not conceptualize bureaucracy as a gendered structure, as his analytical focus was on bureaucracy as an organizational and legal form rather than on embodied actors or interactional dynamics. Accordingly, this study does not read gender bias into Weber’s intentions, but rather builds on and extends his framework

by analyzing how bureaucratic rationality is enacted within historically male-dominated social contexts. Nevertheless, once bureaucratic principles are institutionalized and enacted through concrete organizational practices, they intersect with broader social hierarchies and norms, including gender.

Public administration has historically sought to justify its authority by elevating particular images of professionalism, expertise, managerial competence, and public virtue; yet these justificatory images are themselves embedded in masculinized understandings of the public sphere, through which bureaucratic power is normalized and exercised as an implicitly gendered social structure rather than a purely technical one (Stivers, 2002). A feminist organizational perspective deepens this picture by suggesting that bureaucracy is not an administrative realm detached from social power relations (Acker, 1990; Acker, 1992; Britton, 2000; Martin, 2003). Bureaucratic routines and institutional cultures can be structured around historically masculinized ideals of rationality, hierarchy, and authority, which shape interactional expectations about who appears credible, competent, and entitled to represent an organization in official settings (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1991; Britton, 2000; Martin, 2003; Connell, 2006). Even when formal rules may be written in gender-neutral terms, gender can enter into scene through credibility assessments, informal norms, and taken-for-granted assumptions that operate within discretionary encounters and organizational routines (Acker, 1990; Lipsky, 1980). These dynamics become especially consequential in entrepreneurship, because entrepreneurs must repeatedly secure institutional recognition through registration, licensing, taxation, inspections, and ongoing compliance. In this sense, entrepreneurship is not only shaped by market conditions or individual resources but is also constituted through bureaucratic infrastructures that can enable, delay, or make entrepreneurial activity uncertain. With this in mind, the discussion now turns to how entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are defined in the literature, as a basis for specifying where bureaucracy and entrepreneurship intersect in practice.

Accordingly, although there are many different definitions for the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur in the literature, entrepreneurship can be broadly defined as a production factor that brings labor, capital, land and technology together

(Pehlivanoğlu & Kayan, 2019) and as a source of employment, innovation, social welfare, sustainable economic growth and development (Demirdağ, 2021). In this sense, entrepreneurs are often conceptualized as actors who shift economic resources from areas of lower productivity to areas of higher productivity (Drucker, 1985). Because entrepreneurship varies substantially across countries, and even across regions within the same country, a considerable amount of research has explained these differences through contextual determinants such as human capital, financial resources, unemployment, urbanization, natural opportunities, industrial clusters, and infrastructure (Karadağ, 2017). At the same time, entrepreneurial activity is not shaped solely by individual effort or market dynamics; it is also institutionally embedded, and the opportunities and constraints entrepreneurs face are structured by ecosystem conditions, including access to resources, participation, and support (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2019; Brush et al., 2019).

Within this broader landscape, women's entrepreneurship has become increasingly visible, both in policy agendas and in academic research, particularly since the 1990s. Parallel to women's growing participation in entrepreneurial activity, scholarship has expanded to examine women entrepreneurs' experiences, constraints, and strategies, and to question the assumption that entrepreneurial ecosystems operate as uniformly enabling and gender-neutral environments (Brush, 1992; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2019). Studies have addressed a wide range of themes, including the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and gender inequality, barriers to growth and sustainability, factors shaping women's access to finance and resources, and the effects of women's entrepreneurship on economic growth and employment (Kotiranta et al., 2010). These studies have also examined competitive strategy and growth trajectories (Ganesan, Kaur, & Maheshwari, 2002), support networks and access to social capital (Welter & Trettin, 2006), and work-family balancing strategies and their potential implications for sustainable business development (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2009). A persistent emphasis in the literature concerns the gendered nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems and evaluation criteria, including how women may be disadvantaged in access to opportunities and resources and how entrepreneurship discourse can reproduce masculine norms of the "ideal entrepreneur," sometimes

framing women-owned businesses through deficit-oriented assumptions (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). In this respect, women's entrepreneurship is not only an economic phenomenon but also a gendered social and institutional field.

In light of this background, Türkiye provides a particularly relevant context in which women's entrepreneurship has been publicly promoted while gendered inequalities in economic participation remain visible. Since the early 1990s, women's entrepreneurship has been widely supported and encouraged by state policies as well as by international organizations, civil society actors, and media discourses, often framed as a pathway to women's economic independence and as a response to women's unemployment (Ecevit, 2007). Türkiye also hosts entrepreneurial activity across diverse sectors, ranging from health and food and beverage to social media, smart mobility, e-commerce, and fintech (Dülger, 2018). At the same time, recent official figures still point to a pronounced gender imbalance within entrepreneurship. According to one set of statistics (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı, 2025), among the population aged 15+, employers totaled 1,324 thousand men (87.7%) compared to 186 thousand women (12.3%), while own-account workers comprised 4,244 thousand men (80.1%) and 1,054 thousand women (19.9%). In the combined category of "entrepreneurs" (employers and own-account workers), there were 5,568 thousand men (81.8%) and 1,240 thousand women (18.2%). Although the share of women entrepreneurs increased from 13.1% in 2002 to 18.2% in 2024, women's representation remains low, particularly among employers (12.3%) and within the overall entrepreneur category (18.2%).

The same source reports that the female employment rate rose from 25.3% in 2002 to 32.5% in 2024, while the share of informal employment among women declined from 72.5% in 2002 to 32.9% in 2024; these trends point to quantitative improvements in women's labor-market position, yet they also emphasize the persistence of gender imbalance in entrepreneurship. Read alongside the literature on male-dominated entrepreneurial norms, this distribution can be interpreted not only as a numerical pattern but also as an indicator of the social context in which women entrepreneurs operate, namely an entrepreneurial field in which masculine standards

of credibility, authority, and legitimacy may continue to shape everyday interactions and expectations (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Marlow & McAdam, 2013).

This is where bureaucracy becomes central to the context and purpose of the study. Entrepreneurship and bureaucracy are closely connected through the organizational form, procedural logic, legal frameworks, and institutional arrangements that shape entrepreneurial activity (Nistotskaya & Cingolani, 2016). Cross-national research shows that extensive regulations, procedural requirements, and time costs associated with bureaucratic processes can deter entrepreneurs from starting a new venture (Urbano & Turró, 2013). Administrative burdens linked to starting, running, or closing a business can also shape entrepreneurship levels within a region, while burdensome regulation in practice and the costs created by bureaucratic uncertainty may discourage entrepreneurial activity and undermine entrepreneurs' capacity to act more entrepreneurially (Veciana & Urbano, 2008). These insights matter because bureaucracy is not encountered only as technical compliance "on paper." It is lived through institutional routines, gatekeeping practices, and face-to-face encounters in which credibility is assessed, authority is negotiated, and legitimacy is practically granted or withheld.

To conceptualize why these encounters may be especially consequential for women, this study draws on sociological and organizational scholarship that highlights how bureaucracy can intersect with patriarchal power. As Weber (in Gerth & Mills, 1946) observed:

> "Bureaucratic and patriarchal structures are antagonistic in many ways, yet they have in common a most important peculiarity: permanence. In this respect they are both institutions of daily routine. (. . .) The patriarch is the "natural leader" of the daily routine. And in this respect, the bureaucratic structure is only the counter-image of patriarchalism transposed into rationality".

Within Weber's own framework, this comparison does not suggest that bureaucracy constitutes a form of patriarchy. Rather, it establishes a methodological analogy grounded in permanence and routinization within an evolutionary account of authority that traces a historical shift from personal and traditional domination to

rational-legal rule. From a feminist interpretive perspective, however, and without attributing this claim to Weber himself, the passage can be mobilized to examine how bureaucratic rationality may reorganize, rather than eliminate, gendered power relations through routinized procedures and seemingly objective rules. Building explicitly on this interpretive move, later feminist and critical organizational scholarship has argued that bureaucracy may function as a rationalized mode of patriarchy insofar as it sustains gendered hierarchies through institutional routines and organizational norms, even in the absence of overtly personal authority (Ramsay & Parker, 1991). Considered alongside research showing that entrepreneurship itself is often structured by masculine norms and patterned gendered disadvantages, women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucratic institutions and bureaucrats emerge as a plausible site where gendered power relations may be reproduced, negotiated, and at times contested (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Brush et al., 2019).

Although the literature on women's entrepreneurship continues to expand, much of this research has concentrated on themes such as motivations, access to finance, networks, and work-family balance, while the bureaucracy-entrepreneurship nexus has more often remained in the background as a lived dimension of women's entrepreneurial experience, constituted through face-to-face encounters and directly shaping everyday entrepreneurial practice (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Marlow & Patton, 2005; Welter & Trettin, 2006; Brush et al., 2019). Yet empirical evidence from Türkiye suggests that legal and bureaucratic obstacles occupy a meaningful place within the constraint landscape women entrepreneurs report. Tan's (2006) study, for instance, classifies the barriers women face in entrepreneurial activity as society's value judgments and beliefs about women (30%), lack of information (23%), obstacles created by competitors (20%), difficulty in finding capital (16%), and legal and bureaucratic obstacles (11%); within the latter category, an excessive number of transactions, prolonged processing times, compulsory donations, and frequent legislative changes emerge as particularly salient. Taken together, these findings suggest that bureaucracy may be experienced by women entrepreneurs not merely as a "technical" domain of administrative compliance, but as an institutional interface that generates time, cost, and uncertainty during both venture establishment and day-

to-day operation, and in which recognition, authority, and legitimacy may be tested through everyday interactions.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the interaction between women's entrepreneurship and bureaucracy by focusing on how women entrepreneurs encounter and navigate bureaucracy, bureaucratic processes and bureaucrats, and how these encounters may be shaped by gendered expectations and male-dominated institutional routines. More specifically, the study seeks to make visible the kinds of barriers women entrepreneurs may face when they come face-to-face with bureaucracy, including potential interactional challenges, particularly at the establishment and running phases of their entrepreneurship experience that may differ from men's experiences within the same administrative settings. It also aims to identify the coping and navigation strategies women entrepreneurs develop in response to bureaucratic demands. By bringing the bureaucratic dimension into analytical focus, the thesis aims to contribute a more institutionally grounded and interaction-sensitive understanding of women's entrepreneurship, highlighting the bureaucracy-entrepreneurship nexus as a critical site where gendered inequalities can become practically consequential in entrepreneurial life.

1.2. Research Questions

Over the past three decades, research on women's entrepreneurship has expanded substantially and has generated important findings on the characteristics of women entrepreneurs, the motivations that shape women's entry into entrepreneurship, and the ways entrepreneurship is framed in relation to women's empowerment (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2009; Ganesan, Kaur, & Maheshwari, 2002; Welter & Trettin, 2006). Studies have examined, among other themes, the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and gender inequality, barriers to business growth and sustainability, constraints on access to finance and resources, and the broader effects of women's entrepreneurship on economic growth and employment (Brush, 1992; Kotiranta et al., 2010). A sizeable part of this literature also focuses on the strategies women entrepreneurs develop to balance family and business responsibilities, to build and mobilize networks, and to strengthen competitive advantage and growth

trajectories (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2009; Ganesan, Kaur, & Maheshwari, 2002; Welter & Trettin, 2006). In addition, access to finance has remained a central concern, with research showing that gendered barriers in credit markets and external financing can have lasting negative effects on venture performance and sustainability (Lins & Lutz, 2016; Marlow & Patton, 2005; Wang et al., 2022).

Despite this growth, the field still exhibits important conceptual and theoretical gaps. Mainstream entrepreneurship research tends to privilege individual-level explanations, including opportunity recognition, risk-taking, and human capital, while treating the institutional environment as a largely neutral backdrop (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2009; Ganesan, Kaur, & Maheshwari, 2002; Welter & Trettin, 2006). Yet scholarship on entrepreneurial ecosystems has emphasized that the assumption of equal access to resources, participation, and support is not always borne out in practice, and that women are frequently disadvantaged across multiple dimensions of the ecosystem (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2019; Brush et al., 2019). From a feminist perspective, entrepreneurship is not only an economic activity but also a gendered social field shaped by norms, hierarchies, and everyday power relations. This perspective suggests that it is necessary to examine not only why women become entrepreneurs, but also how entrepreneurial experience is organized through institutional processes and how it is enabled, constrained, or contested through those processes (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Marlow & McAdam, 2013).

It is within this problem space that bureaucracy becomes analytically central. Bureaucratic procedures do not merely regulate entrepreneurship; particularly during the establishment stage and the running stage, they structure access to legality, licenses, resources, and legitimacy, and they often operate through face-to-face encounters. In these encounters, credibility is assessed, authority is negotiated, and institutional recognition is practically enacted. For women entrepreneurs, bureaucracy may thus be experienced not only as paperwork and rules, but also as a field of everyday interaction in which gendered bureaucratic practices can shape how one is treated, whether one is listened to, how one is directed, and to what extent one is taken seriously or questioned. Accordingly, this study aims to examine women

entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy both as a formal administrative system and as a gendered interactional arena, and it aims to understand how these encounters shape entrepreneurial trajectories in practice.

In light of this background, the study is structured around the following overarching research questions: How do women entrepreneurs in Ankara experience and manage bureaucratic processes during the establishment stage and the running stage, and how are these encounters shaped by gender norms and power relations? Addressing these questions entails examining which bureaucratic procedures women entrepreneurs most frequently confront across these two stages, how they narrate the interactional dimensions of bureaucratic encounters such as being treated as the official representative of the business, being directed or redirected, being questioned, and being taken seriously, and what practical consequences these encounters generate in terms of time, costs, delays, access to information, and perceptions of institutional fairness and legitimacy. The analysis also explores the coping and navigation strategies women entrepreneurs develop to manage the bureaucratic demands in the field of entrepreneurship. Finally, the study investigates how empowerment is made sense of in relation to bureaucracy, identifying the conditions under which entrepreneurship is experienced as enabling and the points at which boundaries become visible when bureaucratic processes are perceived and lived as gendered and hierarchical. Throughout the analysis, attention is paid to differentiation across sectors and social positions, tracing how diverse life conditions and resources shape patterns of bureaucratic encounter and the forms of response available to women entrepreneurs.

In doing so, the study aims to fill a gap in the literature. While the gendered nature of entrepreneurship has been widely discussed, the intersection between bureaucracy and women's entrepreneurship has rarely been examined as a constitutive site where gendered inequalities are reproduced, negotiated, and at times contested. By approaching bureaucracy not as a neutral administrative routine but as an ensemble of lived encounters that concretely shape entrepreneurial continuity and legitimacy, this study aims to contribute context-sensitive, narrative-based insights to the women's entrepreneurship and empowerment literature and offers a distinct analytical lens on the bureaucracy-entrepreneurship nexus.

1.3. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is to examine in depth the interaction between women entrepreneurs in Ankara and bureaucratic processes, with a particular focus on how bureaucracy is encountered both as a formal administrative system and as a gendered field of everyday interaction. The research concentrates on two central phases of the entrepreneurial journey, namely the establishment stage and the running stage, because these stages are where bureaucratic encounters become frequent, repetitive, and consequential for continuity, credibility, and survival. While the establishment stage and the running stage are analytically distinguished in this study, they are not treated as isolated or independent phases. Rather, the findings suggest a patterned continuity between the two stages. Early encounters with bureaucracy during establishment shape women entrepreneurs' subsequent exposure to discretion, predictability, and institutional treatment during the running stage. Difficulties related to recognition, access to information, and credibility at the point of establishment often carry forward, influencing inspection practices, compliance experiences, and the need for intermediaries over time. In this sense, the establishment stage functions as a formative moment that structures later bureaucratic encounters, producing a cumulative dynamic in which early interactional inequalities are reproduced and intensified during ongoing business operations.

By establishing a specific focus within the dynamic environment of a metropolitan city, Ankara, this study consciously foregrounds the situated experiences of women entrepreneurs operating in this city. The choice of Ankara does not rest on a claim that the city is universally representative; rather, as Türkiye's capital, its high administrative density and the greater visibility of bureaucratic processes in everyday economic life provide an analytically productive setting for examining how institutional procedures and street-level encounters shape entrepreneurial practice. It aims to capture the complex relationship between women's entrepreneurship and bureaucratic procedures by focusing temporally on contemporary experiences. This emphasis makes it possible to trace how bureaucratic procedures intersect with everyday business practices, where tensions and frictions emerge, and what kinds of

coping strategies are mobilized within Ankara's particular administrative, socio-economic, and cultural context.

Empirically, the study is based on qualitative data generated through semi-structured interviews, a method widely used in gender studies because women's experiences are often implicit, symbolic, emotional, and relational. The semi-structured format aims to balance structure and flexibility and enable participants to articulate experiences that may unfold outside institutional language. A total of 16 interviews were conducted in September and October 2025. Each interview took place in a single session, either face-to-face or online, and conversations were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The empirical scope is limited to women entrepreneurs who live in Ankara and who established their ventures in Ankara. The sampling was designed to enable comparison across different sectors and experience patterns, and the data were interpreted through a thematic analysis framework with an explicit intersectional sensitivity.

This study approaches women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy not merely as technical steps of administrative compliance, but as a gendered institutional interface where legitimacy and authority are produced and tested through everyday interactions. From an institutional perspective, bureaucratic processes generate transaction costs for all entrepreneurs, regardless of gender, including familiar administrative burdens such as time loss, extra costs, delays, and uncertainty (Williamson, 1981). However, this study aims to show that, for women entrepreneurs, bureaucratic encounters often entail an additional interactional burden that compounds these standard transaction costs. This burden can emerge when women are not automatically treated as authorized representatives of their businesses and must invest extra effort to establish legitimacy, to be taken seriously, or to respond to heightened questioning and implicit credibility tests.

The central argument of the study is that such encounters shape entrepreneurial trajectories not only procedurally, but also through gendered expectations and power relations, and that women entrepreneurs develop situated coping and navigation strategies under these conditions. Conceptually, this contribution lies in

demonstrating how gender operates as a source of double transaction cost, whereby interactional and legitimacy-related demands accumulate on top of the procedural costs already embedded in bureaucratic systems. It can also be expected that when gender intersects with other marginalized positions, such as non-heterosexual identity, these layered demands may intensify, producing what can be understood as a triple transaction cost, in which procedural, gendered, and sexuality-related forms of scrutiny and credibility work converge within bureaucratic encounters. Moreover, the study indicates that these costs may be further amplified through woman-to-woman interactions, where female bureaucrats reproduce gendered discipline via moralized judgements and selective rigidity, resulting in a multiple transaction cost in which procedural, interactional, sexuality-based, and intra-gender dynamics accumulate and reinforce one another.

To conclude, the thesis is organized in line with this analytical pathway. Chapter 2 establishes the conceptual ground by discussing bureaucracy, its transformations, and its gendered dimensions. Chapter 3 examines how entrepreneurship is historically and socially constituted as a gendered field and positions women's entrepreneurship within the relevant literature. Chapter 4 situates the analysis in Türkiye by tracing the historical and institutional trajectories of bureaucracy and entrepreneurship and framing their interplay from a gendered perspective. Chapter 5 presents the research design and methodology. Chapter 6 provides the empirical core by analyzing women entrepreneurs' bureaucratic encounters in Ankara, identifying common problems and patterns of differentiation at the establishment and running stages of the enterprises of the interviewed women entrepreneurs, as well as their coping strategies and recommendations. Finally, Chapter 7 synthesizes the findings and discusses the thesis's contributions and implications.

CHAPTER 2

BUREAUCRACY'S GENDER

Modern bureaucracy has long been conceptualized as a rational, rule-bound, and hierarchically organized structure, anchored in Max Weber's ideal-type model. From its roots, bureaucracy was designed to guarantee efficiency and predictability in administering the complex demands of capitalist economies, nation-states, and rapidly expanding administrative tasks. In this sense, the emergence of bureaucratic forms is closely intertwined with the rise of modern capitalism, which required highly structured and calculable systems to coordinate labor, resources, and power (Weber, 1947). This chapter begins with situating bureaucracy within this historical and theoretical context, tracing how its core principles such as its organizational structure, relationship with political authority, and the role of bureaucrats themselves, have shaped the evolution of modern administrative systems.

As noted in the Introduction, it is useful to briefly recall at this point that Weber's bureaucratic model was formulated as an abstract organizational ideal rather than as a theory of social actors or embodied identities. His concern lay with the legal-rational organization of authority, not with the gendered composition of bureaucratic roles or interactional practices. This clarification is important, because it allows the analysis to distinguish between Weber's conceptual intentions and the later institutional trajectories of bureaucratic systems. The gendered dimensions discussed in this chapter therefore do not stem from an attribution of bias to Weber's theory itself, but from an analytical effort to examine how bureaucratic rationality, once institutionalized, operates within social contexts historically structured by male dominance.

It is precisely at this point, where abstract organizational principles encounter concrete social relations, that feminist critiques become analytically relevant. While

the traditional Weberian model emphasizes impartiality, expertise, and a clear separation between politics and administration, critical scholars, particularly those working within feminist frameworks, have drawn attention to the hidden assumptions embedded in this supposedly neutral design (Ferguson, 1984; Cockburn, 1991; Ashcraft, 2006). These critiques show that the very characteristics suggested in ideal-type of bureaucracy, particularly with regards to technical rationality, hierarchical authority, and rigid role definitions, are not merely administrative necessities but also reflect broader social power relations, including gendered dynamics (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1991). Understanding how these dynamics operate requires unpacking both the internal logics of bureaucratic structures and the ways in which they interact with social and economic forces.

These gendered dynamics do not remain static, but are reshaped as bureaucratic systems evolve. Over time, shifts in public administration paradigms, including the emergence of New Public Management and New Public Governance, have transformed how bureaucracies function and how they engage with citizens. The shift from rigid, centralized administration to more flexible, networked, and participatory governance models has significantly impacted the way services are delivered and received (Fleischer & Reiners, 2021; Stanica et al., 2022). In this chapter, these shifts are treated as part of a broader transformation in how bureaucratic authority is organized and exercised, with particular attention to how discretion and implementation shape outcomes. In more details, this transformation brings to light the dual nature of bureaucracy as both a provider of services, through bureaucrats and especially street-level bureaucrats, and as an institutional setting that directly shapes citizens' access to rights and resources. The discretion exercised by these bureaucrats highlights how policy implementation is not purely mechanical but deeply influenced by social norms and biases (Lipsky, 1980; Hupe et al., 2015).

A feminist perspective deepens this analysis by demonstrating how bureaucratic structures and practices have historically favored male participation and authority, while marginalizing or overlooking women's roles and needs (Ferguson, 1984; Cockburn, 1991; Ashcraft, 2006). Feminist scholars argue that bureaucracy is fundamentally gendered, not only because men have dominated its leadership

positions, but also because the underlying principles of rationality, hierarchy, and standardized procedures reflect a masculinist ethic that privileges traits historically associated with men (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990). These gendered assumptions shape the ways bureaucracies define jobs, shape to whom services are provided and how they are delivered, and determine who has power to decide and who must accept decisions (Britton, 2000; Martin, 2003). This chapter also explores how these structural dynamics play out in everyday interactions between bureaucracies and citizens. Women, for instance, often experience unique barriers when they access services that are still organized around male-centric assumptions (Young, 1990; Walby, 2005). Moreover, the embedded discretion of street-level bureaucrats can either counteract or reinforce these patterns, depending on how individual biases and structural norms intersect (Lipsky, 1980; Diggs, 2022).

By bringing together historical, structural, and feminist critiques, this chapter makes clear that bureaucracy should not be seen solely as an administrative mechanism detached from social power dynamics. As feminist organizational scholars have emphasized, ethnicity, (dis)ability, age, and other social divisions also shape the texture of organizations (Ramsay & Parker, 1991) and are dimensions that warrant theorization and critical attention, although they are not the focus of this study. It is nevertheless hoped that some of the broader implications of the analysis developed here may also be applicable to these dimensions. Rather, this study focuses specifically on gender and examines bureaucracy as a dynamic site where gendered inequalities are produced, maintained, and sometimes challenged through institutional routines and everyday interactions. This understanding underscores the need to critically examine both the ways bureaucracies are organized and the everyday practices through which they deliver services and interact with diverse groups.

In sum, this chapter will present the conceptual foundations of bureaucracy, its historical transformation under capitalism and changing governance models, and the intertwined roles of bureaucrats, politics, and organizational design. It will then critically examine how these structural features have gendered effects, drawing on feminist perspectives to show how bureaucracy reproduces or challenges gender

inequalities in both service delivery and access. This layered analysis will provide a basis for understanding why bureaucracy remains a key site for analyzing power relations and why addressing its gendered dimensions is crucial for achieving more inclusive and responsive public administration.

2.1. Traditional (Weberian) Bureaucracy

The term bureaucracy, first used in 1745 by the French physiocrat economist Vincent de Gournay (Albrow, 1979) to emphasize the increasing efficiency of offices in public administration, occupies a prominent place in the history of administrative sciences. While some perceive bureaucracy as synonymous with public administration, others view it as an ideal form of organization, while still others define it as synonymous with inefficiency, cumbersome procedures, formalism, bureaucracy, and evasion of responsibility (Akçakaya, 2016; Sauvy, 1975). Even Gournay (cited in Albrow, 1979) criticized bureaucracy, which he saw as a serious illness that would harm France, by suggesting that offices, officials, secretaries, inspectors, and intendants were not appointed to serve the public interest, but rather, it seemed that the public interest was established for the sake of offices' existence.

Bureaucracy is recognized as a central element in the functioning of modern states, particularly since the its conceptual development by the German sociologist Max Weber in the early 20th century. Weber, in his "Economy and Society" (1978), delineates the key traits of the ideal-typical bureaucracy associated with the terms such as esteem, professionalization, hierarchical structure, standardized tasks, and depersonalized authority. In this sense, bureaucracy as an organizational form and structure of operation, has been particularly associated with the Weberian bureaucratic model or theory (Öztaş, 2015: 140-142). Weber's "ideal type" of bureaucracy, which is indeed not a form that can be observed in reality in its pure and complete form but rather a mental abstraction and qualification, has been characterized by its efficiency and rationalization (Şimşek, 1996) and separation of politics from administration, to act as the most appropriate form of state organization under capitalism. From a sociological perspective, bureaucracy refers to the organizational structures and procedures that enable the coordination of labor among

many individuals to achieve goals identified as “rational”, as specified by Weber (1947). In this manner, its ideal-type features include division of labor with explicit job titles and descriptions, formalized and written rules and procedures for task completion, performance-based hiring, evaluation, and rewards, application of universal standards based on formal position rather than personal preferences, and a “hierarchical” structure of authority delineating power relationships (Martin & Segal, 1977).

Historically, bureaucracy has been studied and examined by numerous scholars following Weber, exploring its various facets. For instance, according to Crozier (cited in Eryılmaz, 1993), the term “bureaucracy” has three distinct meanings. Firstly, it refers to governance through official channels, wherein state bodies operate under a powerful central authority and are staffed by designated and hierarchical officials. Secondly, it denotes a particular organizational structure characterized by its universality across various institutions over time, standardization of tasks and methods, and the dissociation of authority from individuals. Thirdly, in everyday usage, bureaucracy is often used in a negative sense, referring to red tape and burdensome administrative procedures, such as slow and repetitive procedures, unnecessary barriers, impersonal treatment, avoidance of responsibility, and practices that create significant difficulties for both public officials and recipients of bureaucratic services.

Weber’s concept of bureaucracy emerged in response to the evolving needs of society as it transitioned from traditional feudal systems to more rational and centralized forms of governance in the 19th century (Weber, 1978). This shift was driven by the demands for efficiency, effectiveness, and neutrality in public administration, which required a more structured and rule-based approach (Mommsen, 1989). Weber (1978) developed the model of bureaucracy to provide a systematic way of organizing large institutions and governments to handle the complexities of modern state functions and capitalist economies. Key features like hierarchy, division of labor, and competence became essential elements of what Weber defined as an “ideal-type” bureaucracy, setting the groundwork for modern administrative systems (Held, 1980).

To gain a deeper understanding of Weber's perspective on bureaucracy, it is crucial to examine several interconnected aspects of his analysis. First, exploring why Weber highlighted the need for the concept of bureaucracy helps clarify his motivations to establish a rational-legal system distinct from traditional and charismatic forms of authority. The link between capitalism and bureaucracy is then essential to analyze, as Weber (1978) argued that the growth of capitalism was both facilitated by and dependent on bureaucratic structures. Furthermore, understanding the organizational structure and the "ideal-type" bureaucracy sheds light on Weber's principles of efficiency and predictability. Examining the relationship between politics and bureaucracy is vital to comprehend how Weber (1978) perceived the separation between political decision-making and administrative implementation. Finally, studying the role of bureaucrats within this framework reveals their impact as executors of policy and their influence on service recipients. These aspects are intricately linked, highlighting how traditional bureaucracy serves as a fundamental mechanism in ensuring the stability and functioning of capitalist societies while maintaining political neutrality.

2.1.1. Conceptual Significance of Bureaucracy

The traditional understanding of bureaucracy dates back to the 19th century and is fundamentally linked to the seminal contributions of Max Weber to the study of organizational structures and authority. In a rapidly industrializing world characterized by increasing complexity and a need for efficient management, Weber (1978) recognized that traditional forms of authority were insufficient to address the new challenges faced by modern states and organizations. Bureaucracy, as he conceptualized it, is a formal and intricate organizational system established to regulate and enhance the efficiency of management within institutions and governments. This system encompasses essential elements such as authority, responsibilities, procedures, and hierarchical structures, which together create an environment conducive to stability and predictability in administrative functions, and this, according to Weber, constitutes the framework of "rational-legal" authority (Weber quoted in Roth & Wittich, 1978). Weber (1978) developed the concept of bureaucracy in response to the increasing complexities of modern states and

capitalist economies. By the late 19th century, rapid industrialization, urbanization, and globalization had heightened the state's responsibilities in managing economic and social order, creating a need for more rational, organized, and efficient systems of administration (Gerth & Mills, 1946). According to Weber, traditional forms of authority, such as those based on feudal or charismatic rule, were inadequate to handle the new challenges posed by modern society. He argued that a "rational-legal authority," grounded in laws and formal rules, was necessary to create a stable and predictable framework for managing these complexities (Weber, 1947). This is why bureaucracy is conceptually significant not only as an organizational form, but as a solution to the problem of how authority can operate predictably in large-scale settings.

Weber (1947) also saw a strong connection between the rise of capitalism and the development of bureaucratic structures. As industrial societies grew more complex, the demands of capitalism, such as efficiency, accountability, predictability, and calculability, could only be met through bureaucratic systems (Weber, 1947). Its conceptual significance lies in its capacity to provide the stable, rule-based coordination that modern capitalist organization requires, allowing economic and administrative activity to be managed in a predictable and calculable way beyond personal discretion. In Weber's view, bureaucracy was not only an essential tool for the administration of the state but also a vital mechanism for sustaining capitalist economies. Bureaucratic structures, with their reliance on formal procedures and rules, provided an effective organizational model for managing large-scale institutions and ensuring the smooth operation of capitalist production processes (Weber, 1978). For this reason, Weber argued that these demands could not be met through traditional forms of authority that relied on personal discretion or charismatic leadership; instead, bureaucratic systems, with their emphasis on expertise, meritocracy, and institutional loyalty, provide a rational basis for decision-making (Roth & Wittich, 1978). Thus, bureaucracy played a dual role in ensuring both the efficient functioning of government and the sustainability of capitalist economic relations (Bendix, 1977), offering a stable and predictable framework for public administration and economic activity (Weber, 1947).

Finally, Weber's understanding of bureaucracy is closely tied to how he explains authority and legitimacy in modern societies. Legitimacy can be established in three

ways: rationally, through the acceptance of legal rules and the authority of appointed officials; traditionally, through respect for long-standing customs and their enforcers; and charismatically, through recognition of a leader's exceptional qualities and the authority derived from them (Rosser, 2018). Taken together, these distinctions position bureaucracy as the organizational expression of rational-legal authority, organized through formal rules and procedures to standardize administration and make decision-making predictable. At the same time, bureaucracy does not develop in a social vacuum; its expansion and consolidation have historically been intertwined with broader economic transformations and the growth of modern capitalist organization. Accordingly, the next sub-section examines this linkage more directly by focusing on the relationship between capitalism and bureaucracy.

2.1.2. Capitalism and Bureaucracy

The intricate relationship between capitalism and bureaucracy is pivotal in Weber's analysis. He contended that the rise of capitalism necessitated a bureaucratic structure to manage economic activities efficiently and maintain order in a market-driven society. In this context, bureaucracy plays a dual role; it is both a product of capitalist development and a facilitator of economic growth. Weber posited that bureaucratic systems emerged to coordinate the complex activities of businesses and governments, thus ensuring that decisions could be made efficiently and executed uniformly (Sager & Rosser, 2009).

Weber (1978) emphasized that capitalist economies require a reliable mechanism for the allocation of resources and the management of labor. Bureaucracy, with its clear hierarchies and formalized procedures, provides the necessary framework for these activities. This framework not only enables organizations to respond effectively to market demands but also promotes stability and predictability in business practices. Moreover, the bureaucratic model allows for the specialization of tasks, which is essential in a capitalist economy where efficiency is paramount.

Another critical element of Weber's analysis is how bureaucracy legitimizes authority in a capitalist context. Unlike traditional administrative systems, where

authority is based on personal loyalty or hereditary rights, bureaucratic authority is rooted in the legal-rational framework. This system allows for the efficient management of resources, the application of laws, and the regulation of economic activities without dependence on individual discretion (Weber, 1978). This rational-legal authority is essential for creating trust in markets and ensuring that economic actors can rely on predictable rules and procedures (Held, 1980).

Weber (1978) also acknowledged the potential downsides of bureaucratic structures, particularly their tendency toward rigidity and the "iron cage" of rationalization, where the focus on efficiency and rules can stifle innovation and personal freedom. However, he believed that in a capitalist economy, the trade-off was necessary for ensuring long-term stability and functionality (Swingewood, 1998). Bureaucracy, despite its shortcomings, was seen as the most suitable organizational form for managing the complex and dynamic nature of capitalist production and administration (Mommsen, 1989).

In summary, Weber argued that the development of bureaucracy was both a response to and a facilitator of capitalist expansion. Bureaucratic systems, with their emphasis on rules, hierarchy, and rational decision-making, provided the structural foundation for managing the complexities of modern economies. In doing so, they not only enhanced the efficiency of the state but also legitimized the authority needed to regulate and sustain capitalist systems (Collins, 1986). Thus, Weber viewed bureaucracy as an integral part of the capitalist apparatus, necessary for ensuring both economic growth and administrative order.

2.1.3. Organizational Structure and Ideal-Type Bureaucracy

Weber (1978) argued that decision-making processes must be based on established rules and procedures, often adopting a centralized approach. Embracing a centralized management approach, bureaucracy emphasizes central authority in decision-making processes and highlights standardization and the enforcement of rules in these processes. This traditional bureaucratic model is organized in a hierarchical structure with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities. In this model, subordinates comply

with the orders of their superiors because they are expected to act rationally, logically, and in accordance with the established legal structure of the organization. On the other hand, obedience based on personal qualities and abilities of the superior is prohibited, meaning that it is expected there will be no room for arbitrary rule in this model (Eren, 1991).

According to Weber, in an ideal bureaucracy, the effective fulfillment of tasks and the work required to accomplish these tasks necessitates that the authorities responsible for these duties operate under the command and supervision of higher-ranking authorities (Şimşek, 1996: 51-54). This hierarchical organization enables the standardization of public services and provides managers with extensive control (Weber et al., 1991). Such a structure enables the standardization of public services and provides managers with extensive control over their domains. The hierarchical arrangement allows for a clear chain of command, which facilitates accountability and ensures that organizational goals are met efficiently. This structure is not only effective for maintaining order but also ensures that public services can be delivered uniformly and efficiently.

As Bayırbağ and Göksel (2013) state, Weber's "ideal type" bureaucracy, characterized by instrumental rationality, operates based on principles such as hierarchy, well-defined roles, appointment, meritocracy, career advancement, tenure, regularity, institutional loyalty, and impersonality. At the helm of this structure is a non-bureaucrat leader, typically a politician. With these attributes, bureaucracy, when viewed purely from a technical standpoint, is considered to posses the highest level of rationality and the potential to achieve optimal efficiency. However, Weber (1978) does not merely regard bureaucracy as a specific organizational form but he embeds his analysis of bureaucracy within the broader economic and societal context of macro-level variables. As per his perspective, bureaucracy should function as a neutral instrument, drawing its authority from technical expertise. This ensures that bureaucracy remains easily scrutinizable, and the politicization of administration is averted (Bayırbağ & Göksel, 2013, p.158). Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy is built upon principles such as meritocracy, career advancement, and institutional loyalty. This framework ensures that individuals are selected and promoted based on their

qualifications and performance, thereby enhancing the overall competence of the organization. According to Weber (1978), this meritocratic approach not only improves bureaucratic functionality but also fosters a sense of commitment among employees, who perceive opportunities for advancement based on their efforts.

Furthermore, the implementation of ideal bureaucracy creates a clear hierarchy and a set of rules, making decision-making processes more systematic (Sager & Rosser, 2009, p. 1137). This hierarchical structure delineates roles and responsibilities, reducing uncertainty and thereby increasing organizational efficiency (Merton, 1957). Additionally, Weber's model emphasizes the rational and logical nature of bureaucratic structures, which allows organizations to be more adaptable to both external and internal dynamics (Kalberg, 1980).

Moreover, the emphasis on institutional loyalty within this model enhances employee engagement, as individuals are more likely to feel invested in an organization that values their contributions and offers a pathway for professional growth. This investment can lead to lower turnover rates and a more cohesive work environment (Kettl, 2000). The bureaucratic ethos promotes a culture of performance and accountability, ultimately resulting in improved service delivery and organizational effectiveness (Perry & Wise, 1990).

In conclusion, an ideal type serves as an analytical framework for comparing empirical observations (Sager & Rosser, 2009). Weber did not intend for it to be a descriptive or prescriptive account of how bureaucracy ought to operate. Instead, Weberian bureaucracy is integrated into his wider sociological theory and should be understood within its methodological, theoretical, and empirical contexts. This model is not standalone; it originates from Weber's historical examination of modernization and the development of the rational state, representing the essence of that process (Sager & Rosser, 2009).

Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy offers a comprehensive framework that not only enhances organizational performance but also strengthens employee loyalty. The implications of this model extend beyond bureaucratic efficiency, providing valuable insights into organizational behavior and management theories.

2.1.4. The Relationship Between Politics and Bureaucracy

Weber's understanding of bureaucracy encompasses not only management forms but also the dynamic relationships between political authority and bureaucracy. While defining bureaucracy as a rational, systematic, and hierarchical structure, Weber deeply analyzes its interaction with political processes (Wright, 1974). This sub-section examines the relationship between politics and bureaucracy within the framework of Weber's bureaucratic theory in an analytical manner.

Weber posited that a deeply ingrained dichotomy exists between democracy and bureaucracy. Within his theoretical framework, the tension between these two realms transcends a mere "informational fight," as originally used by Weber (1947), as a struggle between bureaucrats and parliament. Instead, the issue is significantly more profound. As a tool for "societalizing" power relations, bureaucracy has served and continues to serve as a primary instrument of power for those who manage the bureaucratic system. Weber (1947) emphasizes that rationally organized "societal action," i.e. bureaucracy, surpasses any resistance posed by "mass" or even "communal action."

Weber's theory analyzes the relationship between politics and bureaucracy under two main headings: the impact of politics on bureaucracy and the influence of bureaucracy on political authority (Beetham, 2018). These two aspects shape the governance dynamics of the modern state in a complementary manner.

Political authority is a significant factor determining the functioning of bureaucracy. Weber (1978) suggests that bureaucracy acts as an instrument of political will. Bureaucratic officials operate according to the directives of political leaders, which can call into question the claimed neutrality of bureaucracy (Ferguson, 2014). Politics plays a decisive role in shaping public policies and implementing them. Bureaucracy not only provides the mechanisms for the realization of these policies but also influences their feasibility.

Weber's insights are crucial for understanding how bureaucratic structures operate in modern democracies. For instance, political changes can directly affect the

functioning of bureaucracy. Changes in political power can lead to the reshaping of bureaucratic personnel and even necessitate a reevaluation of certain policies.

Conversely, bureaucracy also exerts a significant influence on political authority. Weber emphasizes that bureaucratic structures are equipped with expertise and professionalism, arguing that bureaucratic officials can shape political decisions through their knowledge and experience (Dahl, 1989). This suggests that bureaucracy can, to a certain extent, be decisive in political decision-making processes.

Bureaucratic officials can enhance the implementability of public policies through their expertise, which directly impacts the effectiveness of political authority. However, this influence can sometimes lead to conflicts between bureaucracy and politics. Bureaucratic hierarchies can, at times, hinder or slow down the implementation of political decisions. Thus, this tension between bureaucracy and politics reveals the complex nature of modern state (Sager & Rosser, 2009).

The relationship between politics and bureaucracy in Max Weber's understanding of bureaucracy emerges as a field of mutual interaction and dynamic tension. While politics directs bureaucracy, bureaucracy can also influence political processes. Weber's theory offers a framework for comprehending both the functioning of bureaucracy and the structure of political authority.

In conclusion, Weber's analysis of bureaucracy is intricately linked to the political context in which it operates. He argued that a clear demarcation between politics and administration is essential for the legitimacy of bureaucratic authority. In his view, bureaucracies should function as neutral instruments, drawing their authority from technical expertise rather than political affiliations. This perspective is crucial for understanding the legitimacy and efficiency of bureaucratic systems, as it helps to prevent the politicization of administrative processes. He emphasized that the bureaucratic structure must remain apolitical to function effectively, thus maintaining its legitimacy and authority, or its "technical superiority". This is particularly significant in the context of modern states, where bureaucracies are often tasked with

implementing political decisions. The expectation is that bureaucrats operate based on established rules and procedures rather than personal loyalty or political agendas, which could compromise the integrity of the administrative process.

2.1.5. The Role of Bureaucrats

The role of bureaucrats within Weber's framework is pivotal to the functioning of bureaucratic systems. Bureaucrats are tasked with implementing policies and decisions made by political leaders, ensuring that these are carried out within the established legal framework. This execution of duties requires a high degree of specialization and expertise, which Weber deemed essential for effective administration (Weber, 1978). In this context, bureaucrats act as intermediaries who translate political directives into actionable plans, bridging the gap between policy-making and practical implementation.

In this framework, the bureaucrat is seen as a professional whose role is to execute policies impartially and uphold the organization's structure. Weber (1978) recognized that this ideal role of bureaucrats is essential for ensuring that public administration remains accountable to the law and not to individual whims. This accountability is crucial for maintaining public trust in governmental institutions, as it establishes a clear expectation that decisions will be made based on established rules rather than personal biases or external pressures. The bureaucrat's obligation is to adhere to the rational-legal authority that underpins the bureaucratic system, thus reinforcing the overall stability and reliability of administration (Rosser, 2018).

Weber's vision of bureaucracy reflects a belief in the rationality of organizational processes. He argued that bureaucratic systems, through their structured procedures and clear hierarchies, are capable of achieving the highest level of efficiency (Henderson & Parsons, 1997). This efficiency is not merely an abstract ideal; it has practical implications for resource allocation, service delivery, and the overall effectiveness of government functions. However, this efficiency is contingent upon the bureaucrats' commitment to their roles and adherence to the established rules and procedures. In essence, the effectiveness of the bureaucratic system is a direct reflection of the dedication and professionalism of its bureaucrats.

Moreover, Weber's analysis highlights the potential challenges faced by bureaucrats, particularly in navigating the complexities of political influence and public expectations (Bartels, 2009). This aspect of his analysis underscores the often-precarious position of bureaucrats, who must operate within a dynamic political landscape while remaining steadfast in their commitment to the principles of neutrality and legality. Bureaucrats must balance the demands of political leaders with the need to maintain the integrity of the bureaucratic system. This balancing act is critical for sustaining the legitimacy of both bureaucratic authority and the policies they implement, as any perceived bias or deviation from established norms can undermine public confidence in governmental operations.

In summary, Weber's understanding of bureaucracy is not merely an examination of organizational structures; but also, a framework regarding the role of bureaucrats. These insights continue to resonate in contemporary discussions on public administration and governance. Bureaucrats, as the executors of policies within this framework, are positioned at the intersection of political directives and administrative implementation, emphasizing their responsibility in maintaining the integrity of the bureaucratic system. By navigating the complexities of political influence while adhering to established rules, bureaucrats ensure that the principles of accountability and efficiency are upheld. This dynamic is crucial in democratic societies, where the actions of bureaucrats are essential for public trust in state institutions. Weber's framework thus highlights the need for bureaucrats to balance their roles effectively, reinforcing their importance in shaping not only policy outcomes but also the perception of administration itself. As debates on accountability, efficiency, and public service persist, the role of bureaucrats remains central to understanding the complexities of modern organizational life.

2.2. Transformation of Bureaucracy

The traditional hegemonic Weberian understanding of bureaucracy has played a central role in modern state and public administration; however, it has also undergone significant transformations over time. This transformation has fundamentally been shaped by the structural effects of capitalism. The demands of

capitalism have prioritized efficiency and performance-oriented approaches in public administration, leading to the adoption of frameworks such as New Public Management (NPM) and governance. Consequently, this transformation has laid the groundwork for a reconfiguration of perceptions and roles related to bureaucracy (Harvey, 2005).

When examining the changes within bureaucracy, it is essential to approach it not only from the perspective of institutional structure and functioning but also through the interactions between service recipients and service providers. The importance of this approach lies in its emphasis that bureaucracy is not merely a structure confined to internal rules and management processes; rather, it exists in constant interaction with external actors, particularly citizens. This perspective provides an opportunity to better analyze the social dimensions of bureaucracy and the dynamic relationships among its actors. Thus, examining bureaucracy in this way allows for a comprehensive analysis of the capacity of management systems to respond to societal demands, as understanding the interactions between service recipients and providers offers a robust tool for analyzing the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of bureaucracy. This framework also contributes to understanding how bureaucracy demonstrates flexibility and transformation in response to societal demands and changing political-economic conditions. Furthermore, this viewpoint reveals both the role of service providers in shaping public policies and how the demands and expectations of service recipients transform bureaucratic structures.

As the complexity of administrative tasks grew, bureaucracy became dominant, establishing itself as the prevailing paradigm in public administration. Bureaucracy is viewed as the most effective means of organizing complex tasks; however, this hegemonic structure has faced various criticisms over time (Lipsky, 1980). Critics have argued that the traditional bureaucratic model is inadequate in addressing the dynamic and diverse needs of modern society, emphasizing the need for enhanced adaptability and responsiveness. These critiques highlight that bureaucracy must increase its flexibility and interaction with service recipients. At this point, it will be beneficial to examine the reasons behind these criticisms and the need for transformation in bureaucracy.

To understand the transformation in bureaucracy, it is essential to first examine Osborne's contention, which outlines the evolution of public policy implementation and public service delivery through three distinct design and delivery phases. These phases include the long-standing Public Administration (PA) from the late 19th century to the late 1970s/early 1980s; the New Public Management (NPM) until the early 21st century; and the New Public Governance (NPG) since then. According to Osborne (2006), the NPM period can be viewed as a relatively short-lived and transitional phase between the statist and bureaucratic tradition of Public Administration (PA) and the plural and pluralist tradition of the New Public Governance. Understanding this transformation is crucial for grasping the transformation of bureaucracy.

Hood (1991) defines the key elements of public administration as the dominance of the rule of law; a focus on implementing established rules and guidelines; a central role for "bureaucracy" in policy-making and implementation; a separation of "politics and administration" within public organizations; and the hegemony of professionals in public service delivery. These principles highlight the significance of predictability and uniformity in decision-making, which is often seen as one of the key strengths of the traditional Weberian model.

As a field of practice, public administration reached its zenith in the UK during the welfare state period from 1945 to 1979, a time when the state was anticipated to fulfill all social and economic needs of its citizens "from the cradle to the grave" (Osborne, 2006). Public Administration (PA) was conceived as the instrument for this paradigm, focusing on administrative processes to ensure equal treatment. However, despite its structured approach, the traditional bureaucratic model struggled to adapt to the increasingly diverse needs of society, as public demands eventually outstripped available resources. As their dominance waned, both the welfare state and public administration encountered increasing criticism from academics (Dunleavy, 1985) and political elites (Mishra, 1984).

Most notably, Chandler (1991) asserted that public administration had entered a state of terminal decline as a discipline, while Rhodes (1997) argued that it had become

merely a “eyewitness” in the areas of public policy implementation and service delivery. Faced with these criticisms, there was a push for reform that paved the way for the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) as an alternative that promised greater flexibility and responsiveness, particularly under the influence of critiques to welfare state and increasing New Right paradigm.

Hood (1991) identifies seven doctrines of NPM: hands-on professional management; explicit standards and measures of performance; increased emphasis on output controls; disaggregation of units; greater competition; promotion of private-sector management practices; and a focus on greater discipline and frugality in resource use. In addition to Hood’s doctrines, Pollitt (1995: 133) offers the introduction of more flexible working arrangements in public-sector organizations including short-term contracts, performance-related pay, and local bargaining and emphasizes the importance of service quality and responsiveness to service users.

The rise of New Public Management (NPM) from the late 1970s onwards introduced a new discourse on public policy implementation and service delivery, claiming that private-sector management techniques were superior to those used in Public Administration (PA). It was believed that applying these techniques to public service delivery would enhance their efficiency and effectiveness of these services (Thatcher, 1995).

The rise of NPM is closely linked to challenges to bureaucratic rigidity and the pursuit of more flexible, dynamic management models (Hood, 1991). Unlike the rigid rule-following approach of traditional bureaucracy, public institutions under NPM were evaluated based on performance metrics and goal attainment, leading to more dynamic and effective operations. Additionally, tools such as customer satisfaction surveys and feedback mechanisms emerged as concrete steps toward improving service quality. This approach has laid the groundwork for the decentralization of public services and the development of the governance concept. Governance refers to a broader management understanding in which the state acts not as a sole actor but in collaboration with civil society and the private sector (Rhodes, 1996).

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) in their "Reinventing Government" provided the principles of NPM. For their distinction between "policy decisions (steering) and service delivery (rowing)," they argue that bureaucracy is a bankrupt tool for rowing. Instead of bureaucracy, they propose "entrepreneurial government", which focuses on competition, markets, customers, and measuring outcomes. This transformation in the public sector means less government, which means less rowing, but more governance, which means more steering (Bevir&Rhodes, 2003: 46). NPM is defined by the application of business principles and management practices, along with the involvement of private sector entities in delivering public services, primarily to achieve greater efficiency. This can be accomplished through collaborations between public and private sectors, or through quasi-markets and separating purchasers from providers in public service structures. Advocates of NPM view it as a way to introduce more adaptable organizational models, reduce hierarchical layers in management, and decentralize decision-making processes (Hood, 1991).

The transition from traditional bureaucracy to governance has emerged as a result of the interaction of complex and diverse factors, including globalization, technological advancements, and changing societal expectations (Roberts, 2004). Therefore, there has been a need for a transition to a more participatory, flexible, and locally responsive governance model (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Understanding the underlying reasons for this change requires considering its historical development. However, starting from the second half of the 20th century, various limitations and problems within these traditional bureaucratic structures became increasingly evident. These limitations include the lack of participation and flexibility in bureaucracy, the slowness in decision-making processes, and the reduction of flexibility in service delivery due to standardization.

In this context, especially in Western democracies, there has been an increasing call for reforming bureaucracy and establishing a more effective, participatory, and flexible governance structure. This push for reform has been fueled by the recognition that traditional bureaucratic approaches are insufficient to meet the evolving needs of citizens (Hart, 1984). As the complexity and diversity of public services have increased, the demand for responsiveness and rapid response in service

delivery has become critical, reflecting the need for a governance model that can adapt to dynamic social conditions and address diverse citizen expectations effectively.

This transition enhances diversity and flexibility in service delivery, allowing for a better alignment with local needs. In traditional bureaucratic systems, decision-making and service delivery often operated within a centralized framework, where senior executives dictated policies while lower-level officials adhered to established rules and procedures (Meier & O'Toole, 2006). While this structure facilitated standardization and control, it often limited the flexibility required to adapt to the local needs. However, with the shift towards a governance model, there is a significant transformation in these dynamics, especially in the service delivery. This change empowers service recipients to participate more actively in the process, while bureaucrats are granted greater autonomy to tailor their responses to specific local contexts. As a result, the governance model is anticipated to foster more effective, responsive, and customized service provision.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a noticeable rise in democratic discontent, coinciding with concerns about the potential decline of liberal democracies (Corbett, 2020; Offe, 2011). This has prompted a reconsideration of the roles, traits, and principles of bureaucrats in light of contemporary governance challenges (Garvey, 2019; Frederickson et al., 2016; Perry & Christensen, 2015; Peters & Pierre, 2012; Rabin et al., 2007). Recent developments such as globalization, rapid technological advancements, increasing citizen engagement through social media, the rise of populist movements, and changing public expectations around transparency and accountability in government have contributed to the growing social complexity within which bureaucrats operate. Furthermore, the rise of authoritarian and populist political agendas further complicates the role of bureaucrats by undermining principles of political impartiality (Box, 2021) and reshaping accountability dynamics between bureaucrats and politicians (Wood et al., 2022), adding to the challenges of governance.

As globalization expanded, so did administrative internationalization, involving entities like international organizations and multi-level governance structures,

particularly like the European Union (Bauer & Trondal, 2015). Concerns regarding the relationship between bureaucrats and civil society have evolved even though they may not directly focus on bureaucrats as democratic agents (Ege, 2020; Pedersen et al., 2011). These developments are important for the transformation of bureaucracy because global interactions necessitate that bureaucracies become more flexible, transparent, and accountable (Schomaker et al., 2019). In fact, the significance of administrative internationalization for the transformation of bureaucracy lies in its capacity to reshape how bureaucratic systems interact, adapt, and function in a globalized world. As globalization increases, bureaucratic structures are no longer confined to national borders but are increasingly influenced by international organizations and multi-level governance, such as the European Union. These global interactions introduce new dynamics, norms, and challenges that bureaucracies must navigate, requiring them to be more adaptable and responsive to both international and local needs.

The involvement of entities like the European Union (EU) and international organizations promotes the adoption of global standards such as transparency, efficiency, and accountability (Weiss, 1982). This encourages bureaucratic structures to become more flexible, cooperative, and responsive to both national and international demands. Consequently, this helps dismantle traditional hierarchical structures, fostering the development of more fluid and adaptable governance models. In essence, international standards and collaborative approaches enable bureaucratic systems to be more attuned to local needs and demands, thereby enhancing democratic participation and strengthening the relationship between the public and bureaucracy. This shift challenges the traditional Weberian model, which viewed bureaucracy as neutral and detached from political processes, and promotes a transition towards a more open, accountable, and participatory governance approach (Ongaro, 2019).

Emergence of the governance paradigm is also to address the limitations of NPM, in a way to incorporate non-state actors into service delivery and shifting from rigid hierarchical structures to more collaborative, network-based arrangements (Eliassen & Sitter, 2008). NPG proposes the existence of a plural state, characterized by the

involvement of various interdependent actors in the provision of public services, as well as a pluralist state, where diverse processes shape the policy-making framework (Osborne, 2006). New Public Governance advocates for a more participatory, transparent, and stakeholder-inclusive approach to governance, surpassing traditional bureaucratic frameworks. This transformation underscores the need for innovative approaches to address contemporary organizational challenges (Genç, 2010; Davis, 2020; Yatkın, 2014; Hood, 1991; Kernaghan, 2000).

Governance seeks to revamp bureaucratic systems into ones that are more adaptable, inclusive, and focused on providing services. This shift aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of governments and public institutions in delivering services (Box, 1999). In more detail, governance aimed to increase participation in decision-making processes, promote flexibility and localization, while NPM particularly emphasized privatization, performance measurement, and market orientation in the public sector. This transformation led to a decline in trust in classical bureaucracy and increased the search for innovation in the public sector. Actually, it can be said that the emergence of the New Public Management approach stems from the belief that bureaucratic structures need to adopt more adaptable mechanisms to address citizen demands, recognizing that traditional methods are inadequate for addressing contemporary challenges (Hughes, 2017:67).

Therefore, the governance model has been developed to address the limitations of traditional bureaucracy and to enhance the effectiveness of public service delivery. This evolution has been motivated by growing demands for inclusivity and responsiveness, which have prompted reforms aimed at fostering greater participation in public decision-making processes. As a result, it is asserted that governance plays a positive role in promoting democratization (Akın, 1998).

To conclude, the transformation of the traditional Weberian understanding of bureaucracy is a multifaceted process that reflects the complex interplay between societal demands, economic imperatives, and evolving governance paradigms. As this chapter has explored, the rise of New Public Management (NPM) and subsequent governance paradigm signify a fundamental shift in how public

administration is conceptualized and practiced. The historical context reveals that while the Weberian model provided a robust framework for efficiency and organization, it increasingly fell short in addressing the diverse and dynamic needs of modern societies. Critiques of traditional bureaucracy highlight its rigidity and inadequacy in fostering responsiveness, adaptability, and citizen engagement. The transition to NPM marked a pivotal moment, as it introduced market-driven principles aimed at enhancing efficiency and performance. However, this approach also exposed limitations, particularly in its capacity to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness in service delivery. The emergence of New Public Governance (NPG) further underscores the necessity for a more collaborative and participatory framework that integrates non-state actors and prioritizes stakeholder engagement. This part of the study has emphasized the importance of understanding bureaucracy not merely as an institutional structure but as a dynamic entity shaped by interactions between service recipients and providers.

2.3. Service Providers in Bureaucracy: Street-Level Bureaucrats and Discretion

The historical transformation of bureaucracy and its implications plays a crucial role in understanding the two key actors involved in public service delivery: service providers and service recipients. Building on the previous section, the shift from a hegemonic Weberian model to New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG) has not only reconfigured organizational structures and performance logics, but has also changed how bureaucratic authority is exercised in practice (Harvey, 2005; Osborne, 2006; Hood, 1991). As public organizations became increasingly assessed through outputs, responsiveness, and citizen-oriented service quality, the image of the bureaucrat as a neutral rule-follower became harder to sustain. Instead, implementation began to be understood as a practical process shaped by judgments, priorities, and situational choices, especially where services are delivered directly to citizens (Lipsky, 1980). For this reason, analyzing bureaucracy through the interaction between providers and recipients is essential, because it makes visible how bureaucratic rules are applied, negotiated, and sometimes reshaped in everyday encounters. In this context, although bureaucracy involves two actors, this sub-section focuses on the service provider side of service

delivery. The service recipient side, with a specific focus on women, is taken up later under the feminist perspective section to determine gendered experiences of bureaucratic encounters in a more concentrated way.

Bureaucrats, particularly those at the frontline of service delivery, play a fundamental role in implementing policies. At this point, special attention should be paid to street-level bureaucrats, as conceptualised by Lipsky (1980), in order to reach a broader conclusion about the bureaucratic task of service delivery. Understanding their role is crucial for uncovering how direct interactions with service recipients can influence both policy implementation and the perceived legitimacy of public services. This requires careful attention to how rules are translated into everyday practice at different points of the administrative chain, and to how discretion, constraints, and institutional routines shape what ultimately gets delivered as "service". Moreover, focusing on street-level bureaucrats provides valuable insight into the historical shift from traditional bureaucracy to governance, characterized by more flexible and participatory models.

Over time, the centralized nature of traditional bureaucracy has been replaced by more varied, participatory, and localized decision-making processes. This shift has fostered greater flexibility, diversity, and a stronger service recipient orientation in service delivery processes (Stanica et al., 2022), catalyzing transformations in the roles and interactions of both service providers and service recipients. The transformation described here illustrates not just a structural change but also a shift in values and approaches towards greater inclusivity and responsiveness in service delivery. As highlighted by Fleischer and Reiners (2021), this transformation has significantly altered public service delivery by moving away from rigid hierarchical structures towards more horizontal, networked relationships between bureaucrats and various stakeholders. Examining street-level bureaucrats' roles and interactions within these frameworks reveals that the shift to governance has not only redefined administrative tasks but also reshaped the nature of service delivery itself. Therefore, analyzing the interactions between bureaucrats and citizens in governance contexts is essential for understanding how these relationships might impact service delivery, considering the historical and contextual factors that influence them.

The service provider side of bureaucracy includes both traditional Weberian-type bureaucrats and frontline officials. Traditional bureaucrats typically operate within the central government or large-scale institutions, fulfilling highly defined tasks (Ringer, 2004). These tasks are often based on standard procedures and regulations, with decisions made according to policy objectives set by senior executives or policymakers. Traditionally, bureaucrats performing specific tasks in large-scale organizations have had limited direct interaction with service recipients or involvement in discretionary decision-making in individual cases.

According to Weber (1947), the primary purpose of bureaucracy is to ensure efficiency and rationality in policy implementation. However, over time, as society's needs and public service demands have evolved, so too has the traditional bureaucratic model, which was designed to ensure efficiency in complex organizations. Increasing demands for flexibility and customization in service delivery have contributed to the growing prominence of street-level bureaucrats who directly interact with service recipients (Kencana, 2017). This broader transformation of bureaucracy extends beyond individual officials to the bureaucratic system as a whole, including structures, business processes, and the quality of services experienced by citizens (Kencana, 2017: 208). Consequently, governance-oriented reforms have encouraged frontline bureaucrats to take greater initiative and respond more closely to local needs in service delivery (Hupe, Hill, and Buffat, 2015).

The concept of street-level bureaucracy was first introduced by Lipsky (1980) to describe lower-level officials directly involved in the delivery of public services. Traditional bureaucrats refer to those adhering strictly to established procedures within larger institutions, while street-level bureaucrats are those who interact directly with service recipients and exercise discretion. Street-level bureaucrats are public service workers who engage directly with citizens and possess significant discretion in carrying out their duties. They facilitate access to government programs and deliver services within these programs, yet they operate in environments characterized by consistently insufficient resources, unclear objectives, conflicting priorities, and an ever-increasing demand for services (Lipsky, 1980). They may include various professional groups such as police officers, healthcare workers,

teachers, judges, public lawyers, and social workers. Because they work at the point of contact with citizens, they often rely on discretionary judgments rather than strict rule application in order to manage caseloads, interpret criteria, and respond to concrete situations. This capacity enables them to respond more effectively to local needs and implement policies in ways that reflect contextual constraints and recipient circumstances (Wise, 1981).

Street-level bureaucrats exercise significant discretion in decision-making, acting as the final stage in public policy implementation. This discretion often shapes not just the immediate outcomes of policy but also broader perceptions of equity and justice within public services. Their influence extends beyond mere execution; their judgments shape access to essential services like housing, healthcare, and welfare (Lipsky, 1980). They may effectively determine who receives housing assistance, who is eligible for welfare benefits, and who gains access to healthcare services. In this sense, frontline service delivery is a crucial site for understanding how policy becomes practice. Recognizing this discretion highlights that street-level bureaucrats operate not only as administrative agents but also as influential actors whose everyday decisions can systematically shape policy outcomes (Lipsky, 1980).

People in these positions typically share commonalities due to their analytically similar work conditions. Lipsky, as cited in Wise (1981), characterizes street-level bureaucrats as policy makers because of their extensive discretion in decisions concerning citizens and their relative independence from organizational oversight. In essence, the actions of street-level bureaucrats can shape agency policy as it is experienced on the ground. According to Lipsky (1981: 9), these bureaucrats face a distinctive work environment compared to other officials, since they must manage clients' reactions to their decisions. They operate amid limited resources, unclear policy objectives, and performance pressures. They also navigate tensions between autonomy and supervisory control, which can strain relationships with clients who may experience serious consequences from bureaucratic decisions. A central dilemma concerns whether to prioritize consistent treatment of clients or to customize services and decisions based on the particular needs and circumstances of individuals or groups (Banerjee et al., 2014).

Consequently, the working conditions of street-level bureaucrats entail uncertainty (Moore, 1987), as they frequently encounter dilemmas that involve both ethical considerations and organizational pressures. In such contexts, discretion becomes a practical tool for navigating complex situations where the human aspect is central, and it may also help manage organizational conflicts and contradictions (Cappello, 2011). In some instances, discretion functions as professional independence. In others, it operates as a coping strategy for uncertainty and workplace pressure, including the allocation and rationing of services or the reduction of service levels (Cappello, 2021).

The transformation of bureaucracy has far-reaching implications for public service delivery, particularly for understanding service provision in practice. While the rise of street-level bureaucrats has introduced greater flexibility and responsiveness, it also brings challenges that require critical attention. Frontline discretion can enable adaptation and customization, but it can also result in arbitrary practices or injustices (Boahen, 2016). Moreover, the autonomy of frontline officials can reduce the capacity of central governments to implement policies consistently and may lead to variation in implementation across contexts (Moore, 1987). Examining street-level bureaucracy therefore clarifies how established goals set by policymakers are translated into practice, and why service quality and policy outcomes can differ across sites and cases.

In sum, focusing on service providers, and particularly street-level bureaucrats, demonstrates that service delivery is shaped by the practical conditions under which bureaucrats work and by the discretionary judgments they must make. These dynamics help explain how governance-era reforms have altered the meaning of implementation and how bureaucratic authority is exercised in everyday life (Lipsky, 1980; Hupe et al., 2015). At the same time, because service delivery is relational, provider-side discretion necessarily shapes how bureaucracy is experienced by service recipients. For this reason, the next relevant step is to examine the service recipient dimension through a feminist lens, with particular attention to women's encounters with male-dominated bureaucratic settings. This analysis is developed in the later section on women as service recipients.

2.4. Feminist Perspective on Bureaucracy: Feminist Critique

Bureaucracy has historically been characterized by its male-dominated structure, as argued significantly by referring to the Weberian model that emphasizes rationality, technical efficiency, and hierarchy (Acker, 1990). These core principles have often facilitated men's dominance within bureaucratic organizations, relegating women to subordinate roles or positions as mere service recipients. The hierarchical nature of bureaucracy has perpetuated a gendered division of labor, with decision-making power predominantly in the hands of men (Ferguson, 1984).

Feminist critiques of bureaucracy focus on how its structural characteristics reinforce gender inequalities (Cockburn, 1991). However, these perspectives generally lack substantial historical depth, as they do not provide separate critiques of classical Weberian bureaucracy or the structural transformations that bureaucracy undergoes due to the influences of New Public Management (NPM) and governance. Instead, they address the broader ways in which bureaucratic systems maintain male domination and limit women's roles within these structures (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). Feminist scholars highlight how the seemingly neutral principles of bureaucracy actually serve to entrench male authority and marginalize women's voices (Ashcraft, 2006).

In this sub-section, the interplay between bureaucracy and gender will be critically examined from a feminist perspective, focusing on the reasons behind male dominance within bureaucratic structures and its implications for women as service recipients. Understanding how bureaucratic frameworks have historically favored male leadership and perpetuated gender biases is essential to addressing the inequalities faced by women as service recipents in public service settings. Therefore, this section will be divided into two sub-sections: the first explores why bureaucracy is male-dominated through a feminist lens, analyzing the structural dynamics and societal norms that contribute to this phenomenon. The second sub-section investigates the experiences of women as service recipients within these male-dominated bureaucracies, highlighting the barriers they encounter and the implications for their access to services. Through this dual examination, the systemic

issues that perpetuate gender inequality in bureaucratic contexts is intended to be uncovered.

2.4.1. Why Bureaucracy is Male-Dominated?

The feminist analysis of bureaucracy explores how institutional frameworks and operational norms within bureaucratic systems perpetuate gender disparities and uphold patriarchal power dynamics. Feminist scholars (Acker, 1990; Bem, 1981; Ashcraft, 2001) argue that conventional bureaucratic structures inherently favor men while neglecting the specific needs and concerns of women. This critique covers several crucial aspects, revealing the systemic biases ingrained within bureaucratic organizations. One significant aspect of the feminist critique focuses on the dominance of male leadership in bureaucratic organizations. Another aspect of the feminist critique revolves around the gendered nature of division of labor within bureaucratic structures, where women frequently find themselves in lower-tier positions characterized by limited authority and decision-making autonomy, thus reinforcing conventional gender norms and impeding women's professional progress. Sexism and discriminatory practices are prevalent issues encountered by women in bureaucratic settings, fostering hostile work atmospheres and sustaining gender-based disparities in employment results. Yet another aspect of the feminist critique revolves around the gendered nature of service delivery in bureucracies. Bureaucratic processes in terms of service delivery might display inherent gender prejudices, leading to unequal access for women to resources, advantages, and opportunities. This could worsen current gender disparities in multiple areas such as healthcare, education, social services, and employment. Overall, the feminist critique of bureaucracy highlights how bureaucratic structures, practices, and cultures reinforce gender in both public and private sectors. Addressing these biases and structural inequities is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable bureaucratic systems that prioritize gender equality and empower women.

First, this sub-section focuses on inequality within bureaucratic institutions, especially male leadership and gendered divisions of labor, because these structures determine who holds authority and whose work is valued (Acker, 1990; Cockburn,

1991). Second, it examines how gendered norms, organizational culture, and everyday interactions reproduce a "masculine ethic" as the taken-for-granted standard of competence and neutrality (Kanter, 1975; Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1988). Third, it discusses how these internal power relations extend outward into service delivery, where bureaucratic routines and judgments can carry gendered assumptions and shape access to resources and support (Kelly & Newman, 2001; Connell, 2005; Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995). Examining these three points together is important because it shows that male dominance is not only about representation, but also about the organizational mechanisms through which bureaucracy defines authority, normalizes "neutral" conduct, and produces unequal outcomes.

Discussions regarding the male dominance of bureaucracy primarily date back to the second half of the 20th century. During the 1960s and 1970s, with the rise of the feminist movement, there were in-depth discussions about women's place in the workforce and their roles in public service (Friedan, 1963; Tong, 2009). These discussions were rooted in broader societal changes, including the post-World War II economic boom, which led to an increasing number of women entering the workforce, but often in lower-status positions with limited opportunities for advancement (Hartmann, 1976). This period also saw a growing awareness of the structural barriers that women faced in public service, emphasizing the necessity for equal rights with men in this field (Friedan, 1963; Hartmann, 1976). This historical background matters because feminist critiques did not treat women's disadvantage as isolated incidents, but as patterned outcomes linked to organizational structures.

This awareness was not only a response to the changing economic landscape but also a reflection of the evolution in feminist thought from first-wave feminism, which primarily focused on legal rights and suffrage (Dicker, 2008), to second-wave feminism, which expanded its scope to address issues of equality in the workplace, reproductive rights, and the societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Tong, 2009; Scott, 1986). Many second-wave feminists criticized bureaucracy as a structure created and dominated by men, serving to oppress women by reinforcing traditional gender roles and limiting women's access to leadership positions (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1991). This is why it is necessary to examine how male dominance is built into institutional routines, not only into formal rules.

Despite early radical feminist criticisms condemning bureaucracy and hierarchy as structures created and dominated by men, serving to oppress women, many feminist scholars have not engaged deeply with organizational theory. A significant challenge arises from the prevailing discourse that portrays organizations as gender-neutral (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2003). This perspective obscures the inherent gender imbalances within organizational structures and undermines the potential for achieving a balanced representation of genders in decision-making roles. For this reason, this sub-section treats bureaucracies as organizations that may appear neutral but operate through gendered processes (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2003).

Contemporary organizational theories often overlook gender (Cockburn, 1988), implying that organization is a gender-neutral structure. However, Cockburn (1988) argues that organizations often present themselves as neutral but are deeply gendered in practice, shaping how women and men experience work differently. When the presence of men is dominant in an organization, it becomes challenging to view gender as a relational concept. Organizational structures and processes are often perceived as gender-neutral because they are based on the behaviors and viewpoints of men, who are assumed to represent society as a whole (Acker, 1992; Smith, 1997). Gendered attitudes and behaviors become apparent within these structures only when the differential impacts on both women and men are acknowledged, thereby undermining the notion of gender neutrality. Moreover, because masculinity is so often treated as the "default" language of authority in organizations, male dominance can be overlooked rather than debated, as if it were simply the natural order of bureaucratic life (Rodriguez & Guenther, 2022). This helps explain why male perspectives can continue to shape institutional routines as "normal," even in contexts where equality is formally endorsed.

Kanter's seminal work, Men and Women of the Corporation (1977), which has made one of the most significant contribution to the literature on women and gender in organizations, asserts that gender differences in organizational behavior primarily stem from structural dynamics rather than individual characteristics. Kanter (1977) argues that the challenges women face in bureaucratic organizations are consequences of their structural positioning in these organitions. In this context,

gender manifests through specific roles within the organization, each carrying distinct images associated with the gender of those expected to fulfill them. Kanter (1977: 250) recognizes the presence of gender in early organizational models, identifying a "masculinethic" of rationality and reason in the managerial image. This "masculinethic" elevates traits traditionally associated with men, such as toughness, analytical abilities, emotional detachment, and cognitive superiority, to necessities for effective organizational functioning (Kanter, 1974). In other words, male dominance is reproduced not only through who occupies positions, but also through what the organization defines as ideal competence.

According to Ressner (1987), organizations possess a dual structure comprising bureaucracy and patriarchy, in which bureaucracy operates through its own formal rules and procedures, while gender relations are organized through patriarchy as a distinct but coexisting structure that permeates organizational life. This means that even when bureaucratic rules look neutral, patriarchal relations can still shape who is promoted, who is trusted, and who is excluded. While this analysis may aid in understanding women's experiences of discrimination, exclusion, segregation, and low wages, Ressner's approach, much like Kanter's, implicitly accepts the mainstream organizational theory's assumption of organizations as gender-neutral entities. This creates a key tension: whether male dominance is treated as external to bureaucracy or as part of bureaucracy's internal logic.

Conversely, Ferguson (1984) presents a radical feminist critique, portraying bureaucracy as a vehicle of oppressive male dominance, constructed through abstract discourse on rationality, rules, and procedures. Thus, unlike Kanter and Ressner, Ferguson perceives bureaucracy itself as a product of male domination. Ferguson (1984) argues that bureaucracy, by its dominant nature, tends to place both officials and service recipients in positions where autonomy is limited and compliance becomes routine. She uses the term "feminized" to describe a position of dependence and reduced autonomy that bureaucracy can impose on those who must comply with its routines (Ferguson, 1984). In her view, this is not a claim about women as a group, but a way of naming how bureaucratic power can push people into dependence and reduced control over decisions that affect them. Because everyday

procedures are organized around rules, supervision, and unequal authority, individuals often develop coping strategies simply to move processes forward or avoid penalties. Yet these strategies can also unintentionally sustain the same routines and relationships of control that make bureaucracy dominant in the first place (Ferguson, 1984).

According to Martin (2013: 283), feminists have frequently depicted bureaucracy as being hostile to women, femininity, and feminism. Their concerns stem from various reasons. To start with, Weber's conceptualization of an ideal bureaucracy suggested that women are not suitable for involvement in bureaucratic settings (Martin & Knopoff, 1997). Bureaucracies have been criticized by some feminist scholors (see Ferree & Hess, 2000) for their alignment with Weber's view, which posits that bureaucracies require men and embody stereotypical practices of masculinity, such as rational and logical thinking, calculating means and ends, taking decisive action, and enforcing top-down control. While these behaviors come naturally to men, women are believed to be inherently incapable of exhibiting them. Consequently, bureaucracies are perceived as environments suited primarily for men, a viewpoint shared by some feminists (see Martin & Knopoff, 1997; Ferree & Hess, 2000; Baker, 1982). Especially radical feminists within the second-wave women's movement often criticized bureaucracy as being male-centric and dominated (Ferree and Hess, 2000). This matters because "neutrality" and "rationality" can be coded as masculine, which makes exclusion look like merit.

The other typical aspect of bureaucracy that concerns feminist is division of labor as this is also essentially a gender-based division. The establishment of divisions along gender lines encompasses the division of labor, permitted behaviors, physical spatial arrangements, and power dynamics institutionalized to maintain these divisions within the structures of labor markets, families, and the state (Acker, 1990: 146). Despite significant variations in the patterns of these divisions, men typically occupy the highest positions of organizational power. Managerial decisions often initiate gender divisions (Cohn, 1985), which are perpetuated by organizational practices.

Last aspect of bureaucracy that most concerns feminists is power, specifically a "hierarchical power" structure where some individuals hold power over others.

Radical feminists perceive hierarchical structures as undemocratic and disempowering for all except a select few (Baker, 1982). Hierarchies exhibit gendered characteristics because they are shaped by principles derived from preexisting gendered frameworks (Steinberg & Haignere, 1987). These rankings typically reflect established patterns of gender typing, job segregation, and the concentration of women in the least desirable and lowest-paying positions. Moreover, there is a feminist recognition that hierarchical organizations are an important location of male dominance (Acker, 1990). However, this idea has also been criticized due to the imperfect nature of the flat organic structures preferred by radical feminists. Flat structures lacking hierarchical distinctions based on position can create conditions that, as Polleta (2002) observes, lead to a "tyranny of structurelessness". The power that is accumulated informally and remains unrecognized usually causes harm; not acknowledging evolving power differentials permits those with greater influence to act freely, while inhibiting those with less influence from holding them responsible (Kleinman 1996; Thurston 1987). For these scholars, when power is linked to a specific role, such as an official position with a title, job description, and clear responsibilities, individuals who misuse their authority can face its consequences. They can be removed from their position through a vote, publicly criticized, or subjected to shame. In summary, they can be at least held accountable. This debate shows that formal structure can sometimes make power visible, but gendered norms can still shape how power is used.

Acher (1990: 139) suggests that organizational structure is not "gender neutral"; rather, gender assumptions are embedded in the foundational documents and contracts that shape organizations and inform our understanding of them. These assumptions often mask the gendered aspects of work by presenting abstract roles and "hierarchies" that imply a genderless, universal worker. On the other hand, this universal worker is typically portrayed as male such that depictions of male bodies and masculinity dominate organizational procedures. This portrayal reinforces gender bias within organizational processes, perpetuating the marginalization of women and the maintenance of gender segregation. Moreover, according to Acher (1990), the promotion of gender-neutral and disembodied organizational structures aligns with broader strategies of control in industrial capitalist societies, which are

founded on deeply ingrained gender disparities. It is contended that the ongoing nature of gender inequality and the prevailing perception of equality arise from what is referred to as a gender subtext (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). This refers to a collection of often hidden, power-driven processes that shape gender roles, including organizational and individual structures (such as goals, policies, and behaviors) that systematically (re)produce distinctions between genders.

Research focusing on the role of gender in the public sector has brought forth the concept of "gendered bureaucracy" (Kelly & Newman, 2001; Acker, 1990). Gendered bureaucracy is a concept that deserves attention precisely because it examines the role of gender in bureaucracies and how bureaucratic processes are influenced by gender. In other words, this term is used to understand how gender is shaped within public institutions and organizations, and how gender-based norms are reflected. Here, the point is that the same gendered assumptions that operate inside organizations can also shape how services are designed and delivered to citizens. In this context, it focuses on how women and men, as service recipients, are affected by public services and how these services are shaped. Additionally, the importance of these studies is increasing in order to understand the impact of gender on bureaucratic structures and how gender equality can be achieved. Similarly, some scholars such as Connell (2006) and Duerst-Lahti & Kelly (1995) have argued that bureaucracies are inherently gendered institutions, structured around a "masculine ethic." This framing suggests that traditional bureaucratic values, like rationality, objectivity, and hierarchical control, are closely aligned with traits historically associated with masculinity. These traits have been instrumental in reinforcing male dominance within these systems, marginalizing women's experiences, needs, and perspectives.

Goodsell (2024) highlights a shift in recent times where women are increasingly occupying leadership roles within governance structures, challenging the historically male-dominated power dynamics. Women leaders are increasingly assuming top executive positions, including the presidency, cabinet, and agency leadership roles. This transformation, similar to other societal shifts happening today, carries important implications for power sharing, deserved rights, and effective governance

(Swiebel, 1988). However, this progress does not negate the underlying issues of gender bias in bureaucratic practices that continue to influence how women experience and access public services. The presence of women in leadership roles does not automatically translate to a transformation of the masculine norms that underpin bureaucratic institutions (Swiebel, 1988). This distinction matters because representation can change faster than institutional culture.

Taken together, these debates show that the male dominance of bureaucracy is sustained not only through who occupies formal positions, but through the organizational standards that define competence, authority, and neutrality in masculinized terms (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1974; Cockburn, 1988). In this sense, bureaucracy operates as a gendered institutional arrangement where leadership patterns, divisions of labor, hierarchical power, and routine interactions can reproduce inequality even when formal rules appear impartial (Acker, 1990; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). This matters because the same organizational logics that shape internal careers and authority also travel into the public-facing side of bureaucracy, influencing how services are prioritized, interpreted, and delivered in practice (Kelly & Newman, 2001; Connell, 2006). Accordingly, the next sub-section turns from why bureaucracy remains male-dominated to how this dominance becomes visible at the point of contact with citizens, by examining women's experiences as service recipients within male-dominated bureaucratic settings (McDowell, 2014; Young, 1990; Walby, 2005).

2.4.2. Women as Service Recipients in a Male-Dominated Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy and feminism have a longstanding history of opposition, with the former often criticized for its male-dominated nature, which results in gender biases affecting the accessibility and quality of services provided to women as service recipients (McDowell, 2014). Historically, bureaucratic institutions have been shaped by institutional cultures and societal norms that privilege masculine-coded authority, leadership, and decision-making. As a result, gender imbalance becomes visible not only in who occupies decision-making positions, but also in how problems are defined, who are treated as legitimate, and what kinds of support are

prioritized. This sub-section examines how the male-dominated character of bureaucracy affects women as service recipients, with a particular focus on how women's experiences can become relatively marginalized compared to men's within seemingly neutral administrative systems.

Understanding the gendered organization of bureaucratic structures and public service delivery is important because it helps explain why formally neutral services can produce unequal experiences and outcomes especially for women, as service recipients. By examining this dynamic through a feminist lens, it can be suggested that male dominance in bureaucracy can be treated not simply as a descriptive feature of organizational composition, but as an institutional pattern that shapes policy priorities and the daily experiences under which women encounter the bureaucracy. This suggests that a critical examination of these dynamics is essential for understanding the broader implications of gender biases within bureaucratic contexts. Ultimately, this analysis aims to examine why bureaucracy remains male-dominated from a feminist perspective and explore how this dominance contributes to the inequalities faced by women as service recipients.

Women as service recipients can face gendered forms of disadvantages that deepen inequality and, in some contexts, produce marginalization. A central problem is that male-centric policies and bureaucratic practices may fail to recognize women's needs as public priorities, thereby generating barriers to access and lowering the quality or suitability of service provision (Young, 1990; Walby, 2005). Young's (1990) analysis of structural inequalities highlights that policies developed without considering gender perspectives tend to reinforce existing power imbalances, making it difficult for women to access essential services. Walby (2005) similarly emphasizes that institutional practices often overlook women's specific needs and thereby entrench gender disparities. From this perspective, discrimination is not limited to overt exclusion; it can also be produced by omission, misrecognition, and the routine privileging of masculine-coded "default" life patterns in policy design.

In this discussion, it is useful to define key terms to ensure conceptual clarity. Social services can be understood as publicly provided, publicly funded, or publicly

regulated welfare-state services aimed at securing basic well-being and mitigating social risks, including income support, health services, social care, housing-related supports, education-linked supports, and protective services (McKinlay, 1990). Importantly, these services are not merely technical provisions; they are institutional sites where needs are recognized, classified, and prioritized through policy rules and administrative routines. Service recipients refer to individuals and groups who interact with these institutions as clients, applicants, beneficiaries, or complainants, and whose access to benefits, information, and protection is shaped by eligibility criteria and frontline implementation practices (Brodkin, 2012). These definitions highlight that unequal service experiences can result both from the formal architecture of programs and from the everyday conditions of bureaucratic encounters.

Male-dominated bureaucracies often prioritize policy agendas that reflect male perspectives and institutional assumptions, which can result in the under-prioritization of services that are central to women's lives, such as childcare. When childcare policies are designed in environments where decision-making is dominated by masculine-coded norms, childcare may be framed as a private, individual responsibility rather than a shared social need. This framing can narrow the scope of provision, restrict eligibility, or normalize inadequate service availability. In practice, women can face persistent difficulties in accessing childcare supports and may be compelled to shoulder care responsibilities through their own time, finances, and informal arrangements. The resulting burden is not only a matter of household organization; it can restrict women's capacity to participate in paid work, sustain enterprises, and maintain economic autonomy, thereby reinforcing gender inequality (Connell, 2005a; Acker, 1990).

Similarly, in male-dominated bureaucracies, the predominance of male decision-makers can lead to limited gender sensitivity in policies and support mechanisms for domestic violence. Where women's safety needs are not treated as urgent public priorities, provision may be insufficient in both capacity and accessibility, such as limited shelter availability, inadequate emergency support, or bureaucratically demanding procedures for protection and assistance. In addition, gender-biased

attitudes within institutions can produce a tendency to shield men from scrutiny or sanction, disbelief, or moralizing interactions that deter women from seeking help or that delay access to protection. These barriers can restrict women's practical access to safety, justice, and economic independence and can keep women in structurally disadvantaged positions as service recipients (Meyers & Gornick, 2005). These examples illustrate why gender should be treated not merely as a demographic variable but as a structural feature shaping service delivery priorities and institutional responses.

A critical mechanism through which gendered inequality is reproduced in service delivery is street-level bureaucracy, where frontline public servants exercise discretion while implementing policy (Lipsky, 1980). Street-level bureaucrats, such as social workers, healthcare providers, and law enforcement officers, interact directly with the public, making decisions that can significantly affect access to services such as information, benefits, referrals, and protection. Because discretion is exercised under time pressure, resource constraints, and routine organizational practices, it readily takes on and reproduces societal stereotypes and institutionalized assumptions. Women as service recipients can be disadvantaged in encounters where their credibility is assessed through gendered expectations, or where their needs are minimized as private or emotional rather than public and urgent (Brodkin, 2012). For example, a social worker may treat a report of domestic violence as a "family dispute" rather than a safety issue, or a healthcare provider may interpret women's complaints by framing them as emotional rather than medical. For this reason, attention must be paid not only to formal policy design but also to routine implementation practices, since gender bias can be reproduced through daily decision-making and interactional norms (Brodkin, 2012).

Women as service recipients often encounter significant barriers when accessing services, stemming primarily from gender biases embedded within bureaucratic systems. These biases manifest in policies that fail to reflect women's experiences and in social norms that diminish women's needs within public services (Fraser, 1989; McCall, 2005). Women's unequal experiences as service recipients are also political because welfare, care, and social provision are key arenas in which societies

contest whose needs are recognized as legitimate public priorities. Fraser (1989a) characterizes these struggles as the "coming welfare wars," arguing that disputes over social spending, eligibility rules, and moral judgments about dependency tend to intensify in periods of economic strain and political conflict. The significance for gender is that these struggles are often organized in ways that disproportionately affect women. Because women are overrepresented both among recipients of many welfare programs and among workers in welfare-sector occupations, they are especially vulnerable to retrenchment, punitive redesigns of programs, and moralizing scrutiny. Therefore, the welfare conflict is not limited to public debate; it also occurs within bureaucratic encounters through stricter requirements, narrowed eligibility criteria, and intensive monitoring of women's lives and care responsibilities (Fraser, 1989a; Mink, 1999). This context underscores the importance of examining how institutional priorities and routine bureaucratic practices collectively shape women's access to services.

Relatedly, feminist perspectives stress that the experiences and voices of women positioned as service recipients are essential for understanding how bureaucratic systems operate in practice. Spivak's (1988) critique of representation highlights how women are often only made understandable by having someone speak on their behalf or by translating into dominant institutional categories. In bureaucratic settings, this means that women's needs, experiences, and narratives are often processed through administrative classifications and credibility assessments that do not reflect their living conditions. Therefore, treating women as subjects rather than passive beneficiaries is not only an ethical commitment but also an analytical necessity. This makes visible how gender-based inequalities are produced and reproduced through routine bureaucratic procedures and daily judgements about legitimacy.

These dynamics are reinforced by the fact that the traditional bureaucratic model, characterized by rigid hierarchies, standardized procedures, and rule-bound interactions, can disadvantage those who do not fit the masculine-coded default template around which many institutional assumptions have historically been organized (Connell, 2009). Institutional rigidity can limit responsiveness to diverse

needs and demands, particularly when policies are administered within male-dominated institutional settings through fixed schedules, formalized documentation requirements, and narrowly defined eligibility categories. Harding (2004) argues that institutions often resist transformative change because prevailing organizational logics and standards are naturalized as neutral, objective, and universally applicable. From this perspective, organizational inflexibility is not merely an inconvenience; it operates as a structural barrier that constrains institutions' ability to recognize gendered forms of need and to address disparities in access and treatment.

Additionally, women's experiences as service recipients point to the need for a feminist approach to bureaucracy that treats gender not as a secondary consideration but as a constitutive dimension of institutional design and service delivery. From this perspective, reducing inequality cannot be achieved through formal anti-discrimination language alone. It also requires confronting the organizational norms and interactional routines through which masculine-coded authority and credibility are routinely taken as default, and through which certain life patterns are treated as "normal" while care responsibilities, safety needs, and gendered vulnerabilities are rendered exceptional or private matters (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Park, 2002). In practical terms, this implies, firstly, gender-responsive policy review, meaning a systematic examination of rules, eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and service standards to identify where seemingly neutral procedures generate gendered disadvantage. Secondly, this requires systematically identifying where and how women's access and outcomes diverge by tracking indicators such as refusal and approval rates, waiting times, referral decisions, complaint patterns, service termination, and the justifications recorded in case files. Thirdly, it calls for capacity-building and training that addresses not only attitudes, but also the everyday exercise of discretion, including how officials assess credibility, communicate requirements, and decide whether to provide guidance, flexibility, or referral. Crucially, feminist approaches position women not as passive beneficiaries but as active agents whose insights should inform both policy design and frontline implementation, so that services are shaped by the experiences of those who must navigate them in practice (Elson, 2013). Through a dual examination of why bureaucracy is male-dominated and the experiences of women as service recipients, the systemic issues perpetuating

gender inequality in bureaucratic contexts can be illustrated. To address these issues effectively, it is crucial to engage with feminist theories that critique traditional bureaucratic structures and advocate for inclusive policy-making (Baines & Daly, 2015).

In conclusion, addressing the male-dominated nature of bureaucracy requires an approach that integrates feminist insight with practical strategies for organizational change. This involves identifying and challenging structural barriers that hinder women's access to services, redesigning policies so women's needs are treated as legitimate public priorities, and reducing the discretionary reproduction of gender bias at the street-level. A more equal bureaucratic framework would include gender-responsive policy standards, sustained training and accountability mechanisms, and institutional commitments that confront norms supporting male-dominance in decision-making and service delivery (Diggs, 2022). By fostering inclusive institutional cultures and designing services that reflect diverse needs, bureaucracies can improve service delivery in practice while contributing to a more just distribution of recognition, resources, and protection for women as service recipients.

2.5. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the complex and deeply interwoven relationship between bureaucracy and gender has been explored from multiple angles. Beginning with the traditional Weberian understanding of bureaucracy as a rational, hierarchical, and technically efficient system, the discussion traced how this model has historically evolved alongside capitalism and political institutions, shaping the ways in which authority, organizational structure, and administrative roles have been defined and legitimized (Weber, 1947).

This chapter has shown that bureaucracy is far from being a value-neutral administrative mechanism; rather, it is a dynamic field in which power relations, including gendered ones, are produced, reproduced, and contested. By examining its conceptual foundations, its connection with capitalist structures, the evolution from traditional forms to modern governance models, and the interactions between politics

and bureaucracy, we see how these elements collectively set the stage for the persistent patterns of male dominance within bureaucratic institutions (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1991).

Through the integration of feminist perspectives, the analysis demonstrated that the core principles of bureaucracy such as rationality, hierarchy, and standardized roles are not only organizational necessities but also social constructs that have historically privileged masculine norms and leadership styles (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2003). This gendered foundation has tangible consequences for both those who work within bureaucratic systems and those who engage with them as citizens. In particular, the examination of service delivery processes, street-level discretion, and the experiences of women as service recipients underlines how structural and everyday practices can reinforce or challenge existing inequalities (Lipsky, 1980; Brodkin, 2012; Diggs, 2022).

The chapter also highlighted that the transformation of bureaucracy, from rigid, centralized models to more flexible and participatory governance frameworks, does not automatically eliminate gender biases. Instead, it often shifts the sites at which inequalities manifest, requiring a continuous critical focus on how policies are implemented, how organizational cultures evolve, and how service delivery can better respond to diverse needs (Hupe et al., 2015; Fleischer & Reiners, 2021).

Taken together, the themes covered in this chapter make clear that bureaucracy must be understood not just as an administrative apparatus but as a key arena for examining how social hierarchies, particularly those related to gender, are maintained and challenged. Recognizing this provides an essential framework for rethinking public service delivery and governance with an eye toward greater inclusion and equity.

Recognizing that bureaucracy is not a gender-neutral system but rather one deeply embedded with masculine norms is essential for understanding the broader challenges women face beyond public service delivery alone. This insight is especially relevant for women’s entrepreneurship, where bureaucratic procedures

such as licensing, permits, funding access, and regulatory compliance can become significant hurdles that reflect the same gendered power structures explored in this chapter. By connecting the gendered foundations of bureaucracy to women's entrepreneurial experiences, the next chapter will reveal how these structural barriers shape women's agency and limit their economic opportunities by showing that bureaucracy's inherently gendered inequalities are not abstract but become most visible and tangible in the everyday practices and struggles of women entrepreneurs as they put their economic initiatives into action.

CHAPTER 3

ENTREPRENEURSHIP'S GENDER

Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a vital engine of economic growth, innovation, and societal transformation, yet its conceptual roots, historical trajectory, and gendered dimensions reveal that it is far from a neutral or uniform phenomenon. In its earliest forms, entrepreneurship was closely tied to local trade, craftsmanship, and small-scale production, with entrepreneurs positioned as risk-bearers who organized resources to generate profit under uncertain conditions (Cantillon, 1755; Say, 1964). Over time, pivotal thinkers such as Schumpeter (1934) reframed the entrepreneur as an agent of "creative destruction," emphasizing innovation and disruption as central to economic renewal and structural change. Modern perspectives continue to build on these foundations, recognizing that the characteristics and profiles of entrepreneurs are shaped by more than just individual traits; they are profoundly influenced by technological developments, market conditions, policy frameworks, cultural contexts, and the opportunities these enable or restrict.

The evolution of entrepreneurship mirrors broader economic and social transformations. The Industrial Revolution expanded the role of entrepreneurs from local traders to industrial organizers and innovators (Mokyr, 2008; Chandler, 1977). In many advanced economies, the postwar managed economy and welfare state arrangements favored large organizations and stable employment relations, narrowing the relative space for small firm entrepreneurship compared to later decades (Thurik et al., 2013; Henrekson, 2005). The crises of the 1970s, including the breakdown of Bretton Woods and major oil price shocks, and the subsequent neoliberal policy turn in the 1980s reshaped the institutional conditions under which entrepreneurship became a key mechanism of restructuring and adaptation

(Hamilton, 1983; Harvey, 2005). With intensified globalization and the diffusion of information and communication technologies from the 1990s onward, entrepreneurship was increasingly framed as a pathway for competitiveness, knowledge commercialization, and regional development (Szirmai et al., 2011). More recently, platform-based markets and the gig economy have diversified entrepreneurial opportunities while also intensifying precarity and inequality through contingent work arrangements and risk shifting (Kenney & Zysman, 2016).

Despite this growing prominence, entrepreneurship research has historically treated entrepreneurs as a universal type, neglecting the ways in which gender shapes who becomes an entrepreneur and how they are supported or constrained. Early studies largely focused on male entrepreneurs, with women's entrepreneurship long remaining at the margins of mainstream economic thought and policy. It was not until the 1970s that systematic scholarly attention began to illuminate women's entrepreneurial activities, initially through descriptive, trait-based comparisons with their male counterparts. Over time, however, feminist and critical scholars have shown that women's entrepreneurship cannot be understood merely by applying male-centered models; instead, it must be examined within its own historical, institutional, and cultural contexts (Jennings & Brush, 2013). This shift has revealed how gendered barriers such as unequal access to capital, exclusion from key networks, and persistent cultural stereotypes continue to shape the opportunities and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs.

The drivers behind women's entry into entrepreneurship underline this interplay between structure and agency. Women increasingly turn to entrepreneurship not only out of economic necessity, often in response to limited opportunities in formal labor markets or discriminatory workplace norms, but also as a proactive means to gain autonomy, challenge traditional gender roles, and contribute to broader social and economic development (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). International policy agendas, development organizations, and feminist advocacy have come to frame women's entrepreneurship as a key strategy for poverty reduction, employment generation, and inclusive growth. Yet structural inequalities and cultural norms still pose significant barriers, influencing everything from financing options and market access to how entrepreneurial success is defined and rewarded.

Taken together, these insights demonstrate that entrepreneurship, like bureaucracy, is not an abstract, gender-neutral mechanism but a complex site where economic, social, and gendered power relations intersect and evolve. Understanding how the profiles, trajectories, and experiences of entrepreneurs, especially women, are shaped by historical and structural forces is crucial for designing supportive ecosystems and policies that genuinely promote inclusion and resilience.

In sum, this chapter presents the conceptual foundations and historical transformation of entrepreneurship, examines the emergence and trajectory of women's entrepreneurship within the broader literature, and highlights the multifaceted factors, including economic, social, psychological, cultural, and structural factors, that shape women's motivations, challenges, and pathways in entrepreneurial ecosystems. This layered perspective provides a necessary basis for understanding how gendered inequalities persist and how women's entrepreneurial agency can reshape economic participation, setting the stage for the subsequent analysis of their interactions with bureaucratic systems and the governance frameworks that enable or constrain their activities.

3.1. Definition and Scope of Entrepreneurship

This sub-section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship by exploring its conceptual definition, various forms, and the distinctive characteristics of those who engage in entrepreneurial activities. The chapter begins with an examination of how entrepreneurship has been conceptualized by different economists and scholars over time. It then moves on to categorize the types of entrepreneurship and their multifaceted dimensions. Finally, it delves into the typical traits, motivations, and demographic profiles of entrepreneurs, drawing from both classical and contemporary literature. Gaining clarity on the definition and scope of entrepreneurship is essential, as it lays the groundwork for analyzing its historical development, societal impact, and relevance in various economic contexts. Understanding these foundational elements also enables a more accurate interpretation of entrepreneurial behavior and its implications for innovation, employment, and economic growth. In doing so, this section serves as a theoretical

lens through which subsequent discussions on gender and entrepreneurship can be better contextualized and critically evaluated.

3.1.1. Conceptual Definitions of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a complex and dynamic concept that has evolved over time, shaped by economic, social, and technological transformations (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2002). While there is no universally agreed-upon definition, most scholars converge on certain core elements: the identification of opportunities, the mobilization of resources, the willingness to take risks, and the pursuit of value creation (Ercan & Gökdeniz, 2009). Hisrich, Peters, and Shepherd (2017) define entrepreneurship as "the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction." This widely accepted definition captures both the economic and psychological dimensions of entrepreneurial activity, recognizing it as a process that combines innovation, resource mobilization, and risk-taking (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

Building on this perspective, entrepreneurship can also be understood as both a behavioral process and a cognitive orientation (Krueger, 2000). Schumpeter (1934), one of the most influential scholars in the field, viewed entrepreneurship as the act of "creative destruction," where entrepreneurs innovate by introducing new combinations of resources, thus disrupting existing markets and creating new industries. This mindset distinguishes entrepreneurship from traditional business practices, as it is less about following established procedures and more about creating new value through the strategic use of resources and the exploitation of untapped opportunities (Hisrich & Peters, 2002). In this context, entrepreneurship is not only the process through which labor, capital, and other resources are brought together and leveraged, but also the result of creating something more than the sum of its parts (Ireland, Hitt & Sirmon, 2003). As noted by Kaya (2018), entrepreneurship plays a key role in shaping the dynamic business environment fueled by innovation, driving progress not only for individuals but for society as a

whole. Therefore, entrepreneurship is a process driven by the entrepreneur's mindset, which is reflected not only in their individual actions but in the broader economic impact that stems from these actions.

Further, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) emphasize that entrepreneurship is a process of identifying, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities, involving risk taking and resource allocation. Kirzner (1973), another key scholar in entrepreneurship theory, argues that entrepreneurship is primarily about opportunity recognition and "alertness" to market gaps, typically through discovery and coordination that moves markets toward equilibrium, rather than through innovation driven disruption and "creative destruction" as in Schumpeter's account. These definitions highlight various dimensions of entrepreneurship, including opportunity recognition, innovation, and market exploitation, all of which shape the broader entrepreneurial landscape. McClelland (1961) focuses on the psychological aspect of entrepreneurship, defining it as the "need for achievement" that drives individuals to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. He emphasized that the desire for personal success and overcoming challenges motivates individuals to take entrepreneurial risks.

In sum, entrepreneurship is not simply the creation of new businesses but encompasses a broader scope that includes identifying opportunities, innovating within established systems, and driving societal change through new combinations of resources. It is a process that involves taking calculated risks, organizing resources, and continuously adapting to an ever-changing economic landscape. Thus, entrepreneurship remains a central element in understanding modern economies. By continuously pushing the boundaries of what is possible, entrepreneurs contribute to shaping not only industries but also the very fabric of society itself, making entrepreneurship not just a business activity but a key driver of long-term economic and social transformation.

3.1.2. Types and Dimensions of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has traditionally been regarded as a key driver of economic development (Schumpeter, 1934). However, empirical findings regarding the

relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth are often inconsistent and heavily context-dependent (Stam, 2008). A primary reason for this inconsistency lies in the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial types and the diverse economic, institutional, and cultural contexts in which they operate. Many studies, in their attempt to simplify and generalize the concept, have overlooked crucial distinctions among entrepreneurial forms, leading to incomplete or misleading conclusions about their economic impacts at both micro and macro levels (Landes, 1999).

Given this complexity, understanding the various types and dimensions of entrepreneurship becomes essential for answering key questions that shape the economic landscape. For example: “How do various forms of entrepreneurship, influenced by different motivations, scales, and levels of formality, contribute to economic growth in countries?”, “What impact does the scale of entrepreneurial ventures have on business outcomes, and how do small and large enterprises contribute differently to economic and social development?”, “How do opportunity-driven versus necessity-driven motivations shape the entrepreneurial process, and what are the implications of these motivations on business sustainability and growth?” and “How does the level of formality in entrepreneurship (formal vs. informal) affect entrepreneurs’ access to resources, regulatory support, and market integration?” and “Which types are more likely to generate sustained growth in specific socio-economic contexts?”.

This section aims to address these questions by categorizing entrepreneurship and examining how its various forms, those shaped by distinct motivations, scales, and formalities, produce different outcomes. By analyzing these dimensions, we can better understand the nuanced roles these diverse entrepreneurial forms play in both local and global economic and social systems. This more differentiated approach provides a clearer framework for evaluating the dynamic and context-dependent role of entrepreneurship in shaping development strategies at national and global levels.

Entrepreneurship has evolved into a dynamic and multifaceted field, encompassing a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial profiles, business models, and opportunity structures (Gartner, 1985). As global markets undergo rapid transformation,

entrepreneurship increasingly reflects the diversity of motivations, characteristics, and strategies that individuals and organizations adopt (Chrisman, Bauerschmidt, & Hofer, 1998). These variations in entrepreneurial forms are deeply rooted in the different socio-economic, institutional, and cultural contexts in which they emerge. Each form reflects specific motivations, goals, organizational structures, and societal impacts (Cooper, 2003), shaping the ways in which entrepreneurs identify opportunities and develop their ventures. So, this study aims to systematically categorize these diverse entrepreneurial types, based on their core drivers, personal traits, and strategic approaches to venture creation, to provide a deeper understanding of their varied roles in economic and social development.

Additionally, this study delves into the evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is shaped by technological advancements, globalization, and shifting societal values. The entrepreneurial ecosystem refers to the intricate and interdependent network of institutional, social, economic, and cultural factors that influence the creation, growth, and sustainability of entrepreneurial ventures (Stam & Spigel, 2016). This ecosystem encompasses a variety of actors, such as entrepreneurs, investors, universities, government agencies, and support organizations like incubators and accelerators, along with contextual factors such as access to finance, regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, and cultural attitudes toward innovation and risk. These interconnected elements collectively create an environment that can either facilitate or constrain entrepreneurial activity (Baumol, 1990). Notably, the quality and structure of the entrepreneurial ecosystem significantly shape the types of entrepreneurship that emerge and thrive within specific regions or economies (Stam & Spigel, 2016). For example, ecosystems with strong innovation infrastructure and robust access to venture capital are more likely to foster high-growth, technology-driven entrepreneurship. In contrast, ecosystems with constrained resources or a focus on social goals may see a prevalence of necessity-driven or social entrepreneurship. Therefore, the diversity of entrepreneurial forms is not only a reflection of individual choices but also an outcome of systemic and environmental conditions, which influence the types of entrepreneurship that flourish in different settings.

Entrepreneurship can be better understood through a multidimensional framework that captures its dynamic and heterogeneous nature. As entrepreneurial activity varies substantially in why it is pursued, what it produces, and how it is organized, research on measurement and typologies commonly distinguishes entrepreneurship along dimensions such as motivation, scale or growth orientation, and institutional formality (Desai, 2017). Building on this heterogeneity, three core dimensions are especially useful here: motivation, scale, and formality. First, the motivation dimension distinguishes opportunity driven entrepreneurship from necessity driven entrepreneurship, clarifying whether business creation is primarily pulled by perceived opportunities or pushed by limited work alternatives (Fairlie & Fossen, 2018). Second, the scale dimension contrasts small scale ventures with medium and large scale or high growth enterprises, reflecting that some entrepreneurs remain local and low investment while others pursue scaling and rapid growth that matters disproportionately for job creation and productivity (Desai, 2017). Third, the formality dimension differentiates formal and informal entrepreneurship, capturing whether activity occurs within formal institutional boundaries and legal recognition, which shapes access to finance, protections, and growth resources, as well as the constraints faced when operating outside formal structures (Williams & Shahid, 2016). Through this multidimensional approach, entrepreneurship's complex and evolving role in economic development becomes analytically clearer.

"Motivation" serves as a fundamental determinant of entrepreneurial behavior and influences the outcomes of ventures (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). A key distinction in the literature is the division between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurship. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by the pursuit of new opportunities, often seeking to exploit market gaps, innovate, or create value. They are driven by personal aspirations and long-term growth objectives (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). These entrepreneurs tend to engage in ventures that require substantial investment, are positioned for rapid growth, and have significant potential to contribute to economic dynamism and innovation over time. In contrast, necessity-driven entrepreneurship arises when individuals, confronted with economic hardships or limited job opportunities, resort to entrepreneurship as a survival strategy (Babu & Pinstrup-Andersen, 2007). This form

of entrepreneurship is prevalent in regions where alternative employment options are scarce (Acs & Varga, 2005). While necessity-driven entrepreneurs often operate on a smaller scale and face constraints in resources and scalability, they still contribute meaningfully to economic activity, especially in underserved or resource-constrained markets.

"Scale" is another critical dimension that shapes the scope and impact of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship varies significantly in terms of size and scope, with small-scale enterprises often characterized by lower capital requirements, fewer formal structures, and a focus on local markets. These businesses are essential in providing goods and services to communities and play a vital role in job creation and local economic activity (Storey, 1994). However, small enterprises frequently encounter challenges when attempting to scale, particularly due to limited access to capital, markets, and infrastructure. Conversely, medium and large-scale enterprises typically involve larger financial investments, more sophisticated organizational structures, and access to global markets. These ventures often serve as engines of technological innovation, productivity growth, and large-scale job creation, thereby contributing substantially to national and regional economic development (Bhidé, 1999). The scale of an entrepreneurial venture not only determines the resources available but also affects the breadth of its impact on the economic development.

"Formality" plays a decisive role in shaping the sustainability and success of entrepreneurial ventures. Formal entrepreneurship refers to businesses that comply with legal and regulatory requirements, such as business registration, tax payments, and adherence to labor laws. Entrepreneurs operating within formal structures generally have better access to institutional support, including government programs, venture capital, and financial services (Aldrich & Martinez, 2005). These formal ventures benefit from legal protection, enhanced access to resources, and market legitimacy, which can facilitate growth and expansion. In contrast, informal entrepreneurship encompasses businesses that operate outside the formal regulatory framework, often due to a lack of resources or inadequate enforcement of regulations (Julien, 1998). Informal enterprises typically struggle with limited access to financial and legal protections but tend to be more flexible and adaptive, thriving in

environments where formal systems are less effective. Informal entrepreneurship is particularly prevalent in developing economies or sectors where formal infrastructures are inadequate or absent (Williams & Shahid, 2016.

Examining entrepreneurship through these complementary factors of motivation, scale, and formality provides a deeper understanding of how these dimensions shape entrepreneurial outcomes. These factors are not mutually exclusive; rather, they intersect in complex ways. For instance, an entrepreneur driven by opportunity typically starts a small-scale venture with the goal of pursuing new opportunities, such as exploiting market gaps or introducing innovations (Fairlie & Fossen, 2018). As the business develops and gains access to more resources, funding, and markets, this entrepreneur may rapidly scale the venture, transforming it into a larger, high-growth enterprise (Storey, 1994). On the other hand, necessity-driven entrepreneurs begin their ventures out of economic necessity, often starting informally due to limited resources or a lack of formal job opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). As their businesses grow and face increasing demands, they may transition from informal operations to formal structures, seeking greater stability, access to legal protections, and more institutional support to sustain their growth. This progression shows how the motivations behind entrepreneurship, whether opportunity-driven or necessity-driven, can shape the trajectory of a business and influence its scale and formality over time (Webb et al., 2013). This intersection of motivations, scale, and formality reveals the intricate dynamics of entrepreneurship and underscores its varying contributions to economic and social development.

As the field of entrepreneurship has developed, its scope has expanded well beyond this classical understanding, now encompassing social, institutional, and psychological factors that influence entrepreneurial behavior. Gartner (1985) emphasizes that entrepreneurship is not a single, fixed attribute or event but a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon, characterized by a range of behaviors, intentions, and outcomes. In the contemporary global environment, entrepreneurship has diversified, embracing a broad array of entrepreneurial profiles, business models, and opportunity structures (Chrisman, Bauerschmidt, & Hofer, 1998). These forms are shaped by a variety of contextual elements, including economic conditions,

institutional frameworks, and cultural norms (Cooper, 2003). As such, it is no longer feasible to view entrepreneurship as a uniform or monolithic activity. Instead, a more comprehensive understanding requires an analysis of its diverse motivations, such as opportunity-driven versus necessity-driven entrepreneurship, its scale, ranging from small ventures to large enterprises, and its degree of formality, including both formal and informal sectors. This diversity in entrepreneurial forms directly influences the nature of entrepreneurial ventures and their broader societal and economic impact.

By examining entrepreneurship through the lenses of motivation, scale, and formality, we gain deeper insights into the complex factors that shape its role in economic and social development. The interaction between these dimensions not only determines the types of ventures that emerge but also affects the broader contributions of these ventures to their economies and societies. To further explore this multifaceted phenomenon, it is crucial to shift focus to the individual who drives the entrepreneurial process: the entrepreneur themselves. Understanding the characteristics and profiles of entrepreneurs provides additional layers of context to the discussion, highlighting how individual traits and capabilities play a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. The next section will therefore delve into the characteristics of the entrepreneur, who stands at the core of entrepreneurial action and is integral to the overall entrepreneurial landscape.

3.1.3. Characteristics and Profiles of Entrepreneurs

The origins of the term “entrepreneur” come from the French word “entreprendre”, meaning “to undertake” (Jonsson, 2014). For this reason, in early economic theories, entrepreneurs were viewed as individuals who took risks and engaged in business ventures. For example, Richard Cantillon (1755) emphasized the entrepreneur’s role as a risk-bearer who operates under conditions of uncertainty, purchasing inputs at known prices and selling outputs at uncertain ones. This early conception positions entrepreneurs primarily as traders or individuals engaging in business with their own capital. Over time, the understanding of the entrepreneur evolved further, particularly through the work of Jean-Baptiste Say (1964), who expanded the definition to encompass individuals who organize and reallocate resources in a way that increases their productivity, contributing to broader economic growth and efficiency.

Schumpeter's (1934) concept of "creative destruction" refers to entrepreneurs acting as agents of change, disrupting established market structures by introducing innovative products, processes, or business models. This emphasis on innovation remains central to modern economic thought, with entrepreneurs often viewed as the driving force behind technological progress and industrial renewal (Schumpeter, 1934). As the theory of entrepreneurship developed, the concept of the entrepreneur began to be seen not only as a risk-bearer but also as an innovator and leader within both small and large enterprises. Drucker (1985) significantly advanced this view by emphasizing that entrepreneurship involves the practice of innovation. Drucker (1985) believed that entrepreneurship was not limited to individuals starting new businesses but could also occur within existing organizations. Entrepreneurs, in this sense, are individuals who systematically pursue opportunities to create new products, services, or processes that lead to organizational change. This understanding expanded the entrepreneurial profile beyond risk-taking to include creativity, vision, and the ability to lead organizational transformation. Schumpeter's claim (cited in Sanyang & Huang, 2010) that "everyone is an entrepreneur who carries out new combinations" emphasises the importance of innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset in all spheres of economic activity, highlighting that these "new combinations" can refer to novel pairings of resources, technologies, markets, or business models, not just new business formation.

Contemporary scholars in management and business have proposed various theories regarding the characteristics of entrepreneurs. Many leading thinkers remain faithful to the Schumpeter's tradition while offering different interpretations of this concept. For example, Drucker (1985), in his attempt to identify what is unique about entrepreneurs, starts with Shumpeter's definition but expands it to focus on opportunity. Drucker (1985) does not require entrepreneurs to create change but views them as individuals who exploit the opportunities that arise from changes in technology, consumer preferences, social norms, and other areas. He states, "the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity" (Drucker, 1985).

The concept of "opportunity" has become central to many modern definitions of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial action. It reflects how today's management theorists

interpret Shumpeter's notion of shifting resources to areas of higher yield. An opportunity, in this context, refers to the potential to create value. Entrepreneurs are characterized by a mindset that focuses on the possibilities, rather than the problems, created by change. According to Drucker (1985), starting a business is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for being an entrepreneur. He explicitly comments, "Not every new small business is entrepreneurial or represents entrepreneurship" (Drucker, 1985). Drucker (1985) uses the example of a "husband and wife who open another delicatessen store or another Mexican restaurant in the American suburb," suggesting that there is nothing particularly innovative or change-oriented about this. This idea is equally applicable to new non-profit organizations; not every new organization would be considered entrepreneurial. He also emphasizes that entrepreneurship does not require a profit motive.

Stevenson (1983), a prominent theorist of entrepreneurship, introduces the element of resourcefulness to the opportunity-based definition and identifies what distinguishes entrepreneurial management from more common forms of "administrative" management. After identifying several key differences, he suggests defining the essence of entrepreneurial management as "the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled" (Stevenson, 1983). Stevenson (1983) emphasizes that entrepreneurs not only see and pursue opportunities that administrative managers overlook, but they also do not allow their initial resource endowments to limit their options. Entrepreneurs mobilize the resources of others to achieve their objectives, while administrators often allow their existing resources and job descriptions to constrain their vision and actions. This offers a definition of the entrepreneurial manager and the entrepreneurial approach that is not limited to business start-ups.

In the 21st century, the entrepreneur has become a multifaceted figure marked by resilience, adaptability, and a sharp sense of recognizing opportunities. As modern entrepreneurship emphasizes the ability to identify and seize opportunities amidst uncertainty, entrepreneurs are seen as individuals who can pivot when needed, adapt to rapidly changing market conditions, and continuously innovate to stay ahead of the competition (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). The growth of digital technology,

the rise of the gig economy, and the increasing globalization of business have further shaped the profile of entrepreneurs, requiring them to possess not only traditional business acumen but also technological literacy, global awareness, and a strong capacity for networking. These shifts have broadened the scope of what it means to be an entrepreneur, making it a global and dynamic profession (Kuratko, 2016).

The profile of the modern entrepreneur is shaped by a complex interplay of various factors, including technological advancement, economic structures, education, policy environments, and cultural norms. In today's rapidly changing world, entrepreneurs are expected to be innovative, adaptable, and globally minded. While digital transformation, access to capital, and market dynamics significantly influence entrepreneurs' strategic choices and behavior, cultural differences also play a significant role in shaping how entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial roles are perceived and practiced around the world because entrepreneurial activity varies systematically across countries as it is embedded in national culture and social norms, which shape what counts as legitimate risk taking, innovation, and "acceptable" business behavior (Hayton et al., 2002). So, social and cultural norms constitute a core entrepreneurial framework condition that shapes how easy and how attractive starting a business is perceived to be.

Education systems also play a vital role in shaping entrepreneurs' mindsets. Countries that incorporate entrepreneurial thinking into early education, such as Finland or Israel, are stated to tend to cultivate more confident and proactive entrepreneurs (OECD, 2018). Meanwhile, access to capital and financial infrastructure, including venture capital, microfinance, and crowdfunding platforms, greatly affects who can actually start and grow a business (World Bank, 2020).

Government policy and regulatory environments also shape the individual entrepreneur's journey. Entrepreneurs operating in countries with supportive legal systems, simplified business registration procedures, and tax incentives are more likely to successfully launch and grow their ventures. On the other hand, excessive bureaucracy or weak protection of intellectual property rights can discourage entrepreneurs, limit their opportunities, and hinder their ability to innovate (Acs et al., 2017).

Socioeconomic background is another major determinant of who becomes an entrepreneur and what kinds of ventures entrepreneurs can pursue. Entrepreneurs from marginalized communities may face systemic barriers, such as discrimination, lack of access to education or funding, and limited social capital. However, these constraints can also foster creativity and resilience, as seen in the rise of grassroots and necessity-driven entrepreneurship in developing economies (Dees, 2001). Furthermore, technological literacy has become a non-negotiable component of entrepreneurial success. In the digital age, entrepreneurs must navigate e-commerce, data analytics, social media marketing, and remote work technologies. The digital divide, both within and between countries, can create unequal opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs depending on their location, infrastructure, and access to training (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Taken together, these economic, educational, policy-based, technological, and cultural factors intersect to form the modern entrepreneurial profile. Understanding these diverse influences is crucial not only for entrepreneurs themselves but also for educators, policymakers, and investors aiming to foster inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship around the world.

Cultural differences also play a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial profile. The way entrepreneurs interpret risk, failure, and legitimacy can vary greatly across different cultures and regions (Hayton et al., 2002). For example, in some societies, entrepreneurship is celebrated as a path to personal success and social mobility, while in others, it may be viewed with skepticism or even discouraged. These cultural attitudes influence not only the willingness to take risks but also the types of ventures individuals pursue and how they define business success. In some societies, entrepreneurship is celebrated as a pathway to personal achievement and economic mobility, while in others it may be met with skepticism or caution. Cultural attitudes affect risk tolerance, approaches to failure, gender participation, and even communication styles in business. For instance, Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions show how traits like individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance impact entrepreneurial activity. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures such as Japan, people may be less inclined to take entrepreneurial risks due to a fear of failure and social shame. On the other hand, cultures like that of the United States, which view failure as a learning opportunity, tend to encourage more entrepreneurial

experimentation (Morris, Schindehutte, & Lesser, 2002). In highly individualistic cultures such as the United States, entrepreneurship is often associated with self-actualization, innovation, and independence. In contrast, more collectivist societies, such as those in East Asia or Latin America, tend to emphasize group harmony, family obligations, or community benefits, which may shape entrepreneurial goals and decision-making differently (Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002). Gender roles, shaped by cultural norms, further affect who engages in entrepreneurial activity. In more patriarchal cultures, women may face systemic barriers to entrepreneurship, such as limited access to funding, restricted mobility, or social expectations that prioritize domestic roles. This results in lower female participation in entrepreneurship in those regions, as highlighted in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2023).

Throughout the historical process from ancient times to today's information society, changes in the understanding of entrepreneur and the views of some scholars (Ercan & Gökdeniz, 2009) are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Development Stages of Entrepreneurship from Ancient Times to the Present[1]

Historical Period	**Scholar**	**Views on Entrepreneur**
Ancient Age	-	They are free individuals in search of sustenance for their livelihood.
Middle Ages	-	They are the managers of large-scale production projects. There is no element of risk.
17th century	-	Entrepreneur is the person who undertakes the profit or loss risk of fixed-price contracts with the government.
1725	Richard Cantillon	Entrepreneur is the person who undertakes risk separately from the capital owner.
1803	Jean Baptiste Say	The entrepreneur's earnings are separated from the return on capital.
1876	Francis Walker	Earnings of the funder and the entrepreneur are separated.
1934	Joseph Schumpeter	An entrepreneur is someone who innovates and develops new technology.
1961	David McClelland	An entrepreneur is someone who is active and takes moderate risks.
1964	Peter Drucker	An entrepreneur is someone who maximizes opportunities.

[1] Adapted from Ercan and Gökdeniz (2009). The table is compiled by the authors based on Hisrich (1998), Çelik (2006), Özkara et al. (2006), and Timmons (1999).

Table 1. (continued)

1975	Albert Shapero	An entrepreneur is someone who takes the initiative in the social and economic functioning of the organization and assumes the risk of possible failure.
1980	Karl Vesper	The entrepreneur is perceived differently by economists, psychologists, businessmen and politicians.
1983	Gifford Pinchot	An intrapreneur is an employee entrepreneur within an operating organization.
1985	Robert Hisrich	An entrepreneur creates different values by investing time and effort, undertake various risks and eventually receive a financial or moral reward is the person who receives it.
1995	Peter Drucker	The entrepreneur is the person who reallocates resources from low-productivity areas to high-productivity areas and manages to retain them there.
1999	Jeffrey Timmons	An entrepreneur is a person with a way of thinking and acting balanced with contemporary leadership, who builds the right things with honesty and sincerity.
2001	Philip A. Wickham	An entrepreneur is an individual who develops a specific project with their own entrepreneurial vision.
2002	G. Brenkert	Entrepreneur is an indispensable element of the market economy.
2003	L. W. Busenitze	Entrepreneur is the person who plays the leading role in the formation of economic prosperity.

Overall, it can be said that the entrepreneurial profile is not defined by a single fixed trait but by an evolving combination of roles and capacities shaped by historical economic change and institutional contexts. From early views of the entrepreneur as a risk-bearer to contemporary accounts emphasizing innovation, opportunity recognition, and resource mobilization, the entrepreneur emerges as a context-sensitive figure rather than a stable, universal type. Taken together, these perspectives highlight the entrepreneur as a multifaceted and historically contingent phenomenon whose meanings and practices vary across sectors, economies, and cultures.

3.2. Historical Evolution of Entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship has undergone a long and complex historical evolution, deeply intertwined with the economic and social transformations of human societies. In its earliest manifestations, entrepreneurship was closely linked to trade, craftsmanship, and small-scale production in pre-industrial societies. Entrepreneurs were primarily seen as merchants or artisans who assumed modest economic risks to provide goods or services within local markets. These early

entrepreneurial activities laid the groundwork for more formalized and large-scale business ventures that emerged in later centuries (Hébert & Link, 2009).

A major transformation occurred during the Industrial Revolution, which significantly expanded both the meaning and function of entrepreneurship (Best, 1990). Entrepreneurs were no longer perceived merely as traders or capital providers but as pivotal figures who coordinated production processes, integrated various factors of production, and pioneered innovative goods and services. According to Albayrak (2022), an entrepreneur, from an economic standpoint, is someone who brings together the necessary production factors to produce goods or services, transforms them into profit, and takes full responsibility for the inherent risks. This shift elevated entrepreneurship to a central role in modern economies, positioning it as a key driver of economic growth and structural transformation (Albayrak, 2022, p.26). By applying their knowledge and skills to business ventures, entrepreneurs not only enhance their personal wealth but also stimulate employment, foster innovation, and contribute significantly to broader societal development (Casson, 2003).

In the pre-1970 period, entrepreneurship was significantly shaped by the dominant economic structure of the welfare state. Particularly between the end of World War II and the early 1970s, many Western countries embraced Keynesian economic policies and centralized systems that prioritized large-scale industrial production and public sector involvement in economic life (Aşkın et al., 2011). During this time, the dominant perception of economic stability relied on centralized planning, state intervention, and the prominence of large firms. These structures were believed to ensure full employment and economic equality through economies of scale and centralized governance. As a result, individual entrepreneurship was often overshadowed by the structural focus on large enterprises and state-driven economic models. Small-scale, local, or individual initiatives had limited space to thrive within this macroeconomic framework. Nevertheless, even in this period, entrepreneurial activities persisted in smaller forms, often serving local needs and supplementing centralized production with niche services or artisanal work (Pret & Cogan, 2019).

The 1970s marked a critical breaking point, primarily triggered by a series of global economic shocks, most notably the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 (Kaya, 2018, p. 20).

These events resulted in stagflation, industrial decline, and increasing unemployment across many developed economies. As the inefficiencies of Keynesian and centralized economic models became more apparent, policymakers and economists began to reconsider the structural underpinnings of economic growth. According to Demirdağ (2021), these crises not only led to the questioning of centralized production and Keynesian interventionist policies but also triggered a broader understanding of entrepreneurship's potential to revitalize stagnant economies. The economic depression during this period coincided with the emergence of early-stage technological innovations such as automation tools, mainframe computing systems, and microprocessors, which began to reshape production methods and market structures (Demirdağ, 2021). These developments signaled a departure from the Fordist type of production based on mass production and hierarchical control toward more flexible and adaptive modes of production (Jessop, 1995). In this context, entrepreneurship came to be seen not only as an alternative to the declining large-scale industrial model but also as a key strategy for navigating economic uncertainty, technological change, and shifting market dynamics. In fact, it can be said that the economic crises of the 1970s caused the absolute rules of organized capitalism, which was largely based on large-scale and mass production, to be questioned (Casson, 2003).

In the 1980s, economic liberalization became a defining feature of the global economic order (Harvey, 2005). With the rise of neoliberal ideologies led by political leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, free market principles gained prominence (Öniş & Şenses, 2009). Deregulation, privatization, and the reduction of state control over economic affairs became central policy tools. This liberal turn marked a fundamental shift in the understanding and promotion of entrepreneurship (Harvey, 2005). As markets opened up and public sectors were restructured, individuals were encouraged to take initiative, innovate, and create new business ventures (Schumpeter, 1976). The entrepreneurial spirit, once constrained by state-led economic models, found fertile ground in this new policy environment. In Türkiye as well as in other countries undergoing structural adjustment programs during this time, entrepreneurship began to emerge as a strategic tool for economic revitalization and private sector development (Soyak & Eroğlu, 2008). The

withdrawal of the state from direct economic management created a space in which entrepreneurial activity was both a necessity and an opportunity. This decade can be characterized by the re-emergence of individual initiative, innovation-driven growth, and the decentralization of economic activity (Casson, 2003).

The 1990s brought further acceleration to these trends through the intensification of globalization and rapid technological advancement. The end of the Cold War and the rise of global trade networks fostered an increasingly interconnected world economy (Storper & Harrison, 1991). New communication technologies, such as the internet and mobile networks, revolutionized the ways in which businesses operated and accessed markets. Entrepreneurship in this period came to be defined by its capacity to utilize "knowledge" and "flexibility" as core components of successful entrepreneurship (Nassar & Malik, 2021). Knowledge, in this sense, included technical expertise, access to information, and market intelligence, which are tools essential for identifying opportunities and maintaining a competitive edge. Flexibility, on the other hand, referred to an entrepreneur's ability to rapidly adapt to evolving market conditions, consumer preferences, and technological shifts. As global competition intensified, these attributes became essential for survival and success (Nassar & Malik, 2021). Moreover, during this era, entrepreneurship began to be associated not only with economic performance but also with regional and social development. As large firms increasingly demonstrated an inability to quickly adjust to new economic and technological environments, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) emerged as crucial drivers of innovation, employment, and localized economic growth. Entrepreneurship was thus reconceptualized as a context-sensitive activity that varies significantly across regions and sectors, influenced by local knowledge systems, institutional structures, and innovation capacity (Fritsch & Schroeter, 2011). This transformation highlighted the importance of internal dynamics such as social and human capital, localized knowledge, production culture, and innovation networks (Eraydın, 2004). In that sense, these crises led to the end of Fordist-type production and the emergence of a new industrial order (Jessop, 1995). Entrepreneurship and innovation activities started to be important tools of regional economic development and growth (Demirdağ, 2021). Since the 1990s, entrepreneurship has been substantially accepted as one of the

crucial vehicles of long-term regional employment growth, technological advancement, innovation and economic growth and development, particularly as large firms in general are not quick and flexible to adapt to new economic conditions and technological changes (Acs & Armington, 2004). Moreover, in the globalizing world, entrepreneurship has gained importance as a channel for new knowledge and its diffusion and has begun to balance the gap between economic development and investment in new knowledge (Acs & Armington, 2004).

Since the 1990s and into the contemporary era, entrepreneurship has evolved into a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by global dynamics and sector-specific contexts. It is no longer perceived as a uniform or one-size-fits-all economic activity but rather as a complex interplay of innovation, institutional arrangements, and socio-economic factors (Acs & Armington, 2004). In this period, entrepreneurship has increasingly taken on new forms, such as social entrepreneurship, digital entrepreneurship, and green entrepreneurship, reflecting broader shifts in societal values, environmental concerns, and technological capacities. The "entrepreneurial economy" concept, as articulated by Audretsch and Thurik (2001), highlights a fundamental transformation in which the driving forces of economic activity are no longer large-scale production and top-down management, but rather creativity, knowledge, innovation, and entrepreneurial capital. In today's globalized world, entrepreneurship plays a central role in shaping responses to contemporary challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, demographic shifts, and inclusive growth. It has also become a vital component of national and regional strategies aimed at boosting competitiveness, resilience, and long-term sustainability (Lee et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the rise of platform economies, gig work, and digital marketplaces has radically altered the boundaries and definitions of entrepreneurship (James, 2022). Technological platforms now enable individuals to create businesses with relatively low start-up costs, reaching global markets from local settings (James, 2022). These developments have democratized entrepreneurship to some extent, allowing more people, particularly women, youth, and marginalized groups, to participate in entrepreneurial ecosystems (Rani et al., 2022). At the same time, new challenges have emerged, such as precarious employment conditions, regulatory gaps, and

unequal access to digital infrastructure (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). Therefore, contemporary entrepreneurship exists at the intersection of opportunity and vulnerability, innovation and inequality, resilience and disruption. In summary, the historical evolution of entrepreneurship reveals a trajectory that moves from marginal, small-scale activity in pre-industrial economies to a central and dynamic force shaping modern economic, technological, and societal transformations (Rani et al., 2022). This evolution reflects broader shifts in political ideologies, economic paradigms, and technological innovations, and continues to be shaped by the dynamic interplay of global and local forces.

In the 21st century, entrepreneurship has evolved into a multi-dimensional and context-sensitive phenomenon (Sanyang & Huang, 2010). It no longer fits into a single mold. Digital platforms, global networks, and the gig economy have radically altered the landscape. Entrepreneurs today operate within complex ecosystems involving investors, incubators, accelerators, regulators, and global supply chains (Kenney & Zysman, 2016). Aparicio et al. (2016) argue that contemporary entrepreneurship plays a central role in achieving sustainable development goals, fostering inclusive growth, and enhancing societal resilience. It is now widely accepted as the main source of employment, innovation, and competitiveness at both national and regional levels. Furthermore, the emergence of digital entrepreneurship, impact entrepreneurship, and inclusive entrepreneurship has broadened its scope (Srnicek, 2017).

According to Audretsch and Thurik (2001), the transition from the managed economy to the entrepreneurial economy, where economic, social and political events in the economy are under the influence of knowledge dominates the production system and of the other factors as entrepreneurial activity and the capacity to create entrepreneurial capital (Thurik, 2001). In this new paradigm, entrepreneurial capital, i.e., the capacity to generate, absorb, and implement new ideas, has become a key determinant of economic performance. Entrepreneurial ecosystems now prioritize elements such as social capital, human capital, innovation culture, and supportive institutions. Additionally, entrepreneurship is now recognized as a critical policy area. Governments and international organizations invest in

entrepreneurship education, startup incentives, and regulatory reforms to cultivate entrepreneurial behavior. Especially in the face of crises such as climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical tensions, entrepreneurship offers flexible and innovative solutions that large bureaucratic systems often cannot (Lee et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the historical evolution of entrepreneurship from pre-industrial artisans to contemporary platform-based ventures reflects major shifts in economic structures, technological capabilities, and societal values. Across these periods, entrepreneurship has been repeatedly redefined by changing production regimes, policy paradigms, and knowledge dynamics, moving from local trade and modest risk taking to a central role in innovation, employment creation, and regional development.

3.3. Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurs have increasingly moved to the center of academic and policy debates, not only as economic actors but also as agents of social change who can unsettle established gender norms and contribute to broader patterns of inclusive and gender-equal socio-economic transformation (Perrow,1986; Reskin, 2005). This growing visibility has heightened attention to core questions in entrepreneurship research, including how entrepreneurship is defined, whose activities are recognized as "entrepreneurial," and which economic, social, and institutional conditions enable entrepreneurial pathways to emerge and be sustained (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Jennings & Brush, 2013). For this reason, understanding women's entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to simply adding women into existing frameworks historically shaped by male-centered assumptions (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Instead, it requires revisiting the conceptual approaches and evaluative criteria through which entrepreneurship has been categorized, assessed, and validated within the entrepreneurship literature.

Building on the previous sections that reviewed definitions, types, and the historical evolution of entrepreneurship from a broader and often gender-neutral perspective, this section treats women's entrepreneurship as a distinct analytical and empirical

field. It examines how women's entrepreneurship entered and expanded within the literature, how it has been conceptualized over time, and in what ways women-led entrepreneurial activity diverges from conventional models regarding sectoral patterns, financing strategies, growth trajectories, and organizational forms (Coleman, 2000; Jennings & Brush, 2013). At the same time, it emphasizes that women's entrepreneurship cannot be understood through an exclusively economic frame. It must also be situated within gendered institutional arrangements and informal norms that shape access to resources, recognition, and room for maneuver. These conditions influence who can plausibly become an entrepreneur, under what constraints, and at what cost (Gupta et al., 2009; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

This section is important for two reasons. First, it establishes conceptual clarity by differentiating the category of the "woman entrepreneur" from the conventional entrepreneur figure that is commonly treated as gender-neutral yet implicitly coded as male in much of the literature (Ecevit, 1993; Ertürk, 2016; Doğanalp & Afşar, 2016). Second, it provides the analytical foundation for the case study chapter by identifying the mechanisms through which women's entry into entrepreneurship is shaped at the intersection of labor-market dynamics, policy regimes, and everyday gender relations. In practical terms, this section proceeds in three steps: it first clarifies who is meant by the "woman entrepreneur" and why definitional precision matters; it then traces how women's entrepreneurship emerged as a subfield within entrepreneurship scholarship and became linked to policy agendas; finally, it maps the main drivers that draw women into entrepreneurship, including both opportunity-oriented motivations and necessity-driven pressures, and highlights why these drivers have different implications for sustainability and growth (Minniti, 2010; Carter et al., 2003; Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

3.3.1. Women Entrepreneur

The preceding sections focused on the evolving and sometimes ambiguous use of the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur in the literature. Within this context, offering a universally accepted definition of an entrepreneur is already complex;

however, the task becomes even more nuanced when applied specifically to women. This complexity is particularly evident in countries where a large portion of the female workforce is often labeled as "entrepreneurs," even when their roles may not align with the fundamental characteristics of entrepreneurial activity (Doğanalp & Afşar, 2016). To bring conceptual clarity, it is important to distinguish between the terms "businesswoman" and "woman entrepreneur," which are often used interchangeably but refer to different forms of economic positioning and authority.

A "woman entrepreneur" is typically defined as an individual who exhibits entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking, and who initiates, organizes, and manages a business enterprise independently or in partnership with others (Ecevit, 1993; Ertürk, 2016). A women entrepreneur assumes responsibility for the venture, including decision-making, strategic planning, and the financial risks tied to performance outcomes. In contrast, the term "businesswoman" more commonly refers to women employed in a variety of workplaces, often within relatively structured and secure positions, and without the exposure to uncertainty and ownership-related risk that is characteristic of entrepreneurial activity (Ertürk, 2016).

At this point, it is important to emphasize that the entrepreneurial characteristics attributed to women entrepreneurs in this definition, including innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking, are not gender-specific. They largely mirror the traits and behaviors traditionally associated with entrepreneurs in general. The analytical difference, therefore, is not that women entrepreneurs are defined through fundamentally different entrepreneurial qualities, but that the conditions under which those qualities can be enacted, recognized, and rewarded are frequently gendered (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). In other words, the definition largely aligns with conventional understandings of "the entrepreneur," and women's entrepreneurship becomes analytically distinct once the focus shifts from individual traits to the economic, institutional, and social conditions that shape women's entry into entrepreneurship, the constraints under which ventures are established and sustained, and the pathways through which they either remain small, stabilize, or scale over time.

Thus, while both businesswomen and women entrepreneurs contribute to the economic sphere, their positions differ significantly in terms of ownership, risk exposure, autonomy, innovation, and value creation. A woman entrepreneur does not merely participate in the economic system but actively shapes it (Ecevit, 1993). She creates value by transforming an idea into a functioning business, navigating regulatory, financial, and market challenges. Her work extends beyond operational management in the sense that she identifies opportunities, addresses unmet needs, and introduces new ways of organizing products, services, or processes (Ödemiş, 2018).

Moreover, women entrepreneurs frequently engage with both public and private actors, leveraging institutional support, networks, and financial resources to sustain and grow their businesses (OECD, 2004). Their involvement in decisions ranging from reinvestment strategies to resource allocation reflects a level of authority and responsibility that distinguishes entrepreneurship from salaried employment (Ecevit, 1993). At the same time, women's entrepreneurial activity is not uniform in organizational form. It can include employer firms that hire paid labor and pursue expansion, partnerships or family-based ventures, and microenterprises that operate with minimal capital and limited scale (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Within this broader spectrum, it is analytically important not to treat women's entrepreneurship only through the lens of employer firms or growth-oriented ventures. A substantial share of women's entrepreneurial activity takes the form of solo self-employment (Bari, 2021), where the entrepreneur operates as an own-account worker without employing others. This form differs from employer entrepreneurship not only in scale, but also in its typical resource base, exposure to risk, and growth capacity. It can enhance women's economic participation and autonomy, yet it may also reflect constrained opportunity structures, limited access to capital, and the need to reconcile income generation with unpaid care responsibilities (Bari, 2021).

While the definition of a woman entrepreneur emphasizes independence and risk-bearing, it is also essential to consider the constraints women face when entering and sustaining a business (Sharma, 2018). Defining women entrepreneurs purely through functional or economic criteria risks overlooking structural barriers such as limited

access to finance, underrepresentation in business networks, gendered cultural expectations, and the unequal burden of unpaid care work (Gupta et al., 2009). These constraints shape both the types of ventures women can establish and their sustainability and growth prospects (Gupta et al., 2009). As a result, women may concentrate in microenterprises, home-based ventures, or hybrid models that provide flexibility but can also limit scale and profitability (Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

Women entrepreneurs are analytically significant not only because they generate income and, in some cases, employment, but also because their presence makes visible the gendered assumptions through which entrepreneurial roles are assigned and evaluated (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Approached from this angle, the woman entrepreneur is not simply a firm owner in formal terms, but a decision-maker whose authority has to be enacted and recognized in practice (Jennings & Brush, 2013). This entails routine entrepreneurial work such as mobilizing resources, managing uncertainty, and negotiating with suppliers, clients, and institutions, while also navigating contexts in which ownership and leadership are tacitly associated with men. As a result, women entrepreneurs may confront additional credibility demands and role expectations that shape how their business agency is exercised, how they access resources and networks, and how their ventures are able to stabilize or grow over time (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

To conclude, the concept of the "woman entrepreneur" and its definition should be treated as analytically multi-layered. At the most basic level, it refers to a person who establishes and runs a venture and assumes the risks and responsibilities attached to ownership. At the same time, the woman entrepreneur is a situated actor whose entrepreneurial agency is shaped by gendered institutions, unequal access to resources and networks, and the social conditions through which credibility and authority are recognized. This distinction matters for this study because it links definitional precision to the empirical problem addressed in the case study chapter. The key issue is not only who is formally counted as an entrepreneur, but also under what conditions women's entrepreneurial trajectories are enabled or constrained in practice, and how these conditions shape whether ventures survive, stabilize, grow, or close over time

3.3.2. The Introduction of Women's Entrepreneurship into the Literature

To paraphrase Gertrude Stein (cited in Hart et al., 2003), "An entrepreneur is an entrepreneur is an entrepreneur," implying that regardless of size, shape, color, or gender, the essence of entrepreneurship remains the same. If this premise holds, then rigorous research on entrepreneurship should produce theories that are universally applicable. However, while existing studies demonstrate similarities in the demographic profiles of male and female entrepreneurs, they also highlight notable differences in business sector preferences, financing strategies, growth patterns, and organizational structures within women-led enterprises. Given these distinctions, it is both relevant and beneficial to examine women's entrepreneurship as a distinct area of inquiry within the broader entrepreneurial literature. In this section, the focus will be on how women's entrepreneurship emerged in academic discourse, how it has been conceptualized over time, and how it has come to be framed as a policy solution to women's unemployment and economic marginalization.

Entrepreneurship is a relatively recent academic discipline. The first known course was taught by Myles Mace at Harvard Business School in 1947, followed by Peter Drucker's course on entrepreneurship and innovation at New York University in 1953 (Cooper, 2003). In the early years, such courses mainly focused on small business management. It took quite some time before entrepreneurship became a common subject in most business schools (Cooper, 2003). The first conference on small business issues was held at St. Gallen University in Switzerland in 1948 and has been organized biennially, celebrating its 51st anniversary in the fall of 2000. The organization that eventually became the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) originated from a 1956 conference on small business management development at the University of Colorado (Acs & Audretsch, 1990). Although entrepreneurship as an academic field emerged in the mid-20th century and gained steady institutionalization over the following decades, the inclusion of women's entrepreneurship in scholarly research came relatively late (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). It was not until the 1970s that researchers began to systematically study female entrepreneurs. Since then, however, the field has grown significantly, expanding across multiple disciplines, employing diverse methodologies, and

encompassing various national contexts. Alongside this academic expansion, the social and political recognition of women entrepreneurs has also increased substantially since the 19th century, reflecting a broader transformation in gender roles, economic participation, and institutional support mechanisms.

The research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s was based on early trait psychology, so studies from that period focused on analyzing individual entrepreneurs in terms of specific psychological traits and personal characteristics. That is why, many of these studies did not aim to test established theories, but rather treated gender as a variable (Greene et al., 2007). Much of the work during this period focused on identifying the profile of the woman entrepreneur (Birley et al., 1987; Neider, 1987) or comparing women entrepreneurs with their male counterparts (Sexton & Kent, 1981; Masters & Meier, 1988). The goal was to develop an "ideal profile" of the entrepreneur by identifying traits that distinguished entrepreneurs from others.

Until the 1990s, academic journals and many prominent newspapers in the US characterized women-owned firms just as small lifestyle businesses or sole proprietorships (Baker et al., 1997), while male-centered business models were recognized as the natural type of business. In fact, while the mainstream entrepreneurship literature focusing primarily on male entrepreneurs emerged in the 1930s, female entrepreneurship emerged as a subfield in the late 1970s (Jennings & Brush, 2013). While the first academic study on female entrepreneurship was published by Schwartz in 1976 in the Journal of Contemporary Business, the first policy report in this area namely "The bottom line: Unequal enterprise in America" was released in 1979 in Washington DC. The first academic conference presentation on women entrepreneurs was made by Hisrich and O'Brien at the Babson College Conference on Entrepreneurship in 1981 (Yadav & Unni, 2016). Also, the first academic book (Goffee & Scase, 1985) on women entrepreneurship was published in 1985. Early researches on entrepreneurship supposed that male and female entrepreneurs were mainly the same and there was no particular need for separate research (Bruni et al., 2004). For this reason, the subfield of women's entrepreneurship did not develop as a major field from the late 1990s to the early 2000s (Jennings & Brush, 2013). This situation lasted until the initiation of two

special conferences. The first one was policy-oriented conference namely Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Conference on women entrepreneurs in small and medium sized enterprises, held in 1998. The second one was an academic conference namely Diana International, held in 2003.

Eventually, prominent journals in the mainstream entrepreneurship field realized the growing necessity for research in this area. A special issue on women's entrepreneurship was published by the journal Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice in 2006 and 2007, and later in 2012 (Bruni et al., 2004). A special report on women's entrepreneurship was published by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor[2] in 2006, followed by subsequent reports in 2010, 2012 and 2015. The Women Entrepreneurship Index report was published by Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute in 2015 and this report examined the conditions for promoting women entrepreneurship in 77 countries. According to the report, the top ten countries for women entrepreneurs in 2015 were the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Denmark, Netherlands, France, Iceland, Sweden, Finland and Norway (Terjesen & Lloyd, 2015).

So, in the early 1990s, as women began to assume more prominent roles both as entrepreneurs and political figures, feminist theories began to inspire studies on female entrepreneurial behavior (Hurley, 1999; Reskin & Bielby, 2005; Greer & Greene, 2003). However, although many feminist studies offered valuable empirical insights, they often lacked a strong theoretical foundation (Snyder, 1995). Around the same time, some economists like Goldin (1990) began exploring women's employment decisions. While she did not directly focus on self-employment or entrepreneurship, her work played a key role in legitimizing the academic investigation of women's labor behavior. In particular, the contributions of these economists played a pivotal role in advancing both theoretical and empirical research that links women's entrepreneurship to factors such as family resource allocation, marital and childbearing choices, self-confidence, opportunity perception, and poverty (Blau & Ferber, 1987).

[2] http://www.gemconsortium.org/

By the late 1990s, women's entrepreneurship had solidified its position as a prominent academic discipline and emerged as a key topic in media and political discussions on employment and labor markets. Research in this area expanded to encompass a wide range of issues affecting women entrepreneurs, including health, motherhood, family dynamics, and overall life satisfaction (Schindehutte et al., 2003; Williams, 2004). Additionally, the growing body of literature on women's entrepreneurship (Minniti, 2010; Kobeissi, 2010) aims to identify and clarify the specific factors influencing women's involvement in entrepreneurial endeavors. These studies emphasize various key determinants such as educational attainment, per capita income, infrastructure development, family responsibilities, self-perception, and political representation that play a crucial role in the emergence and sustainability of women-led enterprises. Furthermore, scholars have explored entrepreneurial networks (Aldrich et al., 2002) and investigated the characteristics of female-owned enterprises, including growth, performance, management styles, financing, human capital, labor markets, and social entrepreneurship (Burke, 2002; Carter, 2003).

By the 2000s, the research focus shifted from deficit-based approaches to more inclusive and contextual understandings of women entrepreneurship. Scholars began to explore how structural and institutional factors such as access to finance, networks, education, and societal expectations shape women's entrepreneurial pathways (Jennings & Brush, 2013). The recognition of entrepreneurship as a gendered phenomenon opened new debates around how normative ideas of business and success marginalize women's experiences and reinforce systemic inequalities (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Women entrepreneurship is now seen not only as a tool for individual empowerment but also as a critical contributor to economic growth and social development, especially in developing and emerging economies (Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

The key findings from research on female self-employment and new enterprise creation reveal several important insights. First, it is clear that women globally own and manage fewer businesses than men (Devine, 1994; Georgellis & Wall, 2005) This disparity may stem from higher failure rates among female entrepreneurs, fewer women initiating enterprises, or a combination of both factors (Kim, 2007). On the

other hand, some studies argue that, when variables such as enterprise size and industry distribution are held constant or statistically controlled, the failure rates among female entrepreneurs do not significantly differ from those of their male counterparts (Kalleberg & Leicht, 1991). As a result, the gender gap in entrepreneurship may primarily be attributed to the lower rate of women starting businesses (Perry, 2002). Research further indicates that multiple factors contribute to gender-based differences in entrepreneurial behavior, which in turn have broader macroeconomic implications (Kepler & Shane, 2007). For example, women and men often exhibit distinct socioeconomic characteristics, and when controlling for factors such as education, wealth, and family/work status, these gender-based differences may diminish (Cowling & Taylor, 2001). In addition, women typically have fewer years of entrepreneurial experience than men (Aronson, 1991) and are more likely to operate in different sectors (Coleman, 2000). Women's propensity to start enterprises may also be influenced by cultural norms or discrimination (Neumark & McLennan, 1995). Moreover, some studies suggest that women's preferences differ from men's, with fewer women opting for self-employment (Kanazawa, 2005).

In conclusion, the trajectory of women's entrepreneurship within academic literature reflects a gradual but significant shift from being an overlooked subtopic to becoming a recognized and multifaceted field of inquiry. Initially characterized by trait-based comparisons and deficit-oriented assumptions, research on women entrepreneurs has evolved to embrace contextual, structural, and intersectional perspectives. This transformation has been paralleled by growing political and economic interest in leveraging women's entrepreneurship as a tool for addressing gender inequality and fostering inclusive development. Today, women's entrepreneurship is not only studied for its economic implications but also for its role in challenging conventional business norms, reshaping labor dynamics, and expanding the boundaries of entrepreneurial discourse itself.

3.3.3. From Margin to Mainstream: the Drivers Behind Women's Entry into Entrepreneurship

Over the past few decades, women's role in the economic landscape has undergone a profound transformation, shifting from peripheral, supportive roles to becoming

central and dynamic contributors to economic growth and innovation (Cowling & Taylor, 2001). This transition has been neither spontaneous nor uniform, but rather shaped by a complex interplay of global economic changes, structural labor market inequalities, policy reforms, feminist advocacy, and evolving gender norms (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). As traditional employment avenues became less accessible, particularly due to structural adjustment programs and persistent gender-based discrimination, entrepreneurship increasingly emerged as both a survival mechanism and a strategic pathway to empowerment for many women. Simultaneously, international development agendas began to recognize women's entrepreneurship not merely as a gender issue, but as a crucial driver of inclusive and sustainable growth. This section explores the multifaceted drivers such as economic, social, psychological, educational, and cultural factors, that compel women to enter entrepreneurship. Moving beyond the lens of structural barriers, it highlights proactive motivations, challenges, or necessities, and enabling conditions that support women's ability to establish and sustain businesses. Understanding these dynamics is key not only to recognizing women's agency in reshaping economic participation but also to informing policy efforts that seek to promote gender-equitable development.

Until the 1970s, women were primarily included in development policies as passive beneficiaries, often depicted as mothers and housewives. In contrast, training in fields like technology and finance was predominantly designed for men (Minniti, 2009). The Western model of development emphasized in the development plans, concentrated on the home as a standard recipient unit, and especially on men as breadwinners, despite that women were seen as dependents whose responsibility was their home (Demirez, 2016). In short, although women became visible as subjects in development with neoliberalism, it is possible to argue that they were not recognized by social policies. While all this was going on, the economic crises experienced throughout the world caused an increase in poverty and this poverty further worsened with the structural adjustment policies implemented to solve the economic crises (Neumark & McLennan, 1995). These policies mainly affected women negatively because they were both forced to find jobs in the informal sector and faced discrimination by working for low wages and entering the labor market under

unequal conditions. So much so that these negative developments and feminist debates began to shape development plans (Demirez, 2016). For all these reasons, gender equality and the position of women have begun to be considered important for development strategies and have begun to be considered by policy makers due to the importance of gender equality for economic development (Smee & Woodroffe, 2013).

To address this challenge, it has been realized that enhancing the status of women and promoting gender equality are essential steps. Various international organizations, including the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), have undertaken initiatives aimed at empowering women. These initiatives involve the development of projects and programs geared towards enhancing women's capacity to make choices that shape their own destinies, ensuring equal access to and control of resources, and enabling them to fully utilize their rights and opportunities (Demirez, 2016). These international organizations generally believe that the main way to increase women's emancipation is to ensure their access to the labor market, and therefore policies on women's employment have started to emphasize raising women's education levels, promoting women's entrepreneurship and making the labor market more flexible. Here, especially flexibility in the labor market for women can take various forms to enhance their participation and success. These include flexible working hours to balance career and family responsibilities, supportive policies for mothers returning to work after childbirth, and initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship. Gender equality and anti-discrimination measures are vital to create inclusive work environments. Additionally, encouraging women to pursue leadership roles is essential for achieving greater gender diversity in the entrepreneurial world. These policy approaches aim to empower women, promote their economic independence, and ensure they have equal opportunities and rights in the workforce.

Based on all these, since entrepreneurship is characterized as an economic necessity that supports structural balance, employment selection, economic growth and national and personal welfare in a modern economy, women entrepreneurs have started to be seen as significant for economic development with the thought that they

will contribute to job creation and economic growth (Green & Cohen, 1995). In addition, it has been started to be thought that household income will increase and therefore poverty in the society will be alleviated thanks to women's entrepreneurship. At this point, entrepreneurship began to be seen as a useful tool in order to empower women by development agencies and organizations. While developing entrepreneurship programs for economic development at the global level, the impact of these programs on women's lives has also been started to be considered (Demirez, 2016).

While all these international efforts and policy advancements have contributed significantly to empowering women and promoting gender equality, they also serve as important catalysts for the rise of female entrepreneurship. Yet, to fully understand the increasing presence of women in the entrepreneurial landscape, it is essential to explore the fundamental motivations, needs, and challenges that drive them to start their own businesses.

One of the primary reasons that women turn to entrepreneurship is identified as economic necessity (Carter et al., 2003). Particularly in developing countries, many women opt to start their own businesses due to the challenges of low-wage jobs and economic hardship. Economic crises, rising unemployment rates, and poorly paid work push women toward entrepreneurship as a means of achieving economic security and independence (Parker, 2006). The traditional labor market often presents inequalities and discrimination, making self-employment a more appealing and viable option (Bari, 2021). Additionally, women's entrepreneurship is seen as a significant factor in alleviating poverty and contributing to economic growth, as it helps to increase household income (Gupta et al., 2009). The growing recognition of women's entrepreneurship as a key driver of development has led international organizations to focus on improving women's access to the labor market and supporting policies that encourage women's participation in the economy (Ahl, 2006). According to Coleman (2000), female entrepreneurs tend to prefer internal sources over external financing, being less inclined to use financial instruments such as bank loans and supplier credit. The quantity of theoretical and empirical studies examining the correlation between entrepreneurship and economic growth,

development, employment, and the competitiveness of regions and countries has progressively expanded (Dvouletý & Lukeš, 2017), considering the gender dimension within broader policy frameworks as well. Early studies on the relationship between entrepreneurship and regional economic development were mostly conducted in developed countries, showing a direct correlation between entrepreneurship and economic development. However, as research on entrepreneurship increased, it became evident that the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development levels varies by region and time, with significant differences observed according to place and time (Hall & Sobel, 2008). This indicates that regions or countries with higher levels of entrepreneurship may also experience lower-than-average growth rates or low levels of economic development (Fritsch & Schroeter, 2011). Consequently, women's entrepreneurship plays a vital role in these dynamics, not only providing a route to personal financial independence but also impacting broader economic development outcomes.

Social factors also play a significant role in driving women toward entrepreneurship. Many women are motivated by gender inequality in the workforce, facing discrimination and limited opportunities in traditional employment. The societal recognition of gender equality has increased, with more emphasis placed on creating equal opportunities for women, which further encourages women to start their own businesses (Alsos & Ljunggren, 1998). The shifting social norms and the increasing visibility of women entrepreneurs provide inspiration for others to follow suit. As women become more visible in entrepreneurship, it creates a ripple effect, encouraging others to take the leap and contribute to the growing movement of female entrepreneurship (Anna et al., 2000). Women entrepreneurs not only support their families but also contribute to social change by challenging traditional gender roles and fostering economic and social development.

The psychological motivations behind women entering entrepreneurship are also critical to understanding their entrepreneurial journeys. Confidence plays a key role in women's decision to start their own businesses. By creating their own enterprises, women gain a sense of autonomy and self-expression, which boosts their self-esteem and belief in their abilities (Gupta et al., 2009). As they navigate the challenges of

entrepreneurship, women build resilience and the capacity to overcome obstacles, strengthening their confidence. Overcoming societal expectations and traditional gender roles allows women to take on leadership roles and make independent decisions, further motivating them to continue pursuing their business goals. These psychological factors encourage women to challenge the status quo and become active agents of change in the entrepreneurial world. Sexton and Bowman (1986) expanded on this research by using psychological tools to compare male and female entrepreneurship students across various dimensions such as independence, need for control, and risk-taking propensity. Interestingly, the authors identified differences between female entrepreneurship students and those studying other business disciplines in terms of conformity, energy levels, interpersonal interactions, risk-taking, social skills, autonomy, change, harm avoidance, and helping tendencies (Sexton and Bowman, 1986).

Educational factors play a significant role in driving female entrepreneurship. Higher education provides women with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in entrepreneurial ventures. Those with access to education are more likely to develop the critical business skills required to make sound decisions and overcome the challenges of managing a business. Education also allows women to grasp market dynamics, financial management, and strategic planning, which enables them to compete effectively in the business environment. In more developed countries, women's participation in business has notably increased due to better access to entrepreneurship training and support programs. However, the relationship between education and entrepreneurial success is not universally viewed as entirely positive. Some argue that raising women's educational levels may have complex implications for business survival. While better education may help extend a firm's lifespan by equipping entrepreneurs with stronger skills, it could also cause highly educated women to leave entrepreneurship in favor of better-paying job opportunities (Nafziger & Terrell, 1996). They highlighted in their study of India that newly founded businesses led by well-educated entrepreneurs had lower survival rates because their founders were more likely to pursue higher-paying employment or rent-seeking opportunities (Nafziger & Terrell, 1996). This suggests that formal education does not always correlate with enhanced entrepreneurial success.

Similarly, Sexton and Kent (1981) found that female entrepreneurs had slightly lower levels of education compared to female executives.

Cultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping women's decisions to embark on entrepreneurship (Nina Gunnerud, 1997). Historically, traditional societal norms have imposed limitations on women's roles in the workforce, but these norms have begun to evolve over time. This cultural shift provides women with new opportunities to challenge these traditional roles and create their own businesses. With urbanization and changing family dynamics, more women are gaining access to the resources and support necessary to engage in entrepreneurship. As societal views of women in business continue to progress, it becomes increasingly possible for women to take on entrepreneurial roles and be acknowledged as leaders in their communities (Brush, 1992). However, this transformation is not straightforward. Cultural differences add complexity to the way personal and professional roles intersect. On one hand, cultural changes provide an enabling environment for women to overcome traditional constraints and pursue entrepreneurial ambitions. On the other hand, the clash between family and business responsibilities remains a challenge. For instance, a study on married female entrepreneurs in Türkiye found that while entrepreneurship often strained their family lives, it had a positive impact on their social, economic, and individual well-being (Ufuk & Ozgen, 2001).

Structural conditions play a significant role in fostering female entrepreneurship. Government policies that offer support to women entrepreneurs such as access to credit, mentoring programs, and business development services help minimize the challenges women encounter when starting their businesses (Birley, 1987). Additionally, legal and regulatory frameworks that promote women's economic participation further strengthen their ability to establish and expand their businesses. For instance, policies that provide financial support to women entrepreneurs or offer flexible work arrangements help women balance family obligations with their business responsibilities. These structural supports create an environment conducive to the growth and sustainability of women's entrepreneurial endeavors (Naudé, 2010). On the other hand, gender-focused assistance programs have aimed at empowering women within the constraints of the new economy through social

training initiatives (Servon, 1996). While some of these efforts have been directed towards micro-enterprise training, concerns have been raised that such programs reinforce industrial segregation by directing women into small, home-based, underfunded, and labor-intensive businesses. Ehlers and Main (1998) argued that these micro-enterprise programs fail to consider the socio-cultural factors women bring with them, focusing instead on personal development. They suggest that such policies have perpetuated the economic vulnerability of female entrepreneurs and further marginalized them, rather than helping them integrate into the mainstream economic sector (Ehlers and Main, 1998). These concerns emphasise the need for more comprehensive structural support that addresses not just immediate barriers but also the broader socio-cultural and economic challenges women face.

3.4. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the multifaceted and historically evolving nature of entrepreneurship has been explored from various angles, revealing how it is shaped by economic, social, cultural, and institutional dynamics. Starting with the foundational definitions and early economic theories, from Cantillon's risk-bearer to Schumpeter's innovator, the discussion traced how the conceptualization of the entrepreneur has continuously expanded to include the dimensions of innovation, opportunity recognition, and adaptability within rapidly changing market conditions (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1985).

This chapter has shown that entrepreneurship is not a fixed or universally neutral practice but rather a dynamic phenomenon shaped by broader structural forces such as technological change, globalization, and policy frameworks (Acs & Armington, 2004). It demonstrates how the entrepreneurial profile today is deeply influenced by factors like education systems, access to capital, cultural norms, and socio-economic background. These factors not only create opportunities but also reproduce inequalities in who can successfully enter and sustain entrepreneurial ventures (Kenney & Zysman, 2016).

By critically examining the historical trajectory of entrepreneurship from its pre-industrial roots through the industrial revolution to the rise of the "entrepreneurial

economy" in the 21st century, the chapter highlights how shifting economic paradigms, crises, and technological breakthroughs have continually redefined what it means to be an entrepreneur and what role entrepreneurship plays in regional and global development (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001; Lee et al., 2024).

Through the integration of gender perspectives, the chapter also made clear that women's entrepreneurship is not simply a subcategory of general entrepreneurial studies but a significant field that sheds light on how structural barriers, discriminatory norms, and gendered expectations have historically constrained women's full economic participation (Jennings & Brush, 2013). It demonstrated how the inclusion of women in entrepreneurship research evolved from a marginal topic focused on trait-based comparisons to a critical, intersectional area that now considers institutional, cultural, and policy factors (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

Moreover, the discussion underscored that women's increasing engagement in entrepreneurship has not been an automatic process but one driven by a complex combination of economic necessity, policy shifts, feminist advocacy, and evolving social attitudes toward gender roles (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Today, women's entrepreneurship is widely recognized not only as a tool for economic development and poverty alleviation but also as a transformative force challenging conventional business norms and contributing to gender equality and social change.

Taken together, the themes addressed in this chapter demonstrate that entrepreneurship must be understood as a gendered phenomenon embedded within broader social structures and power relations. Recognizing this complexity is essential for designing inclusive policies, education programs, and institutional supports that address the barriers women face and foster more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

This understanding sets the stage for the next chapter, which will focus on the Türkiye context. By situating the historical development of bureaucracy and entrepreneurship within Türkiye's unique political and socio-economic transformations, from the Ottoman era to the neoliberal Justice and Development

Party (AKP) period, the following section will reveal how these structural frameworks shape women's entrepreneurial experiences today. In doing so, it will show that the gendered tensions, barriers, and dependencies explored here do not remain abstract but take concrete form in the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial realities that women navigate daily in Türkiye's evolving governance landscape.

CHAPTER 4

BUREAUCRACY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TÜRKIYE: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

This chapter critically examines the historical evolution of bureaucracy and entrepreneurship in Türkiye through a gendered lens. It first traces the emergence and transformation of bureaucracy from the Ottoman Empire through the Republican era to the neoliberal restructuring of the post-1980s (Findley, 2014; Zürcher, 2004). While the Tanzimat (1839) and Islahat (1856) reforms laid the groundwork for a more centralized and ostensibly merit-based bureaucracy (Zürcher, 2004; Shaw, 1976), the early Republic, especially during the single-party era (1923-1946), institutionalized bureaucracy as a tool for nation-building and state-led modernization (Berkes, 1998; Ahmad, 1993). Yet, despite the modernist and egalitarian discourse, women's representation in decision-making roles remained marginal due to entrenched patriarchal norms (Arat, 1994; Kandiyoti, 1991; Tekeli, 1993). The neoliberal reforms of the post-1980s, aimed at improving efficiency and flexibility, often failed to address or even deepened gendered inequalities within the bureaucratic apparatus (Öniş & Şenses, 2022; Fraser, 2016; Kantola & Squires, 2012).

The chapter then examines the historical trajectory of entrepreneurship in Türkiye, from the guilds and proto-capitalist practices of the Ottoman era to the statist industrialization policies of the early Republic and the export-oriented liberalization of the post-1980 period (Durak, 2016; Gök, 2021; Hoşgör, 2011). The AKP era has institutionalized entrepreneurship as a national project, with expanded support mechanisms such as Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB) and Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) (Durukan, 2021; Arıcan Kaygusuz & Genç, 2022). However, the

symbolic figure of the “national entrepreneur” was constructed around masculine ideals of risk-taking and competitiveness, reproducing traditional gender roles and confining women mostly to micro-enterprises or home-based production (Ermiş Mert, 2020).

The interplay between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship has already been shown to be deeply gendered (Acker, 1990; Walby, 2005). While bureaucracy is characterized by hierarchies, regulations, and formal procedures, entrepreneurship relies on autonomy, innovation, and risk-taking, both shaped by masculine norms (Calás et al., 2009). Moreover, informal networks and discretionary practices, often male-dominated, mediate bureaucratic processes such as licensing, funding, and compliance (Heper & Keyman, 1998; Özbebek Tunç & Alkan, 2019). These informal systems systematically disadvantage women, limiting their access to vital resources and undermining their entrepreneurial sustainability (Doering & Thébaud, 2017; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001).

Altogether, this chapter demonstrates that neither bureaucracy nor entrepreneurship in Türkiye are gender-neutral fields. Rather, their gendered natures can perpetuate gender inequalities when they come together in women entrepreneurs’ encounters with bureaucracy.

4.1. Historical Evolution of Bureaucracy in Türkiye: From Ottoman Roots to Republican and Neoliberal Transformations

The historical evolution of bureaucracy in Türkiye is deeply rooted in the state’s shifting administrative logics and political transformations, from the late Ottoman era to the present day (Findley, 2014; Zürcher, 2004). Bureaucracy in the Turkish context has never been a static or neutral structure; rather, it has continuously adapted to ideological shifts, regime changes, and global economic trends (Ahmad, 1993; Berkes, 1998; Mardin, 2006). Understanding this evolution is essential not only to grasp how the Turkish state has functioned administratively across different historical junctures, but also to assess how bureaucratic norms and practices have shaped, and been shaped by, gendered dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (Kandiyoti, 1991; Tekeli, 1982).

This sub-section focuses on three key historical periods that have critically shaped Türkiye's bureaucratic apparatus. The first part explores the patrimonial and hierarchical structure of the Ottoman state, with particular emphasis on the institutional reforms of the Tanzimat and Islahat periods. These reforms introduced the early foundations of a merit-based, centralized, and hierarchical bureaucracy, marking the rise of a bureaucratic elite and initiating a gradual yet consequential transition toward a more rationalized form of administration (Zürcher, 2004). While these developments modernized the administrative logic of the empire, they remained limited in scope regarding gender inclusion, leaving women almost entirely outside the formal bureaucratic realm (Nasir, 2009). The second part examines the Republican era, when bureaucracy became a central instrument in the nation-building project. The newly established Republic utilized bureaucracy not only as an administrative mechanism but also as a tool for constructing a modern, secular, and unified national identity (Berkes, 1998). The expansion and centralization of bureaucratic institutions during this period has been widely considered to signal the consolidation of a strong state apparatus. However, despite the modernist and egalitarian rhetoric, women's participation in bureaucratic structures remained minimal, particularly in decision-making and leadership positions (Arat, 1994). This contradiction between discourse and practice reflected the enduring gendered boundaries of bureaucratic power. Finally, the third part analyzes the post-1980 period, characterized by neoliberal restructuring in the aftermath of the military coup (Öniş & Şenses, 2022). In this era, Turkish bureaucracy underwent a profound transformation, influenced by global governance discourses emphasizing efficiency, transparency, flexibility, and performance. These reforms aimed to dismantle the rigidities of traditional bureaucratic structures and introduce market-oriented rationalities into the public sector. While such shifts promised greater inclusivity and responsiveness, they often failed to address, and at times even exacerbated, existing gendered inequalities within the administrative system (Eder, 2010).

Following this historical analysis, the section will also focus on women in Turkish bureaucracy, examining the historical positioning of women in the public sector and the structural and cultural barriers that have hindered their vertical mobility. Key issues such as the "glass ceiling," gendered recruitment and promotion practices, and

women's limited access to top decision-making roles will be critically examined. Moreover, the evolving, yet still constrained, visibility of female bureaucrats in high-ranking offices will be analyzed, emphasizing the ongoing challenges and persistent gender inequalities that continue to shape the bureaucratic landscape, despite some advancements over time. This examination will offer a deeper understanding of how gender dynamics within the bureaucracy have evolved, and where the most significant obstacles remain in the path toward true gender equality in public administration.

The roots of Türkiye's bureaucratic tradition can be traced to the patrimonial and hierarchical organization of the Ottoman Empire, where administration was deeply personalized and intertwined with loyalty-based appointments (Zürcher, 2004). This patrimonial system relied heavily on personal allegiance to the Sultan and his court, resulting in a highly fragmented and clientelist administration (Hanioğlu, 2008). However, the Tanzimat reforms of 1839 and the Islahat reforms of 1856 marked a significant departure from this traditional structure by laying the groundwork for a centralized, codified, and merit-based bureaucracy (Shaw, 1976). These reforms introduced modern administrative institutions such as civil registries, provincial councils, and standardized legal codes, thereby fostering a nascent bureaucratic rationality that paralleled modernization efforts in Europe and other parts of the world (Ahmad, 1993).

The Tanzimat reforms in particular sought to replace arbitrary and personalized forms of administration with systematic bureaucratic procedures, reflecting the influence of Enlightenment ideals and European legal codes (Lewis, 1961). The establishment of a centralized bureaucracy aimed to strengthen state authority, improve fiscal administration, and create a professional class of civil servants recruited on meritocratic principles (İnalcık, 1994). Despite these advances, the reforms largely failed to challenge existing social hierarchies and gender relations embedded within Ottoman society (Peirce, 1993).

Specifically, these institutional transformations remained fundamentally exclusionary regarding gender. Women were systematically left outside the formal

bureaucratic order, both ideologically and structurally, as the Ottoman administrative reforms did not address the patriarchal norms that confined women to the private sphere (Nasir, 2009). The emerging bureaucratic elite was overwhelmingly male, and gendered social expectations reinforced women's marginalization from public administrative roles (Findley, 2014). The reformed institutions, while modern in form, reproduced the patriarchal order by maintaining gendered divisions of labor and excluding women from political and bureaucratic participation (Findley, 2014, p.134). Thus, the modernization of bureaucracy entailed administrative centralization and professionalization but did not translate into democratization or inclusivity with respect to women's participation in administrative life (Karpat, 2001).

This persistent exclusion reflects a broader pattern where modernization processes in late Ottoman society enhanced state capacity and administrative efficiency without necessarily dismantling deep-rooted gender inequalities (Berktay, 2009). Therefore, the Ottoman bureaucratic reforms can be seen as simultaneously progressive in rationalizing administration and conservative in reinforcing patriarchal social structures (Karpat, 2001).

The establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 marked a profound political and ideological transformation that fundamentally reshaped the state's administrative architecture (Berkes, 1998). Bureaucracy was reimagined not merely as a mechanism for administration but as a pivotal instrument within the state-led modernization and nation-building project (Zürcher, 2004; Ahmad, 1993). The Republican elite conceptualized bureaucracy as a strategic tool to institutionalize and disseminate the foundational principles of secularism, nationalism, and modernity, which were central to the Kemalist vision of a progressive, unified nation-state (Keyder, 2020). Within this framework, the bureaucrat transcended the role of a mere civil servant to become a symbolic agent tasked with embodying and advancing the Republic's transformative mission (Weiker, 1968).

This era saw a significant expansion and centralization of bureaucratic institutions alongside increased professionalization, reflecting the state's ambitions to establish a strong and efficient administrative apparatus (Findley, 2014; Rothman, 2007).

Centralized control over local administration structures was strengthened to ensure uniform implementation of national policies and the propagation of Republican ideology (Ortaylı, 2008). The reforms aimed to dismantle remnants of the Ottoman patrimonial system and replace it with a rational-legal bureaucracy in line with Weberian principles of administration (Weiker, 1968).

Despite the early Republic's modernist and egalitarian rhetoric, which promoted reforms that extended women's rights in education, civil law (such as the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926), and political representation (women gained suffrage rights in local elections in 1930 and parliamentary elections in 1934), women's participation within the bureaucratic domain remained marginal and heavily gendered (Kandiyoti, 1987; White, 2003). Leadership and decision-making roles within the bureaucracy were overwhelmingly occupied by men, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal norms that persisted beneath the surface of official egalitarianism (Kandiyoti, 1991; Tekeli, 1993; Arat, 1989). Women were largely relegated to peripheral or supportive roles, particularly in socially accepted "feminine" fields such as education and healthcare, which were seen as extensions of their traditional societal roles (Arat, 1998).

The dissonance between the Republic's egalitarian ideals and its actual bureaucratic gender practices is usually considered to highlight the limitations of top-down modernization in confronting entrenched patriarchal structures (Tekeli, 1995; White, 2011). While the state enacted progressive reforms on paper, the persistence of gendered barriers in recruitment, promotion, and institutional culture curtailed women's upward mobility and full inclusion in administration (White, 2011). This gap reflects a broader contradiction in Kemalist modernization: its simultaneous embrace of Western-style secular and legal reforms, alongside the continuation of traditional gender hierarchies within the public sphere (Sirman, 1989; Saktanber, 2018).

Despite the early Republic's ambitious efforts to modernize and centralize the bureaucracy, Türkiye's administrative system throughout the mid-20th century remained deeply embedded within traditional social hierarchies and political

dynamics (Zürcher, 2004). From the 1960s onwards, Türkiye experienced rapid urbanization, political fragmentation, and economic instability, which increasingly exposed the limitations of this bureaucratic framework in responding to new social and economic challenges (Keyman & İçduygu, 2003). Concurrently, the growing influence of globalization and international financial institutions began to challenge the state-led developmental model and its bureaucratic organization. The military coup of 1980 did not occur in isolation but rather as a response to these multifaceted crises, marking a critical rupture that precipitated a paradigmatic shift from a welfare-state bureaucracy toward a neoliberal administrative order (Öniş & Şenses, 2022). This transition entailed reconfiguring bureaucratic structures and practices to align with market principles, emphasizing efficiency, managerial flexibility, and performance measurement in accordance with the prescriptions of global governance paradigms (Yalman, 2018).

The post-1980 period in Türkiye marked a profound and multifaceted transformation in the bureaucratic landscape, catalyzed initially by the military coup of September 12, 1980 (Öniş & Şenses, 2022). This intervention not only restructured the political order but also set in motion a series of administrative reforms aligned with a broader global shift toward neoliberal economic and governance paradigms (Keyman & İçduygu, 2003). The military regime sought to impose a more centralized and disciplined administrative apparatus, aimed at stabilizing the state amid political fragmentation and economic instability (Ahmad, 1993). Subsequently, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed Türkiye's integration into the global economy under the auspices of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which conditioned financial assistance on the implementation of structural adjustment programs emphasizing austerity, deregulation, and liberalization (Kirişci, 2009).

Within this context, Türkiye embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to overhaul its public sector, aspiring to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability, in line with global trends of New Public Management and market-oriented governance (Sözen, 2005). These reforms entailed a paradigmatic shift from a traditionally hierarchical bureaucratic model, shaped by state-led modernization priorities and

associated with strong job security, standardized promotion pathways, and a paternalistic administrative ethos, towards a performance-driven and more flexible administrative framework that prioritized measurable outputs, managerial autonomy, and the privatization of public services.

Although these reforms were officially presented as instruments to democratize governance and foster inclusivity by enhancing citizen participation and reducing bureaucratic inertia, they often failed to address the entrenched gendered power relations within the state apparatus (Dedeoğlu and Elveren, 2012). In fact, the neoliberal restructuring tended to deepen gender disparities by introducing new forms of precarity and competition that disproportionately affected women (Ylöstalo, 2022). Feminist scholars have shown that neoliberal policies undermine women's welfare, well-being, and economic security (Fraser, 2016), that the transformation of the state has led to the instrumentalization of gender equality policies in line with market priorities (Kantola & Squires, 2012), that neoliberalism reshapes women into responsible, competitive, and self-reliant subjects while obscuring structural inequalities (Rottenberg, 2018), and that feminism itself has evolved under neoliberal influence into forms like "neoliberal feminism" and "post-feminism," which focus on individual success while disregarding structural causes of inequality (Rottenberg, 2018). The neoliberal reforms thus did not dismantle the patriarchal foundations of the bureaucratic system but rather reconfigured them into subtler, depoliticized, and technocratic forms that perpetuated gendered inequalities under the guise of efficiency and modernization (Scharff, 2016). Thus, the post-1980 bureaucratic transformation in Türkiye also reflects the complexities and contradictions of neoliberal governance: while promoting formal administrative modernization and global economic integration, it simultaneously perpetuated gendered hierarchies and limited women's full inclusion in public administration.

In conclusion, by tracing the development of bureaucracy in Türkiye through three critical historical periods, this section provided a brief understanding of the institutional and ideological conditions that have shaped the bureaucratic structure. These historical transformations not only illustrate the evolution of the bureaucratic system but also highlight how these changes have impacted women's access to

bureaucratic roles. Moreover, these transformations shed light on the evolving gendered dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within bureaucracy.

4.2. Historical Evolution of Entrepreneurship in Türkiye

Entrepreneurship is not only an economic activity but also a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by political ideologies, state-society relations, and gender roles. The historical trajectory of entrepreneurship in Türkiye reflects these interwoven dimensions. Shifts in economic policy, the role of the state in the market, and evolving discourses on entrepreneurship have continuously influenced who can be an entrepreneur and what kinds of entrepreneurial practices are deemed legitimate or valuable. Understanding the historical evolution of entrepreneurship is therefore essential for analyzing both economic transformations and their broader societal implications, particularly in terms of gender.

This section explores the historical development of entrepreneurship in Türkiye across four key periods. First, it begins with the Ottoman period, where proto-entrepreneurial practices emerged within a trade-oriented economy shaped by institutional, religious, and political constraints (İnalcık et al., 1997; Şahin & Palta, 2020). Second, it examines the Early Republican period, when state-led industrialization under etatism left little room for private initiative, and ideological skepticism toward private capital dominated (Altuncuoğlu, 2019). Third, it analyzes the post-1980 period of economic liberalization, during which a new entrepreneurial class, exemplified by the so-called “Anatolian Tigers”, emerged (Hoşgör, 2011), and entrepreneurship was redefined as a central engine of modernization and development. Finally, it turns to the AKP era, characterized by the idealization of entrepreneurship within neoliberal frameworks, the establishment of institutional support mechanisms such as Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB), TÜBİTAK and regional development agencies and the symbolic construction of the “national entrepreneur” (Durukan, 2021).

By tracing these developments, this sub-section aims not only to highlight how entrepreneurship has evolved in Türkiye, but also to critically assess how this

evolution has affected women's participation. The analysis pays particular attention to the gendered nature of the "national entrepreneur" figure and questions whether this political-symbolic construct reinforces traditional gender roles, such as promoting home-based businesses for women, or aligns entrepreneurship with a male-dominated narrative of national success.

4.2.1. Ottoman Period: Trade-Oriented Economy, Institutional Constraints, and Proto-Entrepreneurial Practices

Although the recent surge of entrepreneurship discourse in Türkiye has been influenced by economic shifts and technological advancement, its historical roots stretch deep into the cultural, economic, socio-cultural and institutional landscape of the Anatolia. Actually, the origins of entrepreneurial activity can be traced back to Assyrian traders involved in the grain trade in ancient Anatolia. As humanity transitioned to agrarian societies, trade became central to economic life, with warfare often linked to control over trade routes and wealth (Gümüşoğlu & Karaöz, 2014).

With the migration and settlement of Turks in Anatolia, these proto-commercial traditions were inherited and adapted, particularly during the Seljuk period. One of the earliest structured entrepreneurial systems emerged during the Seljuk era with the establishment of the Ahi Order, namely a socio-economic and moral guild system (Gök, 2021). The Ahi organization regulated production, trade ethics, and quality control among artisans and merchants. It represented an early example of institutionalized entrepreneurship among the Turkish-Muslim population and laid a foundation of community-based commerce and local trade ethics (Durak, 2016).

For centuries, Anatolia has stood as a pivotal point in trade, giving rise to a new concept of traders distinct from both producers and consumers. These emerging traders recognized the growing needs of expanding societies and took on the role of acquiring goods from producers and selling them to consumers in other cities. These specialized traders represent some of the earliest examples of entrepreneurship; while serving the immediate surroundings of their cities, caravans under their operation developed long-distance trade. Anatolia's strategic position along trade routes

consistently laid the essential groundwork for these entrepreneurial activities (Gümüşoğlu & Karaöz, 2014). Anatolia remained a critical hub along the Silk and Spice Roads, as routes that not only connected East and West but also shaped cultural interactions and political dynamics. This strategic location fostered the rise of traders who operated between producers and consumers across cities (Durak, 2016). These figures, operating local and long-distance trade caravans, embodied early examples of entrepreneurship. Their activities which were distinct from mere production or consumption highlighted a proto-entrepreneurial mindset responding to societal demand (Gümüşoğlu & Karaöz, 2014).

During the following Ottoman period, however, this organic growth of trade and entrepreneurial practices encountered a complex array of institutional constraints. During the Ottoman Period, factors such as the existence of the timariot system, the absence of private property rights, the reliance on agriculture and military spoils for state revenues, and the influence of a religious belief system promoting modesty and contentment hindered the parallel development of industrialization and capitalism as seen in the West (Şahin & Palta, 2020). On the other hand, as noted by Gümüşoğlu and Karaöz (2014), the Ottoman Empire's expansive policies resulted in the acquisition of territories strategically positioned along the trade routes between the East and the West, making significant contributions to the development of trade. From the 16th century onwards, marketing cheap and diverse consumer goods became the official economy of the Ottoman Empire (Doğru, 2008). Nevertheless, a variety of constraints, ranging from restrictions on wealth accumulation for individuals other than the sultan and state officials to interventions by guilds and the state in all economic activities, including regulations on market hours and the number of shops, significantly curtailed the development of both the market mechanism and the formation of the entrepreneur-capitalist class (İnalcık et al., 1997). Limitations imposed on private property and personal wealth through the confiscation system also served as obstacles to entrepreneurial endeavors during this era (Doğru, 2008).

Entrepreneurial endeavors during the Ottoman era were largely conducted by non-Muslim minorities, namely Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, who were granted specific

privileges in commerce (İslâmoğlu-İnan, 1994). Meanwhile, the Turkish-Muslim majority was oriented toward state service in the military or agriculture, leading to their marginalization from the commercial sphere. The lack of initiatives to foster a Turkish-Muslim entrepreneurial class persisted until the Second Constitutional Era, when the framework of the "National Economy" began promoting economic modernization and industrialization (Şahin & Palta, 2020).

In essence, while Western Europe experienced the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire did not undergo an equivalent, economy-wide industrial transformation. Although the empire pursued reforms and modernization initiatives over time, these developments did not translate into a sustained industrial breakthrough on a comparable scale. Likewise, state-led efforts to cultivate an economic elite comparable to a Western-style bourgeoisie became more visible and programmatic in the late imperial period, particularly around the Second Constitutional Era (Owen & Göçek, 1998). Therefore, although trade and craftsmanship constituted the economic bedrock of Ottoman society, the institutional and organizational foundations commonly associated with modern capitalist entrepreneurship remained limited and uneven. In this context, legal-institutional arrangements, political priorities, and socio-normative frameworks shaped the scope of entrepreneurial activity and tended to constrain the emergence of a broad-based, dynamic entrepreneurial class. These dynamics continued to influence economic transformation into the early Republican period and beyond (Owen & Göçek, 1998).

4.2.2. Early Republican Period: Etatism and Limited Entrepreneurial Space

Although the founding of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 is often seen as a decisive rupture from the institutional and economic structures of the Ottoman past, some scholars interpret this transition as one of continuity and transformation rather than complete disjunction. Zürcher (2004), for instance, argues that many of the Republic's modernization efforts were rooted in late Ottoman reforms, suggesting that the new regime inherited and reconfigured this legacy.

In this context, the newly founded Republic of Türkiye confronted the aftermath of World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, inheriting a war-torn,

impoverished economy with a severely diminished population and collapsed infrastructure (Eroğlu, 2007). Responding to these urgent conditions, the leadership prioritized national economic reconstruction, beginning with the 1923 Izmir Economic Congress (Tekerek, 2012). Held between February 17 and March 4, 1923, the Congress convened just after the military phase of the War of Independence and during the interruption of the Lausanne Peace Conference. It laid out Türkiye's first comprehensive economic roadmap, promoting private enterprise while identifying structural weaknesses in agriculture and industry (Altuncuoğlu, 2019). In line with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's vision to elevate a largely agrarian society to the level of contemporary civilization, the new state initially followed a liberal path from 1923 to 1929, emphasizing limited state intervention and support for national entrepreneurship (Çelik & Çetiner, 2019). However, the onset of the global Great Depression in 1929 and the resulting collapse of liberal economic models worldwide prompted a dramatic shift (Altuncuoğlu, 2019). In Türkiye, this shift gave rise to an etatist framework starting in the 1930s, wherein the state assumed an active role in industrialization, not to replace private enterprise entirely, but to operate in sectors where private capital was insufficient or absent (Boratav, 2005). This approach culminated in the launch of the First Five-Year Industrial Plan in 1933, which marked the institutionalization of economic planning under the principle of statism, prioritizing national independence and self-sufficiency in both industry and trade (Boratav, 2005).

The early Republican leadership therefore opted for a state-centric model, adopting a strong interventionist policy to compensate for the underdevelopment of private enterprise and capital (Keyder, 1987). This culminated in the etatist era (1929-1939), characterized by two five-year industrial plans. The Turkish economic model implemented by Atatürk, while allowing for coexistence between public and private sectors, left limited space for independent private initiative (Varlı & Koraltürk, 2010). As Varlı (2012) noted, this resembled development policies in underdeveloped nations, where the state plays an active guiding and controlling role.

A cornerstone of this state-led industrialization strategy was the Industrial Encouragement Law (Sanayi Teşvik Kanunu) of 1927 (Gümüşoğlu & Karaöz, 2014).

Designed to overcome structural barriers such as capital scarcity, infrastructural deficiencies, and limited entrepreneurial experience, the law provided tax exemptions, customs incentives, and reduced local taxes for domestic production (Altıparmak, 1998). These policies aimed to mitigate adverse conditions hindering entrepreneurship and stimulate industrial growth (Altıparmak, 1998).

With the First Five-Year Industrial Plan launched in 1933, the state assumed a direct operational role in industry, initiating systematic nationwide industrialization (Boratav, 1989). Foreign-owned companies were acquired and nationalized, with their revenues reinvested into the state economy (Şahin & Palta, 2020). Even foreign experts were granted work permits to contribute to economic development through their technical expertise. Between 1932 and 1939, Gross National Income rose by 76% in current prices, and the contribution of private industrial enterprises benefiting from the 1927 law also increased (Küçük, 1985).

Nonetheless, entrepreneurship remained subordinated to state-led goals. The private sector was expected to follow state plans rather than initiate autonomous ventures. The ideological aversion to capitalist accumulation and state dominance continued to restrict the formation of a self-sufficient entrepreneurial class (İnalcık et al., 1997).

Women, in particular, were largely excluded from these economic reforms. Traditional gender roles and institutional constraints limited their participation in the economy, and entrepreneurship among women was virtually absent during this period (Arat, 1994). State policies prioritized male labor, reinforcing a gendered division of labor. Although women's participation increased marginally through vocational training and cooperatives, their access to capital, ownership, and leadership remained minimal (Ufuk & Özgen, 2001).

In summary, the early Republican era was a critical turning point in Türkiye's economic trajectory. However, the era prioritized state sovereignty and industrialization over entrepreneurial autonomy. Entrepreneurship was shaped and limited by ideological, institutional, and socio-cultural constraints particularly for women and functioned primarily as a tool for state-driven development.

4.2.3. Post-1980 Economic Liberalization and the Rise of the Entrepreneurial Class

Following the foundation of the Republic, Türkiye's economic model initially prioritized state-led industrialization and infrastructure development under the etatist approach. In the early decades, the aim was to establish a self-sufficient economy through state-owned enterprises and central planning (Boratav, 1989). However, by the 1950s, the limitations of this model became increasingly apparent amid growing internal demand, political pressure, and the country's need to integrate into global trade systems (Eder, 2010).

The post-1950 era, although marked by political instability (Zürcher, 2004), including multiple military coups and shifting coalition governments, witnessed a cautious shift towards private-sector industrialization. During this time, private enterprise gained modest ground through state-supported initiatives. The establishment of the Industrial Bank and the introduction of Development Plans in 1963 played pivotal roles in promoting entrepreneurship and industrial development (Küçük, 1985).

These policies emphasized the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and encouraged domestic production (Karakaş et al., 2015). Iconic entrepreneurial ventures such as Vehbi Koç's Otosan project, which produced the first Turkish car, and collaborative efforts like the Siemens cable factory emerged during this era (Şahin & Palta, 2020). By the 1970s, industrial activities accounted for up to 70% of private sector output despite ongoing turbulence (Eroğlu, 2004).

Nonetheless, this progress was hampered by recurring economic crises, most notably following the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation, which resulted in international embargoes (Candan, 2011). Combined with the oil crisis, rising inflation, and unsustainable public debt, the Turkish economy faced a growing need for structural reform (Öztürk, 2016).

During this time, key institutional developments also occurred, such as the establishment of Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) in 1971, a

major milestone in representing private-sector interests and laying the foundation for modern entrepreneurial discourse in Türkiye (Yenal, 2010). Yet, due to populist policies, regulatory inconsistencies, and ideological polarization, the entrepreneurial environment remained constrained until a more decisive transformation emerged in the 1980s (Yenal, 2010).

Despite the foundational efforts in industrial development and the cautious promotion of private enterprise during the 1950-1980 period, Türkiye's entrepreneurial landscape remained heavily constrained by the dominant role of the state, frequent policy shifts, and economic volatility (Yenal, 2010). These limitations emphasised the growing need for a systemic transformation that would liberalize the economy, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and enable market-driven initiatives to flourish (Karakaş et al., 2015). As the global economic environment moved toward neoliberalism in the late 20th century, Türkiye, too, found itself at a crossroads. The accumulated pressures of inflation, debt, and international isolation set the stage for a more decisive and ideologically distinct shift. It was under these conditions that the 1980s ushered in a new era, marked by liberal reforms, privatization, and export-oriented growth strategies, that fundamentally redefined the role and space of entrepreneurship in Türkiye (Pamuk, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the most significant turning point for entrepreneurship in Türkiye occurred after 1980, in parallel with the global shift toward neoliberal economic policies. The economic reforms initiated through the January 24 Decisions of 1980 marked the official beginning of Türkiye's transition toward a free-market economy, emphasizing export-led growth, financial liberalization, and reduced state involvement (Şahin, 2019).

This transformation enabled the expansion of private enterprise, the establishment of free trade zones, tax incentives, and credit support systems, all of which created an environment conducive to entrepreneurial activity. The shrinking of the public sector, coupled with privatization efforts and rising unemployment, positioned entrepreneurship not only as an economic necessity but also as a strategic response to socio-economic challenges (Pamuk, 2013) particularly for women and young individuals.

A pivotal outcome of this era was the emergence of a new entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, most visibly embodied in the phenomenon of the Anatolian Tigers (Hoşgör, 2011). These were SMEs and family-owned firms from conservative, often Central and Eastern Anatolian cities such as Kayseri, Gaziantep, Denizli, and Konya, which achieved rapid growth through export-oriented strategies and competitive manufacturing (Karakaş et al., 2015). Their success stories challenged the dominance of traditional Istanbul-based business elites and highlighted the democratization of entrepreneurial opportunity across regions. They were supported by institutional mechanisms like Islamic finance cooperatives and local trade networks, linking entrepreneurial success to both cultural values and global market integration (Öniş, 1998).

This period also witnessed a cultural shift: entrepreneurship became associated with modernization, individual initiative, and integration with international capital markets. The acceleration of entrepreneurship after 1980, therefore, must be contextualized within both national and global economic frameworks.

With the arrival of the 1990s, entrepreneurship in Türkiye was further bolstered by institutional support mechanisms such as KOSGEB (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization) (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016). KOSGEB provided financial assistance, entrepreneurship training, and non-repayable grants, playing a central role in the formation and success of new businesses (Özdemir et al., 2016). Through KOSGEB, practical entrepreneurship training programs are implemented with the aims of imparting entrepreneurial skills, creating awareness, establishing new businesses, and ensuring the success of established businesses (Durukan, 2021). These programs include grant and non-repayable credit support for recognized entrepreneurship projects (Durukan, 2021). Entrepreneurship courses are offered in many educational institutions, including universities.

The development of entrepreneurship in Türkiye is deeply embedded in the country's broader political and economic transformations. From the cautious steps taken during the import-substitution era to the sweeping liberal reforms of the post-1980 period, each phase contributed uniquely to shaping Türkiye's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

While the 1950-1980 period laid the institutional and industrial groundwork for private enterprise, it was not until the structural reforms of the 1980s that entrepreneurship could break free from state dependency and engage directly with global markets (Pamuk, 2013).

To conclude, the post-1980 liberalization not only facilitated economic diversification and competitiveness but also redefined entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social mobility and regional economic empowerment. The rise of the Anatolian Tigers and the institutionalization of entrepreneurial support mechanisms like KOSGEB reflect how deeply embedded entrepreneurship has become in Türkiye's development strategy (Durukan, 2021). Moreover, this evolution emphasises the importance of aligning domestic reforms with global economic currents to create sustainable and inclusive growth. Today, Türkiye's entrepreneurial journey stands as a testament to the complex interplay between historical continuity and transformative change, which is a process driven not only by policy and market forces, but also by culture, regional dynamics, and evolving social norms (Hoşgör, 2011).

4.2.4. Entrepreneurship in the AKP Era: Neoliberal Discourses and Governmental Support Mechanisms

In the 2000s, under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule, entrepreneurship policies were significantly institutionalized and became central to the government's political discourse. Building upon the foundational reforms of the previous decades, the AKP redefined entrepreneurship as a symbol of national progress, self-sufficiency, and global competitiveness (Uğur & Yankaya, 2008). During this period, a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem was constructed through the expansion of public support institutions and policy initiatives (Arıcan Kaygusuz & Genç, 2022).

Institutions such as KOSGEB, TÜBİTAK, regional development agencies, and technoparks began offering structured financial assistance, training programs, and market access opportunities (Durukan, 2021). Although KOSGEB existed in the 1990s, it operated with a relatively limited set of programs and a narrow scope; in this period, KOSGEB's support architecture was formalized into standardized

programs, its coverage and implementation capacity were expanded, and entrepreneurship supports built around a training and grant model became increasingly large-scale[3]. This institutional expansion was accompanied by growing collaboration between public institutions, private enterprises, universities, and civil socie[4]ty organizations, thereby enhancing the reach and diversity of entrepreneurial support systems.

Entrepreneurship was also systematically integrated into the education system. Strategic documents such as the "2010-2014 Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education Strategic Plan" and the "Lifelong Learning Strategy Document and Action Plan of Türkiye (2014-2018)" placed entrepreneurship education at the forefront of national policy (Sönmez & Toksoy, 2014). The Ministry of National Education introduced entrepreneurship as an interdisciplinary subject across grades 1 through 8, launched national projects in 7th and 8th grades, and established entrepreneurship as an elective course in high school. Collaborating with TÜBİTAK, the ministry also initiated teacher training programs on innovation and entrepreneurship (Arıcan Kaygusuz & Genç, 2022).

At the practical level, KOSGEB introduced hands-on entrepreneurship training programs, often in cooperation with local municipalities and universities, aimed at fostering new business creation (Uğur & Yankaya, 2008). TÜBİTAK supported R&D-driven ventures through grants and innovation awards (TÜBİTAK, 2024). Regional development agencies provided localized support to mitigate geographical disparities in entrepreneurial infrastructure.

Simultaneously, the AKP promoted a symbolic figure in its political rhetoric, the "national entrepreneur" (*milli girişimci*), as the embodiment of the ideal citizen: self-reliant, devout, hardworking, and loyal to national values (Altınoklu, 2024). This

[3] https://www.kosgeb.gov.tr/Content/Upload/Dosya/Arge/KOSGEB_Destek_Programlar%C4%B1_Y%C3%B6netmeli%C4%9Fi.pdf

[4] https://webdosya.kosgeb.gov.tr/Content/Upload/Dosya/Tablo%20ve%20Raporlar/Degerlendirme-Raporlari/Giris%CC%A7imcilik_Destek_Program%C4%B1_Yeni_Giris%CC%A7imci_Desteg%CC%86i_Nihai_Deg%CC%86erlendirme_....pdf

construction served not only to legitimize the government's economic direction but also to reinforce a national-capitalist vision (Öztürk, 2014).

However, the symbolic image of the national entrepreneur was heavily gendered. It drew on masculine ideals such as risk-taking, competitiveness, and leadership, as traits rarely attributed to women in the prevailing narrative. As a result, women were often marginalized within the entrepreneurial discourse and directed toward traditional roles. Many state-supported women entrepreneurships initiatives emphasized home-based production such as textile work, food preparation, or online retail activities that aligned with domestic responsibilities rather than challenged them (Ermiş Mert, 2020).

Although the rate of women's entrepreneurial participation increased, it remained uneven and largely limited to micro-enterprises. Structural barriers such as unequal access to finance, limited mentorship opportunities, gender bias in investor behavior, and low representation in high-growth sectors, continued to restrict women's full integration into the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Ermiş Mert, 2020). Even when policies formally supported gender-inclusive entrepreneurship, their implementation often reproduced patriarchal norms, linking women's economic activity to family life rather than promoting autonomy and innovation (Toksöz, 2012).

Nonetheless, the 2000s and 2010s marked an unprecedented rise in entrepreneurial activity in Türkiye. Urban centers witnessed the emergence of start-up accelerators, innovation hubs, and venture capital initiatives, particularly in the technology sector (Altınoklu, 2024). Türkiye's participation in international entrepreneurship programs helped integrate domestic ventures into global markets. Universities intensified their role in innovation through technology transfer offices, incubation programs, and start-up support initiatives, including TÜBİTAK's BiGG (Individual Young Entrepreneur) program (TÜBİTAK, 2024).

Despite these advancements, Türkiye's entrepreneurship rates still fell short of expectations. Early-stage entrepreneurial activity in Türkiye is significantly lower compared to other developing countries (Karadeniz & Özdemir, 2009). Analysts

consistently cite several persistent challenges: complex regulatory environments, insufficient intellectual property protections, risk-averse financing systems, and a general lack of institutional trust (World Bank, 2020).

In sum, The AKP era in Türkiye institutionalized and politically idealized entrepreneurship to an unprecedented degree. Through broad-based policy interventions, educational reforms, financial incentives, and international collaborations, entrepreneurship was framed as a national mission and a key pillar of development. However, the symbolic construction of the "national entrepreneur" and the gendered orientation of many support mechanisms revealed the limits of this transformation. While Türkiye made significant strides in cultivating a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem, deep-seated social and structural barriers persisted, especially for women. For entrepreneurship to become a truly inclusive engine of development, future policies must not only provide tangible resources but also confront the embedded social hierarchies that restrict who is recognized and supported as an entrepreneur in Türkiye. Genuine progress will depend on redefining entrepreneurship beyond masculine ideals and creating a more equitable space for diverse entrepreneurial actors to thrive.

4.2.5. Women Entrepreneurship in Türkiye: Policies and Support

Entrepreneurship is commonly defined through economic attributes such as risk-taking, innovation, and opportunity recognition (Zapalska & Fogel, 1998), yet feminist scholarship shows that entrepreneurial opportunities are structured by social and institutional inequalities rather than accessed on equal terms. Gender norms, household roles, education, and institutional dynamics shape who can enter entrepreneurship and with what capacity to sustain and grow a business, while women's unpaid care work is routinely rendered invisible within conventional market-centered definitions (Güney, 2006; Waring, 1988; Hardy, 1999). Historically, dominant liberal narratives and mainstream entrepreneurship theories constructed the entrepreneur as implicitly male, associating economic agency with masculinity and sidelining women's informal and home-based economic contributions (Elshtain, 1981; Casson & Mol, 2006; Ahl, 2006; Çelik & Özdevecioğlu, 2001). From the

1960s onward, second-wave feminist critiques and "gender and development" scholarship challenged this framing by emphasizing structural barriers, labor-market discrimination, and the need to recognize women's lived economic experiences (Freeman, 1975; Ferree & Martin, 1995; Folbre, 1994; Boserup, 1970; Schwartz, 1976). Finally, the crises and restructuring of the 1970s further expanded women's entry into entrepreneurship across many developing contexts, often as a survival strategy in response to exclusion from formal employment and declining household security (Kabeer, 1991; Zamantılı Nayır, 2008).

Similar dynamics began to unfold in Türkiye during the 1970s. Although women's formal labor force participation remained low, the economic pressures of the decade increasingly pushed women to contribute to household incomes through informal labor and small-scale income-generating activities (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016). While these contributions often remained invisible in official statistics, they marked the beginning of a broader recognition that women's integration into economic processes was not only essential for household survival but also held significance for national development and economic resilience (Elveren & Özgür, 2016; Tansel, 2002). Scholars and policymakers started to acknowledge that enabling women's participation in the workforce was critical for achieving more equitable and sustainable growth outcomes (Chant, 1997). This sub-section applies this perspective to Türkiye by tracing the historical and policy evolution of women's entrepreneurship from the late 1980s onward (including the 1990s policy turn and post-2000 institutionalization), the main support architectures and actors involved (public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations, including training, credit/microfinance, and programmatic incentives), and the profile of women entrepreneurs in terms of participation rates, sectoral concentration, firm size, and growth potential. By bringing these together, this sub-section shows how expanding policy attention and visibility have coexisted with persistent structural constraints, particularly gendered divisions of labor and unequal access to finance, networks, and care infrastructure, that continue to shape women's entrepreneurial trajectories.

In Türkiye, the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, characterized by privatization, labor market flexibilization, and the downsizing of the welfare state, had far-reaching

implications for women's economic participation. The decline of agricultural employment drove significant rural-to-urban migration; however, women entering urban labor markets encountered substantial barriers, including limited educational qualifications, persistent gender discrimination, and inadequate childcare infrastructure (Toksöz, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2008). As a result, many were excluded from formal employment and turned to small-scale entrepreneurship not by choice but as a coping strategy. These necessity-driven enterprises were predominantly situated in traditional, low-capital, and gender-segregated sectors such as food production, textile work, and personal care/beauty services, reflecting not only economic marginalization but also the influence of cultural expectations around "appropriate" work for women (Chant, 1997). This reinforced both the economic marginalization of women and the feminization of informal work.

Since the 1980s, newly adopted liberal economic policies in many countries have advocated moving away from the social state, reducing public spending, and cutting public employment. To address the increasing unemployment rates, in addition to entrepreneurial training, new entrepreneurial loans, and increased tax incentives and/or exemptions have been introduced (OECD, 1993; Şahin, 1997; Toksöz, 2012). In an effort to enhance women's entrepreneurship, new models and methods have been experimented with, involving not only public support but also the engagement of voluntary women's organizations and international institutions (Ecevit, 2007). International organizations such as the European Union (EU), the World Bank (WB), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched gender-focused programs that framed women's entrepreneurship as a pathway to both poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth (Şahin, 1997).

By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, state and civil society organizations began to actively promote women's entrepreneurship, particularly through vocational training and microfinance. According to Özar (2004) and Ecevit (2007), two parallel approaches dominated: one encouraged educated, urban women to become self-employed through training programs, while the other used entrepreneurship as a poverty alleviation tool for lower-income women. However, both models were limited by the failure to challenge patriarchal norms or to redistribute the burden of domestic labor, which continued to restrict women's full economic agency.

During the 1990s, women's entrepreneurship in Türkiye became increasingly visible within the broader framework of gender and development, influenced by both domestic policies shifts and international agendas. International organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations (UN) promoted women's entrepreneurship through microfinance programs, business incubators, and mentorship initiatives. While these measures aimed to empower women economically, feminist development scholars have critiqued such interventions for instrumentalizing women primarily as drivers of economic growth, often without addressing the deeper structural inequalities they face (Chant & Sweetman, 2012).

In Türkiye, the 1990s saw the emergence of two main policy approaches to women's entrepreneurship (Özar, 2004; Ecevit, 2007). The first approach targeted urban, educated, and middle-income women, encouraging them to become self-employed through entrepreneurship training programs. This strategy sought to foster sustainable, independent ventures as alternatives to declining formal employment opportunities. The second approach, largely framed around poverty alleviation, focused on low-income women, particularly those excluded from wage labor markets. Entrepreneurship in this model was viewed less as a route to business growth and more as a survival strategy aimed at enhancing household welfare.

However, these initiatives operated within a broader context of economic restructuring. Following the liberal economic reforms of the 1980s, Türkiye experienced a significant decline in agricultural employment, which disproportionately affected rural women. Yet the expansion of urban labor markets failed to absorb this displaced workforce, especially women, due to persistent gender discrimination, insufficient childcare services, and the informal nature of available jobs (Toksöz, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2008). The female labor force participation rate, which stood at around 50% in the early 1980s, had fallen to 34.3% by 1988 (Esim, 2001). Even when women migrated to cities and held qualifications, they were often constrained by low wages and temporary, insecure employment.

State-supported programs during the 1990s proliferated, including vocational training, credit incentives, and microfinance tools. The 64th Government's Action

Plan of 2015, for instance, institutionalized microcredit packages for entrepreneurial women, reflecting a long-standing expectation that women's economic participation could serve as a mechanism for both development and social stabilization (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016). Nevertheless, the majority of support mechanisms remained concentrated in low-growth, gender-segregated sectors and did little to challenge patriarchal norms or redistribute unpaid care responsibilities, limiting their transformative potential (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016).

Since the early 2000s, women's entrepreneurship in Türkiye has been increasingly integrated into national development agendas, with successive governments, ranging from the 50th to the 67th (1993-2025), introducing targeted initiatives to promote female economic participation. One of the most explicit examples of this institutional focus was the 64th Government's Action Plan in 2015, which implemented new microcredit schemes and financial incentives for entrepreneurial women. These strategies paralleled global neoliberal policy trends, wherein entrepreneurship was framed not only as a tool to address unemployment but also as a means to shift welfare responsibilities from the state to individuals (Şahin, 1997; OECD, 1993). However, while these initiatives expanded access to entrepreneurship, they often conceptualized women as economically vulnerable rather than structurally excluded. Consequently, the underlying institutional, social, and cultural constraints, such as gendered norms, limited access to finance, discriminatory practices, and unpaid care burdens, remained largely unchallenged (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016). As a result, women's entrepreneurship was often approached as part of broader poverty alleviation strategies rather than a transformative instrument of gender equality. The proliferation of microcredit programs during this period addressed immediate financial needs but did little to restructure systemic barriers to sustained entrepreneurial success (Şahin, 1997).

Empirical data further illustrates the limitations of these interventions. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2023), women comprised just 6.4% of all entrepreneurs in 2002, rising marginally to 7.6% in 2012 and reaching 14.2% by 2022. Despite this growth, the figure still lags significantly behind the OECD average of approximately 32% (OECD, 2023). Moreover, only 23% of the

entrepreneurship supports provided by KOSGEB between 2010 and 2020 were allocated to women, indicating a continued gender gap in institutional support (KOSGEB, 2021). Complementing these figures, a UNDP Türkiye (2022) report indicates that 85% of female-owned businesses are solo self-employed enterprises with no employees, suggesting limited capacity for job creation and growth.

Overall, despite policy-level recognition and a gradual increase in numbers, women's entrepreneurship throughout the 2000s has largely remained confined to low-growth sectors and small-scale initiatives, constrained by persistent structural inequalities that continue to impede women's full participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Soysal, 2010).

According to the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), as of 2022, women entrepreneurs are predominantly active in low-capital sectors such as beauty services (22%), food production (18%), and handicrafts/textiles (15%) (TOBB-KGK, 2022). Furthermore, over 90% of female-led businesses are micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees (KOSGEB, 2023). Most are sole proprietorships and operate informally or from home. This underlines the limited scalability of women's entrepreneurship and its concentration in feminized industries.

The expansion of media representations and public visibility of female entrepreneurs increased during the 2000s, fostering a cultural discourse of empowerment. However, empirical data indicates that the vast majority of female entrepreneurs in Türkiye operate alone and without access to mentorship or financial infrastructure. According to KAGİDER (2021), only 9% of women entrepreneurs report having growth-oriented business strategies, and 58% started their business without any external financial support. Moreover, 72% of their respondents report never receiving mentorship beyond their immediate family networks, highlighting a significant gap in institutional and professional support systems.

Both the increasing number of women entrepreneurs starting from developed countries and the follow-up of policies that support and expand women's

entrepreneurship by international organizations such as the EU, OECD, and the UN have been effective in carrying out the studies of women entrepreneurs in Türkiye (Çelik & Özdevecioğlu, 2001).

Among the studies aimed at women entrepreneurs in Türkiye, the impact of policies by international organizations such as the EU, the UN, and the OECD in supporting and promoting women entrepreneurship is undeniable (Özgül, 2019). Nevertheless, in Türkiye, progress in women's entrepreneurship has tended to be more limited and uneven than in many Western contexts, and advances have often been incremental rather than transformative. In Türkiye, research on women's labor force participation has proliferated increasingly since the 1980s, and this literature became more established and visible during the 1990s.

In recent years, with the help of the media, the interest in women entrepreneurs has increased and this interest is closely related to the export-oriented development strategies adopted especially in developing countries (Soysal, 2010). The scarcity of studies on women's entrepreneurship in developing countries like Türkiye can pose challenges in comprehending the contributions and impact of women entrepreneurs in these regions. The low engagement of women in economic activities in Türkiye has typically been attributed to their familial roles, the choices influenced by these roles, and the patriarchal dynamics within families (Soysal, 2010).

In this context, the family offers several options for women, including working as a homemaker, participating in family businesses, finding employment, or starting a new entrepreneurial venture. After a woman chooses entrepreneurship, she faces three potential scenarios: remaining as a small-scale business, experiencing failure, or pursuing growth. These divergent entrepreneurial trajectories highlight the importance of institutional and policy environments in shaping women's ability to sustain and expand their businesses.

These various public institutions, NGOs, and international organizations in Türkiye have developed support models to promote women entrepreneurship, a key element of the policy aimed at increasing women's employment, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Organizations Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in Türkiye (Durukan, 2021, p.28)

Public Institutions and Organizations	Non-Governmental Organizations	International Organizations
- Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB) - Development Agencies - Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) - Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution (TKDK) - The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) - Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade - Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Livestock - Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology - General Directorate on the Status of Women - Microcredit Programs for Women of the Provincial Special Administrations	- Women Entrepreneurs Association of Türkiye (KAGIDER) - Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) - Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) - Vocational Training and Small Industrial Support Foundation (MEKSA) - TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Council - European Turkish Business Development Center (ABİGEM) - Ankara Business Women Entrepreneurs and Enchancement Association (ANGIKAD) - Technology Development Foundation of Türkiye (TTGV) - The Central Union of Tradesmen and Craftsmen Credit and Guarantee Cooperatives of Türkiye (TESKOMB)	- The World Bank - United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME), an EU Program

In conclusion, while the number and visibility of women entrepreneurs in Türkiye have gradually increased over the past four decades, their participation remains shaped and constrained by entrenched cultural expectations, gendered labor divisions, limited institutional support, and fragmented policy interventions. Women's entrepreneurship in Türkiye must be understood not as a mere tool for economic survival or policy optics, but as a transformative process within a broader struggle for gender equality. Sustainable and inclusive progress requires adopting feminist economic frameworks, redistributing unpaid care responsibilities,

institutionalizing supportive policies, and addressing the structural roots of gender inequality in economic life.

4.3. Interplay between Bureaucracy and Entrepreneurship

The relationship between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship is complex and multifaceted, shaped not only by institutional dynamics but also by deeply embedded gendered norms (Fraser, 2016). While these two domains are often framed as distinct, namely bureaucracy representing the domain of the state and rule-based authority, and entrepreneurship symbolizing private initiative and innovation, they frequently intersect in ways that reveal underlying structures of power, privilege, and exclusion (Walby, 2005). Understanding this interplay is crucial for unpacking how both bureaucratic and entrepreneurial spheres contribute to the reproduction of gender hierarchies, especially in contexts like Türkiye where both the state and the market remain highly gendered.

This section examines the relationship between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship through two lenses. Firstly, it explores how both are gendered structures shaped by normative expectations and masculine ideals. Bureaucracy is traditionally associated with hierarchy, rationality, and control (Dahl, 1989), while entrepreneurship is linked to autonomy, assertiveness, and risk-taking, all characteristics historically coded as masculine (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009). These gendered assumptions create structural barriers for women by shaping who is seen as "naturally" fit for leadership or authority in either sphere (Acker, 1990). As a result, women entrepreneurs can easily be expected to face difficulties in asserting legitimacy, accessing resources, or navigating bureaucratic processes. Secondly, the section investigates the practical tensions and dependencies that exist between the two. Despite the ideological emphasis on a free-market economy, entrepreneurship in Türkiye remains tightly intertwined with bureaucracy, requiring entrepreneurs to obtain permits, access grants, or comply with regulatory frameworks (Özbebek Tunç & Alkan, 2019). In practice, these processes are often mediated through informal networks and discretionary practices that favor those with access to male-dominated circles of influence. Such informalities including corruption, patronage, and "shortcuts",

function as hidden gatekeeping mechanisms that systematically disadvantage women. Limited access to these informal networks makes it more difficult for women entrepreneurs to enter or thrive within entrepreneurial ecosystems, ultimately reinforcing the gendered order that governs the interface between state institutions and market actors (Ufuk & Özgen, 2001).

By focusing on these dual dimensions, this sub-section highlights how bureaucracy and entrepreneurship not only mirror but also reinforce each other's gendered exclusions, making it necessary to address both institutional structures and informal norms in efforts to create a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment.

4.3.1. Bureaucracy and Entrepreneurship as Gendered Structures

Bureaucracy and entrepreneurship are two foundational domains shaping modern societies, yet both have been historically constructed through deeply gendered norms and expectations. Bureaucracy, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries as states sought to rationalize and centralize power (Şimşek, 1996; Gerth & Mills, 1946), became closely associated with authority, order, and rationality, qualities traditionally coded as masculine. Men were positioned as the natural bearers of authority within hierarchical institutions, while women were often relegated to peripheral or supportive roles, excluded from core decision-making processes (Ferguson, 1984). Similarly, entrepreneurship emerged within capitalist economies as a field valorizing trait such as risk-taking, independence, and assertiveness, all of which have been culturally linked to masculinity (Martin, 2013; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001). Women's economic activities have historically been marginalized or framed as supplementary rather than central entrepreneurial endeavors (Fagenson & Marcus, 1991).

These gendered constructions continue to shape structural barriers women face in both bureaucratic institutions and entrepreneurial arenas today (Chappell & Waylen, 2013). Women often struggle to attain leadership roles or exercise authority in bureaucratic hierarchies that valorize "rational" and "authoritative" masculine traits (Ferguson, 1984; Fagenson & Marcus, 1991). Thus, in entrepreneurship, the

valorization of autonomy and decisiveness can delegitimize women's capabilities and leadership.

Building on Joan Acker's (1990) foundational concept of "gendered organizations," bureaucracies can be seen as institutions that embed and perpetuate masculine norms under the guise of neutrality and meritocracy. Acker (1990) argues that organizational structures are not gender-neutral but rather systematically favor male workers by idealizing uninterrupted career trajectories, long hours, and competitive hierarchies, which are conditions that often conflict with socially imposed expectations on women related to caregiving and family responsibilities. As a result, women's professional experiences in bureaucracies are often marked by exclusion, marginalization, and invisibility (Cockburn, 1991).

Similarly, entrepreneurship, though often romanticized as a realm of innovation and freedom, is equally shaped by gendered expectations. The "heroic entrepreneur" archetype, depicted as bold, risk-taking, and self-reliant, has historically excluded women by associating these traits with masculine identities (Marlow & Swail, 2014). Key entrepreneurial qualities are normatively associated with masculinity, granting privilege to men while rendering women as feminized subjects perceived as lacking, thus creating a hierarchical structure (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Supporting the view of women's deficiency, comprehensive data indicate that men are more likely than women to pursue self-employment and to own growth-oriented ventures (Hart et al., 2011; Marlow & McAdam, 2012). This gender gap in entrepreneurial presence and performance has attracted significant attention, with women often framed as individuals lacking the necessary entrepreneurial attributes, attitudes, and ambitions (Ahl, 2006). However, these biases create an analytical framework that excludes women from the debate and rests on the assumption that their marginalization stems from feminized deficiencies (Fagenson & Marcus, 1991). Consequently, women become positioned as the gendered "other" within entrepreneurship, while men are constructed as the default norm (Marlow & Swail, 2014). Thus, simply by not being men, women are placed in a position of deficit and deemed problematic.

It is also argued that although the masculine nature of entrepreneurial discourse is acknowledged, this recognition has led to an almost exclusive emphasis on women

as the symbol and embodiment of gendered experiences. By examining issues of risk and business finance within entrepreneurship, it is suggested that this assumption assigns women a distinct yet generalized theoretical and empirical role characterized by notions of weakness and deficiency (Marlow & Swail, 2014).

The gendered nature of both bureaucratic and entrepreneurial fields also manifests through work-life expectations. While male-dominated structures assume a linear and full-time commitment to professional advancement, women are often expected to balance caregiving roles alongside their careers (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). These expectations create a structural misalignment between the "ideal worker" and women's lived realities, thus impeding their advancement in both state and market institutions (Ahl, 2006). Structural reforms such as flexible work arrangements, gender quotas, and inclusive funding criteria can play a key role in disrupting these embedded biases.

In conclusion, bureaucracy and entrepreneurship are not neutral arenas but rather deeply gendered structures that reflect and reinforce societal norms about gender, power, and authority. These structures continue to shape the opportunities available to women, limiting their access to leadership, capital, and legitimacy.

4.3.2. Dependencies and Tensions between Bureaucracy and Entrepreneurship

Building on the previous sections, which conceptualized bureaucracy and entrepreneurship as intertwined and gendered institutional fields, this sub-section shifts the focus to the points where they intersect in practice. Rather than treating bureaucracy as a neutral background, it examines how entrepreneurship is initiated, formalized, and sustained through specific bureaucratic routes, and how the literature describes the dependencies and tensions that can emerge as these routes are implemented. This framing matters for the case study that follows because it clarifies where bureaucracy and entrepreneurship most visibly meet in everyday economic life in Türkiye, and why these encounters can create tensions even when the formal rules appear standardized. In the context of Türkiye, entrepreneurship is not merely an economic activity but a political and institutional process embedded within

bureaucratic structures and state society relations. Despite the ideological emphasis on free-market principles, entrepreneurship remains closely intertwined with complex administrative procedures, regulatory oversight, and state mediated access to resources (Sørensen, 2006). Historically, the Turkish state has played a strong role in economic regulation and market formation, shaped by a legacy of state-led development and centralization dating back to the early Republican era (Keyder, 2020). The institutional framework established during this period embedded a top-down approach to economic activity, where formal bureaucratic mechanisms were designed to control and facilitate industrial and commercial growth under state supervision (Tutum, 1994). From the 1980s onward, as neoliberal reforms gained momentum, Türkiye's economic policies rhetorically shifted toward market liberalization; however, the bureaucratic apparatus maintained its significant influence over entrepreneurial activity, producing a contradictory space where entrepreneurship was simultaneously encouraged and constrained (Eder, 2010).

Within this context, the intersection between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship can be clarified by outlining the routine bureaucratic sequences through which entrepreneurial activity is initiated, formalized, and sustained. In practical terms, these sequences determine the bureaucratic conditions under which a business can be established, recognised as legally operative, maintained in regulatory compliance over time, and enabled to access public supports and institutional resources. Although the formal procedural route is, in principle, the same for all entrepreneurs, mapping this route is analytically important for the case study because it provides an institutional ground for examining how everyday implementation actually unfolds, and for making visible whether women entrepreneurs can navigate the same bureaucratic route and its requirements more smoothly or more problematically within male-dominated bureaucratic settings. In this way, the case study can discuss more systematically whether bureaucratic interactions during establishment and running stages vary across genders.

To clarify where dependencies and tensions are most likely to arise, this subsection focuses on four routine administrative processes that structure the entrepreneurial journey in practice: establishment and registration, licensing and sector-specific

authorizations, ongoing compliance and oversight during operation, and access to government support. Focusing on these processes is important for the case study because it identifies concrete institutional touchpoints where standardized rules are implemented and where delays, uncertainty, and differential treatment can arise in daily interactions.

The first process is the establishment and registration, where entrepreneurship encounters bureaucracy through sequential paperwork and repeated interactions with multiple public institutions. In Türkiye, establishment and trade registry procedures are defined as a structured process coordinated through Central Registry Record System (MERSİS) and completed through the relevant trade registry directorates and professional chambers[5]. Similarly, chambers of commerce make the administrative requirements of the incorporation visible through standardized document lists, detailing the incorporation documents and registration papers[6]. At this stage, administrative burdens and procedural costs are generally considered in the literature as key features of the establishment, and it is emphasized that responsibilities distributed among multiple public institutions, repeated document requests, and increased coordination needs can increase transaction costs (Williamson, 1981) and affect the timing and predictability of incorporation and formalization (Akın, 2010).

The second key process extends beyond establishment and registration, focusing on licensing and sector specific permits that determine whether a company can start routine business activity in practice. To become operational, companiess must obtain a municipal workplace opening and operating licence and, depending on the sector, additional approvals from the relevant public institutions. Consequently, a company's ability to become operational often depends not only on formal establishment but also on completing a series of bureaucratic steps that can trigger further documentation requirements and repeated institution visits. A survey-based study similarly shows that firms in Türkiye increasingly identify "business licenses and permits" as a major business-environment obstacle, consistent with the view that

[5] https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/5d3e935313b87607d8feeffc/rehber_Eng.pdf

[6] https://www.atonet.org.tr/hizmetlerimiz/ticaret-sicili-islemleri

permitting processes can add uncertainty and costs to firm operations (Giovanis & Ozdamar Giovanis, 2022). The study highlights licences and permits as an area where regulatory restrictiveness and administrative burdens are relatively pronounced, indicating that this interface can generate delays and uncertainty for firms (Giovanis & Ozdamar Giovanis, 2022). Therefore, these permits and licenses can be defined as fundamental determinants of a company's operating conditions, and it can be said that they are not merely technical formalities, but significant bureaucratic requirements that can shape the speed at which businesses transition from legal establishment to full operational activity.

The third process arises during the running stage through recurring compliance and regulatory oversight mechanisms, including taxation, mandatory notification and reporting obligations, audits, and periodic renewals. Therefore, dependency is not only generated at the point of establishment through the completion of incorporation procedures, but also continuously through the need to maintain regulatory compliance over time. The tax administration's guidance on notifications related to business start-up, the termination of operations, and changes in taxpayer status indicates that firms are not only processed at the outset but are continuously managed through an ongoing framework of reporting and compliance obligations across the business lifecycle[7]. The tensions arising here are generally addressed in the literature in terms of cumulative compliance costs, uncertainty stemming from differences in implementation, and operational disruptions associated with audit and renewal cycles; all of which can impact sustainability even if firms aim to remain compliant (Dabla-Norris et al., 2017).

The fourth process links entrepreneurship to bureaucracy through public support schemes, where incentives and grants channel resources via eligibility rules, documentation, and application procedures. Türkiye's support architecture frames these instruments around development, competitiveness, and employment goals, while access is gained through verification and compliance requirements (Şahin, 1997; Özar, 2004). For the case study, the key analytic point is the recurring gap

[7] https://ivd.gib.gov.tr/ise_baslama_birakma_degisiklik_bildirimi_sunumu.pdf

between policy objectives and practical usability, as procedural load and information asymmetries can shape who can access supports in practice.

Within this ecosystem, some measures explicitly target women entrepreneurs through differentiated parameters embedded in general program designs. For example, KOSGEB's Entrepreneur Support Program provides additional amounts and higher upper limits when the entrepreneur is a woman (KOSGEB, n.d.). The broader landscape also includes innovation- and R&D-oriented instruments administered through structured calls and evaluation procedures by institutions such as TÜBİTAK (TÜBİTAK, 2024). This framing clarifies what supports claim to deliver, enabling the analysis to compare these expectations with everyday implementation.

Across these processes, an additional layer shaping the mutual dependencies between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship concerns implementation patterns such as discretion, local interpretation, and informal facilitation. Türkiye's institutional context has been described as one in which formal regulations coexist with governance arrangements that leave room for discretionary implementation (Heper & Keyman, 1998). Institutionalist scholarship also suggests more generally that in contexts where implementation is negotiable and uneven, informal practices such as facilitation, personal favors, or informal can develop as a parallel administrative logic rather than a simple absence of rules (Kelley, 1996). Bringing in this dimension does not mean explaining entrepreneurship solely through informality; instead, it recognizes that formal procedures and informal practices can coexist and interact, shaping predictability, timing, and perceived fairness along administrative routes (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

Gender and entrepreneurship scholarship helps clarify how facilitation and favors can become socially patterned. For instance, in the contexts and empirical settings discussed by Hovorka and Dietrich (2011), informal networks matter not only for financial capital but also for social and symbolic capital that provide credibility and legitimacy. Doering and Thébaud's (2017) argument, developed in their own context, similarly highlights that access to networks and third-party recognition can

be stratified in ways that shape whose claims are treated as credible and whose pathways are smoothed. Read as an analytic lens rather than a Türkiye-specific finding, this literature suggests a mechanism that can be investigated in Türkiye as well: if informal facilitation is mediated through gendered and male-dominated networks, then women's weaker access to those networks can translate into fewer "shortcuts," less guidance, and slower or less predictable progress through administrative steps.

These informal dynamics reinforce systemic barriers to women's participation, as limited access to male-dominated networks reduces their opportunities for securing resources, building connections, and gaining legitimacy (Sumbas, 2020). In Türkiye's context, where formal institutional support for women entrepreneurs remains insufficient, these informal networks play an outsized role in determining entrepreneurial success (Albayrak, 2022). Thus, the exclusion of women from these networks perpetuates gender disparities in business outcomes and reinforces patriarchal control over economic opportunities. Taken together, the international literature as an analytic framework and the Türkiye literature as contextual grounding motivate a concrete expectation for the bureaucracy-entrepreneurship interface in Türkiye: implementation discretion and informal facilitation may not be distributed neutrally, but may track network position and, by extension, reproduce gendered inequalities in timing, outcomes, and perceived fairness.

To conclude, this sub-section shows that the relationship between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship in Türkiye is characterized by mutual dependency and recurring tensions. Bureaucratic institutions organize business establishment, formalization, operational continuity, and access to supports, while procedural complexity, responsibilities distributed across multiple public institutions, ongoing compliance demands, and variability in implementation can affect the timing, cost, and predictability of entrepreneurial activity. The informal mechanisms, embedded in patronage and discretionary practices, can function as selective access and facilitation structures that tend to advantage men disproportionately and constrain women's capacity to navigate bureaucratic challenges. By clarifying the key processes where entrepreneurship most commonly intersects with bureaucracy and

how these processes can generate dependencies and tensions, this sub-section provides a conceptual and institutional foundation for the case study, including the question of whether these routine interactions are experienced differently across genders.

4.4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the historical and institutional evolution of bureaucracy and entrepreneurship in Türkiye is deeply interwoven with gendered structures of power. From the Ottoman Empire to the AKP era, state-led modernization projects, neoliberal economic reforms, and nationalist discourses have not dismantled but rather reconfigured the barriers to women's full participation in both spheres (Zürcher, 2004; Öniş & Şenses, 2022; Uğur & Yankaya, 2008). As Acker (1990) emphasized, bureaucracy reproduces masculine norms under the guise of neutrality and meritocracy, while the valorization of the "heroic entrepreneur" continues to privilege male-coded traits such as competitiveness and autonomy (Marlow & Swail, 2014).

The enduring tension and dependency between bureaucracy and entrepreneurship further expose how informal networks, patronage systems, and discretionary practices benefit male actors while systematically disadvantaging women (Doering & Thébaud, 2017; Schuler, 2023). This dual exclusion reproduces gender inequalities across formal and informal institutional processes, embedding women's marginalization in both the state and the market (Sørensen, 2006; Fraser, 2016).

Recognizing that these domains are not gender-neutral but deeply structured by patriarchal norms is essential for addressing the barriers that women face in navigating bureaucratic processes and sustaining entrepreneurial ventures. The insights drawn here lay the groundwork for the next chapter, which will turn to field research to determine how women entrepreneurs in Türkiye confront bureaucratic challenges, mobilize coping strategies, and articulate demands for more inclusive institutional support. By linking structural critiques to empirical realities, the study aims to inform policies that view gender equality not merely as an add-on to

economic development but as a transformative objective that requires confronting entrenched social hierarchies at their core (Fraser, 2016; Marlow & McAdam, 2012).

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the bureaucratic mechanisms, gender-based forms of discrimination, and structural barriers encountered by women entrepreneurs operating across various sectors in Ankara. The primary aim of the research is to reveal how women negotiate bureaucratic systems throughout the processes of establishing and running a business, how these interactions are shaped by the prevailing gender regime, and what strategies women develop in response to these structures. Drawing on the central arguments of feminist bureaucracy theory (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Guy & Newman, 2004), the chapter proceeds from the assumption that bureaucracy is a "gendered structure," and that institutional practices, although seemingly neutral, often operate through masculine norms. Bureaucracy is therefore conceptualized not merely as a technical or administrative mechanism but also as a sphere in which male-dominated cultural codes are reproduced. While bureaucracy is shaped by multiple social divisions such as ethnicity, (dis)ability, age, and class, which also structure organizational life (Ramsay & Parker, 1991), this study deliberately focuses on gender as its primary analytical lens. Other dimensions of inequality are acknowledged but remain outside the central scope of the analysis. It is nevertheless expected that some of the broader insights developed here may be relevant for understanding how bureaucracy operates across intersecting forms of social inequality axes.

In shaping the analytical focus of this study, the literature suggests that bureaucracy and patriarchy share a striking feature: their durability as institutions of everyday routine. As Weber (quoted in Gerth & Mills, 1946) notes, "they have in common a most important peculiarity: permanence. In this respect they are both institutions of daily routine," such that bureaucracy can be read as "the counter-image of

patriarchalism transposed into rationality". Bureaucratic order can therefore be approached not only as a system of documents, procedures, and rules but also as a rationalized counterpart to patriarchal authority. In this view, bureaucratic practices can reproduce masculine-coded norms through interactional styles, expectations of conduct, and gendered patterns of service delivery, which means that women entrepreneurs may confront both formal administrative requirements and informal masculine norms embedded in bureaucratic practice (Ramsay & Parker, 1991).

5.1. Data Collection and Methodological Approach

Primary data collection method is the semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is widely used in gender studies because women's experiences are often implicit, symbolic, emotional, and relational (Harding, 2004). A rigidly structured format might disrupt the natural flow of these experiences, whereas a completely unstructured interview could weaken thematic coherence. Semi-structured interviewing therefore provided an appropriate balance between structure and flexibility, enabling the production of rich, nuanced data. Feminist scholars such as Acker (1990) and Reinharz (1992) emphasize that women's experiences frequently unfold "outside institutional language" and cannot be adequately captured through standardized questions. Accordingly, the semi-structured interview guide used in this research was built around predefined thematic frames while also allowing the interviewer to pose additional questions whenever a participant organically expanded upon a theme. Each participant's individual life trajectory was taken into account, to ensure visibility of both the emotional and structural dimensions of their entrepreneurial journeys.

5.2. Sampling Strategy: Convenience, Maximum Variation and Snowball Sampling

The sampling process began through informal outreach within my social and professional environment. Rather than starting with a predefined sampling frame, the initial contacts were identified by asking acquaintances whether they knew women entrepreneurs who might be willing to participate. This approach reflects

convenience sampling, a strategy commonly used in qualitative research when participants are recruited based on accessibility and proximity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Marshall, 1996). Such a strategy was appropriate in this context, as women entrepreneurs in Ankara are dispersed across different sectors.

Following the initial stage, the sample expanded through snowball sampling as suggested by Atkinson & Flint (2001) or Noy (2008) whereby each woman entrepreneur recommended others within her personal or professional network. Because many women entrepreneurs rely on trust-based relationships in their daily business interactions, several participants stated that they would not have agreed to an interview without a personal referral. Snowball sampling was therefore particularly effective for accessing women who were otherwise difficult to reach or hesitant to speak openly about bureaucratic challenges and gendered experiences.

An additional characteristic of the sampling process was an intentional openness to sectoral diversity. As referrals emerged from various fields, such as beauty services, gastronomy, retail, digital design, consulting, publishing, manufacturing, and energy, these women were included in the study in order to capture a wide range of bureaucratic encounters that could occur on the basis of any specificities of different sectors. This aligns with the logic of maximum variation sampling, which aims to gather insights from individuals with diverse backgrounds to illuminate different dimensions of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 1990). At the same time, a deliberate principle guiding the sampling strategy was sectoral diversification rather than intra-sectoral repetition. Rather than concentrating on multiple women entrepreneurs within the same sector, the study prioritized the inclusion of at least one woman entrepreneur from a wide range of sectors. This decision was taken to avoid reproducing sector-specific dynamics and to ensure that the analysis captured how bureaucratic encounters operate across different regulatory regimes, inspection practices, and institutional interfaces. When more than one participant emerged from the same sector, preference was given to maintaining sectoral breadth rather than a specific sectoral depth. As a result, other participants from the same sector were not systematically included, unless their experiences differed substantially in terms of business scale or bureaucratic positioning. This approach allowed the study to

foreground cross-sectoral patterns in gendered bureaucratic encounters, rather than over-representing the logics of any single sector or work field.

Overall, the sampling strategy combined convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and maximum variation sampling. This flexible and relational approach aligns with feminist methodological principles emphasizing trust, relationality, and participant agency in the production of knowledge (Reinharz, 1992). As Noy (2008) notes, snowball sampling allows participants to actively shape the research sample, a dynamic that enriched both the depth and diversity of the empirical data gathered in this study.

5.3. Data Collection Process

A total of 16 interviews was conducted in September and October 2025, in a single session, either face-to-face or online, and each conversation was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Conducting the interviews in one uninterrupted sitting was essential, as the women entrepreneurs who took part in the study often had demanding work schedules and limited availability due to the pressures of running their businesses and managing bureaucratic procedures. Spreading the interviews across multiple sessions risked disrupting the flow of the narratives and fragmenting the data, which would have undermined the depth and coherence of the information collected.

Each interview generally lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. This duration allowed sufficient time for participants to articulate their experiences in detail while also respecting their time constraints. Completing the interviews in a single session also helped maintain a consistent rapport, enabling a more natural and continuous conversation in which participants felt comfortable sharing sensitive or personal reflections on bureaucracy and gender.

Ethical approval procedures and informed consent were followed throughout the data collection process. The ethical approval (0373-ODTÜİAEK-2025) was received from METU Human Research Ethical Board on 20 August 2025. Participants were

assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and all identifiable details were removed or disguised in the transcripts.

5.4. Participant Profiles: 16 Women Entrepreneurs

The sample of this study consists of 16 women entrepreneurs operating in various sectors in Ankara. The participants differ markedly in terms of age, marital and family status, educational background, and sectoral positioning. This diversity provides a broad empirical base for the thematic analyses presented in the subsequent sections. The purpose of this sub-section is to map the general characteristics of the sample; the narrative individual profiles of the 16 women entrepreneurs are presented separately in the case study chapter as a core component of the fieldwork.

The ages of the women range from 27 to 66, encompassing both those who entered entrepreneurship relatively early in their careers and those who established their businesses after a longer period of professional experience. This age distribution makes it possible to trace generational differences in encounters with bureaucracy, particularly in relation to digitalization, institutional culture, and career trajectories. Rather than representing a homogeneous age group, the sample reflects multiple life stages at which women engage with entrepreneurial and bureaucratic processes.

Marital and family configurations within the sample are similarly varied. The group includes single, married, and divorced women, with both childless women and mothers represented, as well as one participant who explicitly identifies as lesbian. This heterogeneity allows for an examination of how entrepreneurship unfolds within different family arrangements and how household responsibilities, intimate life and kinship relations may intersect with bureaucratic interactions. The significance of these differences becomes more visible in later sections, where issues such as time constraints, care work and the gender regime are analyzed in detail.

In terms of educational background, the participants range from primary school graduates to those holding undergraduate, graduate, and even doctoral degrees. The sample includes women who have built their professional experience with minimal

formal schooling as well as women with advanced degrees in fields such as engineering, business, health sciences, and the social sciences. This diversity provides a basis for examining, in later sections, how educational attainment shapes women's capacities to interpret bureaucratic procedures, navigate digital systems, and engage with regulatory documentation. Furthermore, education appears to shape not only women's confidence and competence in navigating bureaucratic settings but also the attitudes and communicative practices of bureaucratic actors toward them. This interactional dynamic will be examined in greater depth in the later sections of this chapter.

In terms of sectoral distribution, the entrepreneurs are active in a wide range of fields, including floral and chocolate design, family and social work counselling, pilates and wellness services, legal practice, software development and technology-based ventures, vegan food production and restaurant management, hairdressing, e-commerce and three-dimensional printing, insurance services, fashion and accessory design, textile retail, physiotherapy and clinical services, financial auditing and forensic accounting, trade in electrical materials, solar energy plant installation and medical publishing. This diversity exposes the women to very different regulatory regimes and inspection practices, and it creates an empirical basis for comparing how bureaucratic encounters vary across service, creative, professional and industrial sectors.

With respect to economic background and access to resources, many of the women come from families without a strong entrepreneurial tradition, often from civil-servant or fixed-income households. In a considerable number of cases, start-up capital was assembled through personal savings, limited family support or small-scale borrowing, rather than through formal investment or extensive family wealth. Some participants explored state support schemes but described difficulties engaging with them due to procedural complexity and limited guidance. Taken together, it can be suggested that entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to an avenue that is easily realized only by women from wealthy families with abundant resources; rather, it is often pursued under conditions of constraint, uncertainty and uneven access to finance. These patterns do not yet constitute the core of the analytical argument but

provide important contextual information for subsequent discussions of class position, access to finance and the bureaucratic barriers that shape women's entrepreneurship in Türkiye.

Taken together, this socio-demographic and sectoral framework demonstrates that women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the interplay of structural factors such as age, family configuration, educational background, and sectoral location. Taken together, these dynamics reveal the multi-layered nature of women's interactions with bureaucratic mechanisms and provide an analytical point of departure for interpreting the individual profiles and thematic analyses presented in the later sections of this chapter.

5.5. Data Analysis: Thematic and Intersectional Framework

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which offers a systematic yet flexible approach for identifying patterns of meaning within qualitative data. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim before the analysis began. Working with full transcripts ensured that the nuances, pauses, tone shifts, and contextual cues embedded in the women's narratives were preserved, which is particularly important in feminist qualitative research where meaning is often conveyed in subtle ways.

In qualitative research based on purposive sampling, sample size is commonly justified through the principle of data saturation, defined as the point at which additional interviews no longer yield new themes or analytical insights (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). While saturation has long been recognized as a central criterion for determining adequate sample size, its practical application has increasingly been clarified through empirical work that specifies how and when saturation can be identified in qualitative analysis (Morse, 1995). Building on the empirical operationalization of saturation, data collection in this research was concluded after 16 interviews, at the point where thematic saturation was reached. At this stage, interviews consistently reproduced previously identified patterns,

mechanisms, and themes, particularly regarding gendered credibility tests, discretionary practices, interactional burdens, and coping strategies, indicating that the analytical framework had been sufficiently consolidated. Further interviews were therefore not pursued, as they were unlikely to generate substantively new analytical contributions and would have primarily reiterated the existing thematic structure. The decision to stop at 16 participants was therefore guided not by numerical targets, but by the achievement of thematic saturation, as evidenced through repeated patterns across diverse sectors and life positions.

The analysis proceeded through several stages. In the first stage, open coding was conducted to identify meaningful units within the transcripts that reflected the women's experiences with bureaucracy, gendered interactions, and entrepreneurship. Codes were generated inductively from the data rather than imposed beforehand, allowing themes to emerge directly from the women's accounts. Transcripts were produced using Cockatoo, while coding was conducted manually, with Microsoft Word/Excel used only to organize the transcripts and iteratively develop the codebook.

In the second stage, these initial codes were examined for conceptual connections and grouped into broader categories through axial coding. For example, codes reflecting dismissive or paternalistic behaviors from public officials were consolidated under a category conceptualized as "street-level paternalism." This stage enabled a deeper understanding of how recurring patterns of gendered bureaucracy manifested across different sectors and life circumstances.

In the third stage, the categories were organized into overarching themes aligned with the theoretical framework of the study. These themes included bureaucracy in the business-establishment process, bureaucracy in business operations, barriers to accessing finance, bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime, sectoral differences, variations connected to age, marital status, education and class, experiences with bureaucratic digitalization, and strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges. Table 3 presents a summary of the coding and thematization process described above, covering both the establishment stage and the running stage.

Table 3. Coding and Thematization of Women Entrepreneurs' Interviews

Stage	Theme	Code	Example Quote/ Concept
Establishment	Bureaucracy in the business-establishment process	Fragmented information	"You ask a question and you do not get a clear answer."
Establishment	Bureaucracy in the business-establishment process	Contradictory guidance	"One institution says one thing, another says something else."
Establishment	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Questioning of women's authority	"Are you really the company owner?"
Establishment	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Male default assumption	"Will your husband sign?"
Establishment	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Being treated as a representative rather than decision-maker	"It was as if the company was not really mine."
Establishment	Variations connected to age, marital status, education and class	Age-coded credibility	"They did not take me seriously at first."
Establishment	Variations connected to age, marital status, education and class	Education-based recognition	"When they come for an inspection, my academic identity changes the way I am treated in a positive sense."
Establishment	Sectoral differences	Frequent inspections in some sectors	"They were coming very often, especially from the tax office."
Establishment	Barriers to accessing finance	Lack of collateral	"They would not even give me a credit card."
Establishment	Barriers to accessing finance	Self-financing	"I sold my car."
Establishment	Barriers to accessing finance	Informal financial support	"Friends helped; people around helped."
Establishment	Institutional support and incentives	Difficulty accessing support programs	"I did not apply because the process is very difficult."
Establishment	Institutional support and incentives	Lack of clear guidance on supports	"You don't know where to apply or who to ask."
Establishment	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Reliance on accountants	"In the end I always ask my accountant."
Establishment	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Avoiding direct interaction	"I preferred not to go myself."
Running	Bureaucracy in business operations	Repeated inspections	"Officials were coming very often."

Table 3. (continued)

Running	Bureaucracy in business operations	Procedural obstruction	“They do not write your statement into the record.”
Running	Sectoral differences	Differences between sectors in form of control	“In some sectors they come to the workplace; in others everything is paperwork.”
Running	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Unequal use of discretion	“A man would hear ‘do it like this,’ but I get a report.”
Running	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Threat of closure	“They said, ‘We can close this place.’”
Running	Bureaucratic patriarchy and the gender regime	Psychological pressure	“There is psychological mobbing in what he does.”
Running	Variations connected to age, marital status, education and class	Gender- and age-coded tone	“The approach toward me as a woman and as someone younger was very negative.”
Running	Variations connected to age, marital status, education and class	Education and professional status	“They even address me as ‘Hocam.’”
Running	Experiences with bureaucratic digitalization	Reduced face-to-face contact	“At least we don’t have to argue with anyone.”
Running	Experiences with bureaucratic digitalization	Information gaps	“It is not possible to obtain clear information.”
Running	Experiences with bureaucratic digitalization	Absence of reachable institutional guidance	“You cannot find a real human to talk to.”
Running	Experiences with bureaucratic digitalization	Dependence on accountants under digitalization	“Everything is electronic now, so the accountant handles it.”
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Reliance on intermediaries	“A man who knows how bureaucracy works took over.”
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Mobilizing informal networks	“I went to the Ministry of Trade… but I called through someone in my family who had connections there.”
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Consulting experienced peers	“I immediately phone someone more experienced.”
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Deliberate self-limitation	“I keep the business small.”

Table 3. (continued)

Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Exit from entrepreneurship	"I would never want to open a company again."
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Adjusting dress, voice and demeanor	"You have to change how you behave to be taken seriously."
Running	Strategies for coping with bureaucratic challenges	Delegating visibility to men	"Things move faster when a man speaks."

A final layer of analysis drew on Crenshaw's (1991, 2013) intersectionality perspective to examine how women's experiences differed across intersecting social positions such as age, class background, marital status, and educational level. This intersectional lens made it possible to identify how bureaucratic barriers and gendered dynamics were intensified or mitigated by these factors. The thematic structure produced through this process forms the analytical basis for the findings presented in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.6. Researcher Positionality and Ethical Considerations

Qualitative and feminist research traditions emphasize that knowledge is never produced from a neutral and disembodied standpoint. It is always generated from a particular social and institutional location. In a study that examines women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy in Türkiye, it is therefore crucial to make visible the researcher's own position within the gender regime, the bureaucratic field and the economic structure, and to reflect on how this position has shaped access to the field, interview dynamics and the interpretation of the data. This section first discusses my positionality as a researcher and then sets out the ethical principles that guided the research process.

5.6.1. Researcher Positionality

I conducted this research as a woman researcher living in Türkiye, sharing the same language and many social reference points with the participants. Professionally, I

work in a ministry as a contracted staff member in an advisory position. I am not a tenured civil servant and I do not provide face-to-face services to citizens as a street level bureaucrat. However, I am located inside a central public institution and I am able to observe the everyday functioning of bureaucracy from within. This position exposes me on a daily basis to the expectations, hierarchies and language of a male dominated bureaucratic world.

Working on a contractual basis, rather than as a permanent civil servant, also involves a particular form of precarity and uncertainty. The fact that my job is not fully guaranteed in legal or practical terms means that I experience directly the insecurities of the contemporary public employment regime. This precariousness has shaped how I listened to women entrepreneurs' narratives about economic risk, fear of losing their business and feelings of insecurity about the future. My own position as a relatively insecure public employee made the themes of risk, dependency and autonomy especially salient when women spoke about their motivations for entrepreneurship and their struggles to sustain their enterprises. As a result, I occupy a position that is simultaneously inside bureaucracy and exposed to labor market insecurity, and this dual location informs the way I relate to the participants' stories.

As a woman working in a ministry, everyday exposure to a male dominated institutional culture created a strong resonance between the theoretical framework of this thesis and my own work life. Hierarchical relations, the predominance of men in decision making positions, the language used in meetings and the forms of representation that structure organizational life are not only concepts from feminist bureaucracy literature but also phenomena that I encounter in my own professional environment. At the same time, being familiar with the internal logic, rhythms and written procedures of the public administration helped me contextualize many of the scenes that women entrepreneurs described when they recounted their encounters with tax offices, registries or inspectors.

However, I am not an entrepreneur and I do not share the daily responsibilities involved in running a business, such as paying employees' salaries, keeping a shop open or managing a production process. In this sense, I am not a full insider in the

world of the participants. I approach their narratives as a researcher who listens to their accounts and seeks to determine them through a feminist and intersectional lens. At the same time, my own status as a contracted and relatively insecure public employee made the idea of one day establishing a business and having more control over my own labor and decisions personally meaningful. When participants spoke about their desire to “stand on their own feet” and to “not be dependent on anyone”, these statements resonated with my own reflections about the future, even though I have not taken that step myself.

This partial insider and partial outsider position had a clear impact on the interview dynamics. When participants saw me as someone who knows bureaucracy from the inside and who, as a woman worker, is also exposed to male dominated structures, they often assumed that I would “already understand” what it means to deal with public offices and male officials. This sense of shared experience sometimes made it easier for them to narrate sexist behaviors in state institutions, because they did not need to start from very basic explanations. At the same time, this perceived closeness created a risk of over identification and of interpreting their experiences too quickly through the lens of my own. To mitigate this risk, I tried to avoid generalizing their accounts in terms such as “we always experience this” and systematically asked follow up questions such as “What did this mean for you at that moment” and “How did you feel when this happened”, in order to foreground their specific perspectives.

My position as someone who works inside a state institution could also have introduced a different kind of power asymmetry into the research relationship. For this reason, during the interviews I was careful not to present my institutional role as a source of authority, but rather as a background that enabled me to understand bureaucratic mechanisms and to ask more informed questions. I explicitly stated to participants that the aim of the research was not to target specific institutions or individuals, but to understand structural patterns of gendered bureaucracy. After each interview, I wrote short field notes that recorded not only what had been said but also my own emotional reactions, moments when I felt too close to a narrative or too uncomfortable, and preliminary interpretations that came to mind. These notes functioned as a reflexive tool that helped me to identify when my own experiences

with bureaucracy and gender might be shaping the analysis too strongly, and they encouraged me to return to the transcripts in order to ground my interpretations firmly in the participants' words.

In sum, this research has been produced at the intersection of my position as a feminist researcher and precarious public employee who is familiar with bureaucracy from within, and the diverse positions of women entrepreneurs in different sectors and class locations. Making this position visible is an important step for transparency in the research process and for a feminist understanding of how knowledge is produced.

5.6.2. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with core ethical principles of social research, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw. Before the interviews, all participants were informed about the aim of the study, the approximate duration of the interview, the main topics to be discussed and the use of audio recording. Participation was entirely voluntary. Each woman was told that she could refuse to answer any question, pause the recording or terminate the interview at any time without having to provide a reason.

Before the recording started, I explained that the conversations would be transcribed and used for academic purposes, including the doctoral dissertation and possible future publications. I also clarified that no real names of persons, companies or easily identifiable locations would appear in the thesis. Instead, participants are referred to throughout the text as "Woman Entrepreneur 1, 2, 3, … 16". Where necessary, potentially identifying details such as specific neighborhoods, brand names or highly recognizable personal characteristics have been altered or generalized, without changing the substantive meaning of the narratives.

Audio recordings and transcripts were stored in password protected digital folders to which only I had access. Contact information that was shared solely for the purpose of arranging interviews was kept separate from the research data to be deleted once

the fieldwork phase had been completed. No financial incentives were offered for participation. Instead, I emphasized that the main purpose of the study was to document and analyze women's experiences with bureaucracy in a way that could inform academic debates and, indirectly, policy discussions.

Because the interviews often touched on sensitive topics such as economic vulnerability, family conflict, sexist treatment by bureaucrats or feelings of failure, I paid particular attention to the emotional atmosphere of the conversations. When participants became visibly upset or tired, I offered to pause, to change the topic or to end the interview. At the end of each conversation, I asked whether there was anything they had said that they did not want to be quoted, even anonymously, and reminded them that they could contact me later if they wished to retract or clarify any part of their contribution.

In presenting the findings, I have sought to balance analytical clarity with care for the dignity and safety of participants. The aim of the research is not to expose individual women or specific officials, but to reveal patterned dynamics of gendered bureaucracy. By anonymizing participants and directing attention away from sensational details towards structural and relational processes, the analysis seeks to honor the trust that women placed in the research while ensuring that their experiences become visible in the academic and public record.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' EXPERIENCES WITHIN GENDERED BUREAUCRACY

Building on the methodological framework outlined in Chapter 5, this chapter presents the empirical findings of the study in an analytical way. Rather than treating women entrepreneurs as isolated individuals, the analysis focuses on how their encounters with bureaucracy are patterned across different stages of their entrepreneurial journey and across distinct yet intersecting social positions. The chapter therefore examines how women navigate bureaucratic systems when establishing a business and while running it on a daily basis, and how these processes are shaped by the wider gender regime, by institutional cultures and by the distribution of care and economic responsibilities.

The chapter begins with an overview of the socio-demographic and sectoral profiles of the 16 interviewed women entrepreneurs, followed by individual analytical portraits that bring together age, marital status, education, family background, business scale and motivations for entrepreneurship. These profiles provide the necessary backdrop for understanding subsequent thematic analyses. The core of the chapter is organized around two key moments in the entrepreneurial trajectory, the establishment stage and the running stage, which are examined as distinct yet connected sites of encounter with bureaucracy. Throughout the analysis, variables such as age, marital status, education, class background and sectoral location are treated as cross cutting axes of variation rather than as separate, additive factors. The chapter concludes with an examination of coping strategies, including women's own policy suggestions, highlighting how these strategies both respond to and reveal the structural and gendered nature of bureaucratic challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

6.1. Individual Profiles of Women Entrepreneurs

This sub-section presents narrative summary portraits of the interviewed 16 women entrepreneurs, each representing different socio-demographic characteristics, sectors, family backgrounds, and motivational patterns. These profiles bring together age, marital status, education, business scale, class origins, presence or absence of an entrepreneurial background in the family, and the women's reasons for establishing their ventures. Their detailed bureaucratic experiences will be analyzed in depth in the subsequent parts of this chapter.

6.1.1. Women Entrepreneur 1

Woman Entrepreneur 1 is a 29-year-old, single, childless woman who studied agricultural engineering (ornamental plants) and transformed her expertise and aesthetic interest into a small flower-and-chocolate design business. The firm, co-owned with another woman, produces customized arrangements for engagements and other special occasions and constitutes her first entrepreneurial experience; she was single at the time of establishment. She grew up in a relatively secure middle-class family of civil servants and engineers with no previous entrepreneurial history, so her decision to open a business was initially perceived as risky yet ultimately tolerated and supported, partly because failure was unlikely to produce a complete economic collapse. The start-up capital came entirely from the family, and she did not make use of any formal grant, loan or public entrepreneurship scheme, since the small amount offered through such programs was considered too insignificant to justify the procedural effort. For her, entrepreneurship emerged not from destitution but as a way to work independently in a field that combines her formal training and passion for design.

In the interview, she emphasizes that being single and living alone shaped her entrepreneurial experience in a dual way. On the one hand, she carries all domestic and financial responsibilities on her own, which she describes as occasionally burdensome, particularly because there is no one with whom to share everyday tasks or financial pressure. On the other hand, she explicitly frames her single status as an

advantage for entrepreneurship, stressing that it provides greater autonomy over time management, decision-making, and daily routines, and that, in her view, being single made the process of starting and running a business easier rather than more difficult.

Her transition into entrepreneurship did not represent a sudden rupture but rather followed a gradual professional reorientation. After graduating as an agricultural engineer with a specialization in ornamental plants, she worked for approximately two and a half years in private-sector companies engaged in soilless agriculture, producing tomatoes and leafy greens. During this period, her professional interest increasingly shifted away from vegetable production toward ornamental plants and design-oriented work, which she later deepened by attending a short but intensive floristry course in Istanbul. She describes this period as one of experimentation and imagination, during which entrepreneurship first emerged as a concrete and achievable "dream" rather than an abstract idea.

Although she had no entrepreneurial role models within her family, she did not enter entrepreneurship without practical knowledge. Prior to establishing her own business, she worked for two years in a flower shop as a florist, where she became familiar not only with floral design but also with the everyday operational aspects of running a small business, including customer relations, basic accounting, and shop management. She repeatedly underlines that this hands-on experience provided her with confidence and reduced uncertainty, and that she does not perceive herself as having started "from zero," despite being a first-time entrepreneur.

Family background plays a significant role in how she narrates her entrepreneurial decision. Coming from a household dominated by civil servants and engineers, with a strong orientation toward stable salaried employment in either the public sector or large private firms, entrepreneurship was initially framed by her family as a risky and psychologically demanding choice. She recalls that her parents were particularly concerned about the long working hours, constant attention required by a small business, and the emotional strain she might experience. The absence of any prior entrepreneurial experience in the family amplified these concerns and made the persuasion process difficult. Nevertheless, she positions herself explicitly as the first

entrepreneur in the family and describes her decision as a deliberate act of persistence, emphasizing that sustained determination eventually transformed initial resistance into conditional support.

The start-up capital for the business was provided entirely through family support, which she presents not as a sign of abundance but as a pragmatic safety net that made the risk socially and economically tolerable. Despite exploring public entrepreneurship support mechanisms, she decided not to apply for institutional grants after being informed that the available amount would be extremely limited. She characterizes the proposed support as symbolically and materially insignificant relative to the effort required, and this assessment reinforced her decision to rely instead on family resources and her own labor.

In terms of self-identification, she does not frame her entrepreneurship as a response to poverty or crisis. Rather, she repeatedly describes it as a means of aligning her professional training, aesthetic interests, and desire for independence. Entrepreneurship, in her narrative, represents a way of constructing a working life that feels both meaningful and self-directed, rather than an obligation imposed by economic desperation. This orientation also shapes how she retrospectively evaluates risk: while acknowledging uncertainty, she emphasizes aspiration, creativity, and personal fulfillment as central to her entrepreneurial motivation.

6.1.2. Woman Entrepreneur 2

Woman Entrepreneur 2 is a 27-year-old, single, childless social work specialist who established a small counselling center focusing on families, adolescents and children. This is her first business. Her family has both positive and negative experiences with entrepreneurship: her mother previously opened and later closed a company, while her aunt still runs a consulting firm. These mixed histories have produced both awareness of risk and a culture of “at least try”, and the family eventually decided to finance her start-up rather than push her towards standard salaried employment. She did not apply for or receive any institutional grants or public support, partly because, based on her mother’s experiences and what she heard from her network, she

perceived the application processes as long, costly and uncertain. Her small, one-woman practice is thus entirely based on family capital, and her primary motivation is not sheer economic necessity but the wish to escape hierarchical organizations and to shape her own working hours, clientele and professional approach.

In the interview, she situates her entrepreneurial decision within her life stage as a young, single woman still living with her family. Although she does not describe herself as carrying formal care responsibilities, she repeatedly refers to a strong sense of moral and emotional responsibility toward her family. She frames entrepreneurship as a way of assuming responsibility for her own life course, emphasizing that establishing her own business symbolized an important step toward personal and economic independence rather than a purely individualistic choice.

Her transition into entrepreneurship followed the completion of a project-based, salaried position rather than an abrupt rupture or crisis. During her university education and early professional life, she accumulated experience through multiple internships in public institutions such as municipalities, the judiciary, and child protection services, and later worked in a structured, team-based project at the Turkish Red Crescent. When this project came to an end, she describes entrepreneurship as an intentional next step that allowed her to continue working in her field while avoiding the rigid boundaries and hierarchical constraints of institutional employment.

A central theme in her narrative is the desire to gain control over time, productivity, and professional decision-making. She explicitly contrasts salaried work, where long hours often felt inefficient and externally imposed, with self-employment, which she associates with shorter but more focused and meaningful working periods. For her, entrepreneurship is closely linked to the creation of a “comfort zone” defined not by ease, but by autonomy over working hours, methods, and the content of her professional practice.

Unlike some other participants, she grew up with visible female entrepreneurial role models. Her mother, a fashion design specialist, previously established her own

company, although it was not sustained over the long term, and her aunt continues to run a consulting practice as a psychotherapist. She interprets these experiences not as straightforward success stories, but as formative lessons that normalized experimentation and risk-taking. In her account, seeing close female relatives attempt entrepreneurship made the act of "trying and seeing what is possible" appear legitimate, even if outcomes were uncertain or temporary.

Family reactions to her entrepreneurial decision were characterized by cautious support. She emphasizes that her family's approval was closely linked to the perception that she had already invested heavily in her professional education and skills. While her parents recognized the risks associated with self-employment, they ultimately endorsed her decision, framing it as a calculated step rather than an impulsive leap. This conditional support functioned as both encouragement and a reminder of responsibility.

In terms of resources, she relied primarily on family support and her own limited means rather than formal institutional mechanisms. Although she was aware of public entrepreneurship schemes, her perception of these programs was strongly shaped by her mother's earlier experiences and by information circulating in her professional network. She associated institutional support with long procedures, additional costs, and uncertain outcomes, which discouraged her from applying and reinforced her preference for informal, family-based financing.

She openly acknowledges a lack of formal entrepreneurship training and frames this as a potential gap in her preparation. At the same time, she highlights the importance of informal knowledge acquired through close observation of relatives, colleagues, and friends who run their own practices. This experiential learning shaped her expectations of self-employment and informed her understanding of both its opportunities and its constraints.

6.1.3. Woman Entrepreneur 3

Woman Entrepreneur 3 is a 37-year-old divorced mother of a 7-year-old boy who works as a physical education teacher and, together with another woman, opened a

small pilates studio. The studio is her first formal business, and she was married at the time of its establishment. Coming from a family dominated by public-sector employment and without an entrepreneurial tradition, she faced a strong cultural emphasis on “secure jobs” and modest expectations. The studio was financed mainly through her husband’s financial contribution and her own professional labor, and she did not benefit from any institutional support scheme. Her decision to start a business was shaped both by the insufficiency of her civil-servant salary and by a long-standing professional aspiration to own a studio, yet her husband’s support came with ambivalence and subtle devaluation that simultaneously enabled and belittled her initiative. Entrepreneurship thus became a strategy to supplement an inadequate wage while claiming professional autonomy within the constraints of marriage and later single motherhood.

In the interview, she situates her entrepreneurial trajectory within a long athletic and professional history. She describes herself as a professional athlete for approximately thirty years and as an instructor and trainer for nearly two decades, emphasizing that her identity as a sports professional predates and grounds her identity as an entrepreneur. Rather than entering the sector from outside, she frames herself as someone who “returned” to the field with accumulated embodied knowledge, professional credibility, and sector-specific experience.

Her decision to establish a pilates studio was shaped by both structural economic pressures and long-standing professional aspirations. She repeatedly stresses that her civil-servant salary as a physical education teacher was insufficient to sustain household needs, which made a second income necessary. At the same time, she presents entrepreneurship as a deferred dream: a goal she had postponed until she felt professionally and personally prepared. In this sense, the studio represents not a spontaneous decision but the materialization of a long-term aspiration to “have her own place” within the sports sector.

Family background emerges as a significant constraining factor in her narrative. Coming from an extended family almost entirely composed of public-sector employees, she describes a dominant mentality that prioritizes job security, risk

avoidance, and predictable income. Entrepreneurship was therefore perceived by her family as an almost “unthinkable” choice, associated with financial danger and instability. She explicitly states that no member of her family offered material or emotional support at the time of establishment and recalls that her decision initially met with fear, disapproval, and silence rather than encouragement.

Her marital status at the time of establishment played a complex and ambivalent role. She founded the business while she was still married, and her then-husband provided substantial material support, particularly during the early stages when capital was needed. However, she characterizes this support as conditional and emotionally ambivalent. While financial resources were made available, she recalls repeated instances of verbal devaluation, discouraging remarks, and skepticism regarding the viability of the business. She underlines that the eventual divorce was not caused by the enterprise itself but by broader communication and gender-role conflicts within the marriage, even though entrepreneurial activity intensified existing tensions.

After the divorce, she became a single mother with full responsibility for a young child, which further reshaped her relationship to entrepreneurship. She emphasizes that managing a business alongside public employment and motherhood requires extreme temporal discipline, especially given that the studio operates primarily during evening hours when clients finish work. She describes nights ending as late as 10:00 or 10:30 p.m. as routine and highlights that such working hours are structurally incompatible with dominant expectations of women’s availability for care work in Türkiye.

Her partnership with another woman is framed as both a strategic and gender-conscious choice. She explains that operating the studio with a female partner was not incidental but intentional, rooted in the belief that women entrepreneurs are often expected to have a man “behind” or “in front of” them to be taken seriously. By forming a women-only partnership, she sought to pool economic resources, professional labor, and emotional resilience, particularly during the pandemic period when the business was established. In terms of entrepreneurial preparation, she emphasizes that she did not enter the process without knowledge or skills. Beyond

her extensive sectoral experience, she holds academic training in areas such as branding, corporate communication, and management, and she frames her entrepreneurial move as an informed and calculated decision rather than a reckless risk. She explicitly contrasts this with stereotypical assumptions that women enter entrepreneurship “unprepared” or “emotionally,” underscoring instead rational planning and professional competence.

Finally, she positions her enterprise not merely as a private income-generating activity but as a socially beneficial service. She strongly rejects the classification of sports and pilates studios as “luxury consumption” and argues that such services contribute directly to public health and social well-being. From her perspective, the high tax burden placed on sports enterprises reflects a fundamental misrecognition of their social value, and she repeatedly articulates the belief that the state should actively support, rather than merely regulate, women-led initiatives in this sector.

6.1.4. Woman Entrepreneur 4

Woman Entrepreneur 4 is a 40-year-old married woman with two children, trained as a computer engineer, who founded a small software and artificial intelligence company. This is her first business, established after marriage, and it was not inherited but created from scratch. She comes from a family with a strong entrepreneurial culture, since both her father and her husband are entrepreneurs, so setting up a company is perceived as a normal career step rather than an exceptional risk. The start-up capital was assembled from parental and own savings, complemented by public entrepreneurship support programs, which were used to hire the first employees and invest in technical infrastructure. Her motivation derives less from survival concerns than from the desire to develop her own products, fill perceived market gaps and exercise technical creativity outside the constraints of large corporate environments.

In the interview, she situates her entrepreneurial trajectory as a continuous and cumulative process rather than a single founding moment. Having graduated in computer engineering in 2008, she began entrepreneurial activities immediately after

university, initially through small-scale freelance and project-based work, and gradually formalized these activities into a registered company. She explicitly frames entrepreneurship as her primary career path from an early age, rather than as an alternative chosen after dissatisfaction with salaried employment.

Her early exposure to entrepreneurship within the family played a formative role in shaping both her risk perception and her understanding of business as a "normal" life choice. She repeatedly emphasizes that her father's long-term experience as a tradesman normalized uncertainty, experimentation, and responsibility in her childhood. Observing how even a traditional, low-margin sector could be managed through innovation and problem-solving helped her internalize the idea that competitive advantage is created through knowledge and adaptation rather than scale alone.

At the same time, her marital relationship constitutes a second, equally significant entrepreneurial context. Her husband, who is also an entrepreneur, contributes not only moral support but also strategic input, particularly in areas such as supply chains, cost structures, and product positioning. She describes their relationship as one of mutual recognition and professional dialogue, in which entrepreneurship is treated as a shared language rather than a source of tension.

Motherhood emerges in her narrative not as a barrier but as a condition requiring institutional and household-level coordination. She explains that raising two little children necessitated early negotiations around domestic labor and time management. Through a deliberate division of care responsibilities with her husband and the support of extended family members, she was able to maintain mobility for meetings and travel. She highlights flexible and remote working arrangements as a critical strategy that allowed her to sustain entrepreneurial activity during intensive care periods.

Unlike several other participants, she entered entrepreneurship with substantial prior knowledge of both technical and organizational processes. Beyond her formal engineering education, she accumulated entrepreneurial competencies through

student-led technology communities, international project collaborations, and early exposure to user validation and product iteration. She presents this background as a key factor that reduced uncertainty and enabled her to approach entrepreneurship as a series of testable hypotheses rather than a leap of faith.

In terms of motivation, she explicitly distinguishes her entrepreneurial decision from economic necessity. Rather than responding to unemployment or income insufficiency, she describes her motivation as rooted in the desire for autonomy, rapid decision-making, and creative control over product development. She contrasts this with the slower pace and constrained agency she associates with large corporate or purely salaried environments.

Her access to financial and institutional resources further differentiates her profile. She benefited from a combination of family-provided seed capital, formal entrepreneurship training, and public support mechanisms, including KOSGEB grants and loans. She frames these supports as enabling early-stage experimentation, covering initial infrastructure costs, and mitigating cash-flow risks during the first hiring phases. At the same time, she stresses that navigating these mechanisms required significant prior knowledge and proactive effort.

Finally, she positions her current enterprise as the outcome of repeated strategic pivots rather than linear growth. From early e-commerce solutions to public-sector digitalization, mobile applications, and most recently generative AI technologies, she describes adaptability as a core entrepreneurial skill. This capacity to pivot, she suggests, was cultivated through long-term engagement with uncertainty rather than through isolated moments of success or failure.

6.1.5. Woman Entrepreneur 5

Woman Entrepreneur 5 is a 29-year-old, single, lesbian physiotherapist with no children, who left her job in neurological rehabilitation during the pandemic and gradually turned home-based vegan food production into a small vegan restaurant and production kitchen. This is her first business. She grew up in an artisan family;

her father owned a textile workshop and she spent her childhood among fabrics and customers, but as a girl she was relegated to “helper” tasks such as serving tea, cleaning and operating women’s machines rather than being taught the core of the trade. She emphasizes that this environment helped her mentally grasp business relations and the logic of trade, but mostly thanks to her own active observation rather than deliberate training. She entered entrepreneurship using savings accumulated from selling her own products, since banks refused to grant her the substantial investment credit she requested, and she did not obtain any grant or public support. Her small but growing business, with around eleven employees, is therefore entirely self-financed and highly vulnerable. Her motivation combines economic necessity after sudden job loss with a desire to produce ethically and politically meaningful food and to become an autonomous economic actor on her own terms.

In the interview, she presents herself as a young but highly politicized and reflexive actor, explicitly rejecting normative expectations around marriage, family formation, and heteronormative life trajectories. She clearly states that she does not plan to marry and positions her single life not as a temporary condition but as a deliberate choice that enables autonomy, mobility, and decision-making capacity. Living alone with her two cats, she emphasizes that her care responsibilities are minimal compared to many women, which she frames as a structural advantage in sustaining long working hours and emotional resilience in entrepreneurship.

Her professional identity prior to entrepreneurship is strongly anchored in health work. Trained as a physiotherapist with specialization in neurological rehabilitation, she worked in institutional settings where she experienced persistent ethical conflicts. She repeatedly recounts being pressured to apply treatment methods she considered ineffective or harmful and describes how refusing to comply led to exclusion, conflict, and ultimately unemployment. In her narrative, entrepreneurship emerges directly from this moral rupture rather than from abstract opportunity recognition.

The pandemic constitutes a critical turning point in her trajectory. As a health worker whose profession requires physical contact, she lost both income and professional

space almost overnight. She explicitly describes this period as one of economic precarity and existential uncertainty, emphasizing that entrepreneurship initially emerged as a survival strategy rather than a planned career move. The first production of vegan meat occurred informally in a domestic context, framed as care labor for a loved one, before being reframed as a potential economic activity.

Family background plays a deeply ambivalent role in her entrepreneurial formation. She grew up in a small-scale artisan household, with her father running a textile workshop. While this environment familiarized her with the rhythms of trade, customer relations, and production, she highlights a sharp gendered division of labor within the family business. As a girl, she was confined to auxiliary tasks such as cleaning, serving tea, and operating machines designated for women, while boys were taught the core elements of trade. She stresses that any entrepreneurial competence she gained from this environment resulted from her own observation and cognitive labor rather than intentional transmission.

The early death of her father further reshaped family dynamics and responsibility structures. After his death, her mother took over the textile business, and she provided informal support when possible. However, she repeatedly emphasizes that her own enterprise was not inherited or transferred but built entirely from scratch. Emotional and moral support from her mother emerges as crucial, particularly at moments of financial risk and uncertainty, even though material resources were limited.

Her entrepreneurial process initially unfolded entirely within the domestic sphere. She transformed her own kitchen into a production space, formally registered her business at her home address, and personally managed every aspect of production, logistics, and delivery. She describes a period during which she prepared orders, delivered them by bicycle, returned home to cook again, and repeated this cycle daily. This phase illustrates both extreme labor intensity and a strong commitment to legal compliance, as she explicitly states that she paid taxes on every product sold from the very beginning.

Unlike many participants, she explicitly positions herself against informal practices commonly normalized among small businesses. She frames tax compliance and

formalization not merely as legal obligations but as ethical and political commitments, grounded in her belief in collective contribution and social responsibility. This stance, she suggests, placed her at a disadvantage in a system where informality is often tacitly tolerated or even encouraged.

Her access to finance was extremely constrained. Banks refused to grant the level of investment credit she requested, despite the innovative and niche character of her production. As a result, she relied entirely on personal savings accumulated from early sales and incremental growth. She did not benefit from public entrepreneurship grants and later describes her attempts to engage with KOSGEB as discouraging, opaque, and dominated by intermediary actors seeking commissions rather than genuine support.

Social networks and peer support, particularly from other women, played a decisive role in the scaling of her enterprise. She attributes a major strategic shift to a single, intensive consultation with a woman specializing in strategy and social media, emphasizing that this interaction fundamentally transformed her vision from small-scale production to brand-building. She repeatedly highlights that much of her early professional support, including branding and design work, was provided through informal solidarity networks rather than formal institutions.

She explicitly frames her entrepreneurship as occupying an “in-between” position between market activity and social activism. Producing vegan food is not only an economic activity but also an ethical and political intervention aimed at accessibility, fair pricing, and producer justice. She stresses that her pricing strategy deliberately resists luxury positioning, even at the cost of profit margins, and describes her enterprise as an attempt to challenge dominant capitalist logics from within.

Finally, she repeatedly emphasizes the emotional cost of entrepreneurship under conditions of constant bureaucratic scrutiny and social hostility. Experiences of harassment, frequent police and municipal inspections, and the sense of being constantly watched and questioned emerge as central features of her everyday working life. Despite running a legally registered business with multiple employees,

she describes feeling persistently perceived as a “girl helping in the kitchen” rather than as a legitimate business owner.

6.1.6. Woman Entrepreneur 6

Woman Entrepreneur 6 is a 42-year-old divorced woman with one child, who opened a modest hairdressing and beauty salon after many years of unregistered work under harsh conditions in a male-dominated salon. This is her first business and she was in the process of divorce when she started it. Coming from a financially fragile family with no entrepreneurial tradition, she initially faced discouraging reactions such as “you will not manage” rather than encouragement. She was unable to make use of entrepreneurship trainings or public support schemes because of childcare responsibilities and lack of formal social security records, and she could not obtain bank loans either. Instead, local tradespeople supported her by providing products and services on informal instalment terms, enabling her to open the salon. She runs the micro-scale business alone and has kept it afloat for more than a decade. Her motivation is rooted in both economic necessity and a refusal to continue experiencing exploitation and humiliation as an employee in another man’s salon; she prefers earning less but owning her labor and workplace.

In the interview, she explicitly frames her transition to entrepreneurship as a response to long-term exploitation, gendered labor expectations, and institutional exclusion rather than as a voluntary or opportunity-driven career choice. Prior to opening her own salon, she had worked for many years as an unregistered employee in a male-dominated beauty salon, where she performed not only professional services but also cleaning and auxiliary tasks that were implicitly assigned to her because she was a woman. She emphasizes that despite doing equal or more work than her male colleagues, she was denied formal social security registration and timely payment, which ultimately pushed her to leave.

Her decision to establish her own business coincided with an acute personal crisis. At the time of founding the salon, she was in the midst of divorce proceedings and was the sole caregiver of a very young child. She repeatedly highlights the absence of any

familial or spousal support during this period, describing herself as “completely alone” in both economic and emotional terms. This combination of marital dissolution, childcare responsibility, and income insecurity shaped entrepreneurship not as a planned strategy but as a survival mechanism.

Unlike several other participants, she entered entrepreneurship with no savings, no family capital, and no access to formal credit. Due to years of unregistered employment, she lacked social security records and was therefore ineligible for bank loans, credit cards, or state-backed financial instruments. She underlines that even basic financial tools were inaccessible to her, reinforcing a sense of structural exclusion from formal economic citizenship.

The initial establishment of the salon was made possible through informal solidarity networks rather than institutional mechanisms. Local tradespeople and long-term clients provided material support by purchasing equipment, covering renovation costs such as painting and labor, and allowing payments to be made in long-term installments. She conceptualizes this arrangement not as charity but as debt-based reciprocity, stressing that she repaid these obligations over time through extreme personal sacrifice, including minimizing household expenses and enduring prolonged financial precarity.

Her motivation for entrepreneurship is articulated in explicitly anti-exploitative terms. Rather than emphasizing growth or profit, she repeatedly stresses dignity, autonomy, and control over her own labor as core drivers. She frames earning less income as acceptable if it means avoiding humiliation, unpaid labor, and gendered abuse. Entrepreneurship thus becomes a means of reclaiming ownership over her time, body, and professional identity.

Despite operating at a micro scale and alone, she emphasizes the durability of her enterprise as a marker of success. Having sustained the salon for over a decade without institutional support, she presents survival itself as an achievement, particularly given the intersecting pressures of single motherhood, financial exclusion, and gendered stigma.

Finally, she reflects critically on how gendered labeling continues to limit her prospects. She argues that being both a woman and single subjects her to persistent moral judgments that constrain expansion opportunities, customer relations, and perceived credibility. In her view, had she been a man, the same skills and experience would have enabled her to grow the business further, whereas as a woman she remains structurally confined to small-scale survival entrepreneurship.

6.1.7. Woman Entrepreneur 7

Woman Entrepreneur 7 is a 38-year-old married woman with a 4-year-old son, who studied language and literature and now runs a micro-scale e-commerce business producing 3D-printed toys and decorative objects sold through a major online platform. This is her first business and she was already married and a mother when she started it. There is no clear entrepreneurial lineage in her family, which is largely composed of salaried workers, so her decision to become self-employed represented a departure from familiar paths. The business was financed through limited household savings shared with her husband, without any recourse to formal grants or public support schemes, and they relied on their own resources to mitigate risk. She single-handedly manages production, logistics and customer relations, while shouldering primary responsibility for childcare. Entrepreneurship, for her, is a way to re-enter economic life after a period dominated by unpaid care work, to monetize her creative production and to generate income within a flexible schedule that remains compatible with mothering.

In the interview, she frames her entrepreneurial trajectory as a response to prolonged interruption from paid employment due to overlapping life events, including the pandemic, pregnancy, and early motherhood. After leaving her position in the tourism and event management sector before the pandemic, she remained outside the labor market for several years, first due to pandemic-related disruptions and later due to her deliberate decision to personally provide full-time care for her child during early childhood. She describes this period as emotionally and psychologically challenging, emphasizing that prolonged absence from paid work generated feelings of stagnation and loss of professional identity.

Her prior professional background is rooted in a highly demanding and time-intensive sector. She worked for many years in tourism, congress, and protocol-oriented event organization, including as a project manager in a foundation affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She characterizes this work as incompatible with childcare, citing irregular hours, constant availability, frequent travel, and the absence of clear boundaries between work and private life. Entrepreneurship thus emerged not as an extension of her previous career but as a strategic exit from a sector she perceived as structurally hostile to motherhood.

She explicitly describes motherhood as the central factor reshaping her relationship to time, labor, and ambition. While acknowledging her husband's involvement in household tasks and childcare, she stresses that responsibility remains asymmetrically distributed and that the mental and organizational burden of everyday life continues to fall primarily on her. She repeatedly emphasizes that even with spousal support, she could not step outside the culturally dominant framework that positions mothers as the primary caregivers, which significantly constrained the time and energy she could allocate to her business.

Unlike some other participants, she had no prior exposure to entrepreneurship within her family or close social environment. She explicitly states that there were no entrepreneurial role models in her immediate circle and reflects retrospectively that such examples might have increased her confidence and accelerated her decision to pursue self-employment. As a result, she entered entrepreneurship without inherited know-how and had to construct her understanding of business almost entirely through self-directed learning.

Her decision to establish an e-commerce business was shaped by the search for a low-capital, home-based, and flexible form of economic activity compatible with childcare. She repeatedly emphasizes that the ability to produce at home, manage working hours autonomously, and integrate paid work into domestic routines was a decisive factor in choosing three-dimensional printing and online sales over other entrepreneurial options. In this sense, entrepreneurship functioned as a mechanism of re-entry into economic life under conditions of care dependency.

In terms of preparation, she openly acknowledges that she entered entrepreneurship with no formal knowledge of business procedures, digital production technologies, or platform-based commerce. Following her decision, she engaged in intensive self-education, including online courses on design software, e-commerce operations, and digital marketing, as well as training programs offered by exporters' unions and women-focused business associations. She frames learning as an ongoing process rather than a completed phase, highlighting continuous effort despite limited time and energy

Her experience with institutional support mechanisms is marked by exclusion through eligibility criteria rather than direct rejection. She expresses strong frustration with age limits and employee-count requirements that prevented her from accessing grants and social security premium support schemes for women entrepreneurs. She contrasts her own ineligibility with younger women entrepreneurs who benefited from one-year social security premium support, framing these criteria as particularly disadvantaging women who enter entrepreneurship after prolonged care-related interruptions.

Finally, she articulates a strong sense of self-imposed pressure to prove competence and legitimacy as a woman entrepreneur. She contrasts this with her perception of men's entrepreneurial trajectories, arguing that women must constantly demonstrate that they can perform beyond domestic roles. This perceived need for continuous self-justification intensifies both motivation and exhaustion, positioning entrepreneurship as a space of empowerment that simultaneously reproduces gendered expectations of overperformance.

6.1.8. Woman Entrepreneur 8

Woman Entrepreneur 8 is a 31-year-old single woman, living with her family and without children, who established her first business as the owner of a small-to-medium-scale insurance agency employing about seven people. She grew up in a tradesman family and has long been familiar with money circulation and commercial risk through her father's business, which normalized entrepreneurship as an everyday

activity. She actively searched for institutional support and applied to public grant schemes with professional consultancy, but her sector, namely insurance and agency services, was ultimately deemed ineligible, and the application ended without support. The insurance agency was therefore financed by her own savings accumulated from previous jobs and by shared capital with her business partner. Her motivation stems less from immediate survival needs than from a desire to stop working under low-paid, subordinate conditions and instead to control her own client portfolio, income and working practices.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Labour Economics and Industrial Relations, which provided her with foundational knowledge in economics, accounting, labour relations, and organizational processes. Although her department was strongly oriented toward public-sector careers and competitive civil service examinations, she gradually became disillusioned with this path, perceiving recruitment processes as opaque and discouraging. This experience played an important role in redirecting her career trajectory toward the private sector and, eventually, entrepreneurship.

Before founding her agency, she worked in several insurance firms, progressing from entry-level positions to more structured and corporate agency environments. These experiences allowed her to develop sector-specific expertise, expand her professional network, and gain familiarity with both operational and managerial aspects of insurance services. Over time, she became increasingly aware that salaried employment limited both her income potential and her decision-making autonomy. Growing up in a family where her father had always worked independently as a tradesman further reinforced her discomfort with fixed salaries and hierarchical subordination, making self-employment appear both desirable and culturally familiar.

Although she comes from a family with an entrepreneurial background, her decision to establish an insurance agency was not immediately embraced without reservations. While her father's experience as a self-employed tradesman normalized the idea of running one's own business, her mother expressed significant concern about the risks associated with leaving a stable job, repeatedly encouraging caution.

Emotional support from her family, particularly from her sister, played a critical role in sustaining her confidence during the transition period, even as doubts and anxieties persisted within the household.

The agency was founded as a limited liability company and operates through a partnership with a non-family male colleague whom she had previously met in the sector. This partnership was formed on the basis of complementary skills and mutual trust rather than kinship ties. While the formal ownership and managerial authority rest primarily with her, the presence of a partner was perceived as reducing both financial and emotional risk during the establishment phase. She emphasized, however, that most formal procedures, signatures, and institutional interactions were handled by herself, underscoring her central role as the responsible entrepreneur.

Her decision not to rely on state entrepreneurship grants was shaped not only by sectoral ineligibility but also by prior observations of lengthy, uncertain, and costly application processes experienced by peers. Although she invested time and money in professional consultancy to explore public support options, the exclusion of insurance agencies from eligibility criteria reinforced her perception that institutional support mechanisms privilege certain "acceptable" forms of women's entrepreneurship while marginalizing others, particularly in service-based and financial sectors.

More broadly, her entrepreneurial motivation reflects a strong emphasis on autonomy, professional recognition, and self-determination. She frequently articulated the desire to "own" both her labour and the outcomes of her work, contrasting this with earlier experiences of being undervalued and constrained in salaried positions. While economic security was an important consideration, her narrative places greater weight on dignity, authority, and control over her professional identity than on short-term financial necessity.

6.1.9. Woman Entrepreneur 9

Woman Entrepreneur 9 is a 34-year-old single, childless business graduate who first ran a flower shop and later founded a small leather handbag brand positioned in the

“affordable luxury” segment. The bag brand is her second entrepreneurial venture, and she remained single throughout these processes. She is the daughter of a highly entrepreneurial father who operates across several sectors and she worked for a time in the family company, where she felt consistently relegated to the background because she was a woman. She deliberately chose not to rely on direct family capital when launching her own brand; instead, she used savings from her work in the family firm and from her earlier flower business, without drawing on formal grants or public programs. Coming from a conservative “eastern” family background, she has always been expected to return home by a certain hour, which makes evening meetings, long negotiations and late-night work difficult and adds a gendered temporal constraint to her entrepreneurial practice. Her main motivation is to step out of the invisible, subordinate position she occupied in the family business and to create a brand where she has full control over aesthetic choices and commercial decisions, despite cultural and familial restrictions.

She was born in Diyarbakır and raised within a family culture shaped by both strong entrepreneurial activity and conservative gender norms commonly associated with “eastern” family structures. Although her father is described as highly entrepreneurial and commercially active across multiple sectors, this entrepreneurial environment did not translate into equal learning opportunities for her within the family business. From an early stage, she became acutely aware that her position in the family firm was structured less around skill acquisition and decision-making and more around gendered expectations of appropriateness and visibility.

While working in the family company after graduating from business administration, she repeatedly experienced being directed toward auxiliary and low-status tasks such as handling minor errands, external follow-ups, or supportive duties, rather than being involved in core operational, financial, or strategic processes. She explicitly interpreted this pattern as a consequence of being a woman in a male-dominated family office, where key responsibilities were reserved for male relatives such as her brother and uncle. This experience was not perceived as an isolated incident but as a systematic form of marginalization that gradually eroded her sense of belonging to the family enterprise.

The realization that even within her own family's business she would remain confined to "small tasks" and peripheral roles became a decisive turning point in her entrepreneurial trajectory. Rather than motivating her to claim a stronger position within the family firm, this experience generated a desire to exit that space altogether and to establish a business where her authority would not be mediated through male relatives. In this sense, her decision to found her own ventures can be read as a deliberate attempt to escape gendered hierarchies reproduced within the family itself, not only within the broader labor market.

Her first entrepreneurial attempt, opening a flower shop, can be understood as both an economic experiment and a symbolic act of separation from the family business. Although small in scale, this venture allowed her to experience direct responsibility, customer interaction, and income generation without familial oversight. The subsequent decision to establish a leather handbag brand represented a further step toward professional self-definition, combining her business education with creative and aesthetic control. Importantly, she emphasized that refusing direct family capital was a conscious strategy to preserve autonomy and to avoid reproducing dependency relations similar to those she had experienced in the family firm.

Despite these efforts toward independence, her narrative also highlights the persistent influence of conservative family norms on her everyday entrepreneurial practice. As a single woman living with her family, she remains subject to expectations regarding mobility, time use, and evening presence at home. She explicitly noted that business meetings extending into late hours, networking events, or prolonged negotiations pose additional challenges for her compared to male entrepreneurs, not because of formal restrictions but due to informal familial monitoring and concern. These constraints, while not preventing entrepreneurship altogether, shape the temporal and spatial boundaries within which she can operate.

Taken together, her profile illustrates how exposure to entrepreneurship within the family does not automatically translate into empowerment for women. On the contrary, early encounters with gendered division of labor in a family enterprise played a crucial role in crystallizing her motivation to establish an independent

business. Entrepreneurship, for her, thus functions not only as an economic strategy but also as a means of reclaiming professional visibility, authority, and self-respect in response to gendered marginalization experienced at home.

6.1.10. Woman Entrepreneur 10

Woman Entrepreneur 10 is a 33-year-old single, childless lawyer who, after several years of working as an associate in other law firms, opened her own law office. This is her first business. Her father's entrepreneurship in the construction sector provided her with a positive example of self-employment and made the idea of having her own practice appear both legitimate and attainable. When she set up her office there were no targeted institutional schemes or start-up grants for newly independent lawyers, and, as a new self-employed professional without a regular salary, she did not consider bank credit a realistic option. The office was thus financed by her own savings from three years of salaried work, complemented by moral rather than direct financial support from her family. Her decision to become self-employed is driven primarily by professional autonomy: she wanted to escape the low-pay, long-hours regime of associate positions and to build her own client base and working style.

In the interview, she situates her entrepreneurial decision firmly within the structural characteristics of the legal profession in Türkiye. She emphasizes that long-term dependent employment is widely perceived as unsustainable for lawyers, as the profession is implicitly organized around the assumption that every lawyer will eventually open her or his own office. This assumption, she notes, is directly reflected in wage-setting practices, where salaries for associate lawyers are kept deliberately low, often only marginally above the minimum wage. In her account, entrepreneurship therefore appears less as an exceptional career move and more as a normalized but deferred professional obligation.

Her trajectory prior to entrepreneurship is marked by several years of salaried legal work under two different employers, during which she accumulated approximately three years of formal seniority. She describes this period as professionally formative yet economically unsustainable, stressing that despite her growing legal expertise

and client responsibilities, her income remained insufficient to secure long-term financial independence. This gap between professional competence and economic reward played a central role in crystallizing her decision to establish her own office.

Although she comes from a family with entrepreneurial experience in the construction sector, she makes a clear distinction between her father's line of work and her own professional field. While observing her father's entrepreneurial trajectory familiarized her with risk-taking, responsibility, and long-term planning, she underlines that legal practice does not benefit from the same forms of capital accumulation or asset-based security as construction. Nevertheless, she explicitly identifies her father as an important role model whose experience made the idea of "standing on one's own feet" appear both legitimate and necessary.

Her decision to finance the establishment of her law office primarily through her own savings is presented as a deliberate assertion of independence. Although she acknowledges that her family, particularly her father, provided moral support and limited material assistance, such as contributing to office furniture and covering rent during the initial months, she stresses that she consciously avoided relying on sustained family financing. This choice reflects her desire to define her professional identity as self-made rather than inherited or dependent.

She emphasizes that at the time she opened her office, there were no state-supported entrepreneurship schemes or targeted financial instruments for newly established lawyers. Due to the absence of a regular, documentable income after resigning from salaried employment, she also considered bank loans inaccessible. As a result, she entered entrepreneurship without institutional financial backing, relying instead on personal savings accumulated during her years of dependent employment.

In preparing for entrepreneurship, she did not receive formal entrepreneurship training but engaged in extensive informal learning. She actively consulted more senior colleagues who had previously opened their own offices and drew on her observations from earlier workplaces regarding office organization, file management, and employee supervision. She frames this process as "learning by watching,"

highlighting the importance of experiential knowledge transmitted through professional networks rather than formal programs.

Finally, she situates her entrepreneurial identity within a broader critique of male dominance in professional organizations. Drawing on her observations of bar associations and professional committees, she argues that women are often included in decision-making bodies symbolically rather than substantively. This awareness reinforces her commitment to maintaining an independent professional space, where authority is grounded in expertise and responsibility rather than mediated through male-dominated institutional hierarchies.

6.1.11. Woman Entrepreneur 11

Woman Entrepreneur 11 is a 66-year-old married woman with three children, who completed primary education and opened a women's clothing boutique only after her children left home for university. This is her first entrepreneurial venture, established in a life stage where intensive care responsibilities had already diminished. She comes from a family with small-scale commercial experience; her grandfather ran a business and her mother once operated a small grocery shop, subtly demonstrating that women too can trade. When she opened her first boutique, she was unaware of institutional support schemes; by the time she opened a second, larger boutique in another neighborhood, she had heard of them but did not consider them necessary or worth the perceived bureaucratic effort. Both boutiques were essentially financed through family and personal savings and grew incrementally into a small-to-medium-scale retail operation with several employees. Her main motivation is to fill the emotional and social void left by her children's departure, to earn her own money and to experience a sense of achievement and recognition through the selection and sale of clothes to her clientele.

In the interview, she explicitly situates her entrepreneurial decision within a specific life-course transition. She emphasizes that she did not enter entrepreneurship while actively raising children, but only after all three of her children had left home to attend university. This temporal positioning is central to her narrative: entrepreneurship emerges not as a strategy for reconciling paid work with intensive

care responsibilities, but as a response to the emotional and social vacuum created by the end of daily motherhood. She repeatedly describes this period as one of “being alone at home,” which she frames as both a moment of loss and an opportunity for self-directed activity.

Her account highlights that domestic responsibilities did not constitute a significant constraint on her entrepreneurial process, precisely because the timing of entry coincided with a reduction in care labor. She explicitly states that housework and family obligations did not prevent her from establishing and running the business, underlining that the feasibility of entrepreneurship is closely linked to the life stage at which it is undertaken. In this sense, her experience contrasts sharply with those of younger women in the sample who combine entrepreneurship with childcare.

Although she had no prior wage-labor experience before opening her boutique, she situates her confidence in entrepreneurship within a longer familial history of small-scale trade. She recalls that her grandfather was engaged in commerce and that her mother once operated a small grocery store. These experiences did not translate into direct training or mentorship, but they nevertheless normalized the idea that women can trade and manage money. She explicitly describes this background as something that “runs in the family,” contributing to a sense of inherited self-confidence rather than technical know-how.

She emphasizes that her business was entirely self-initiated and self-owned. The boutique was neither inherited nor transferred from a family member, and she stresses that she started and sustained it on her own terms. While she acknowledges limited financial contributions from her husband at the very beginning, she repeatedly underlines a personal principle of economic self-reliance, insisting that if she were to run the business, its investments and continuity should be financed primarily through its own revenues. Borrowing from family members, including her children, was framed as temporary and strictly repaid, reflecting a strong moral boundary around debt and dependency.

Her narrative places particular emphasis on autonomy over financial maximization. She repeatedly contrasts “being given money” with “earning and spending one’s own

money," framing the latter as a qualitatively different form of freedom. For her, entrepreneurship is less about wealth accumulation than about personal independence, self-respect, and the ability to make consumption and investment decisions without justification to others. This moral economy of independence constitutes a central motivational thread throughout her account.

Finally, she frames her entrepreneurial experience as deeply affective. Beyond income generation, she repeatedly highlights enjoyment, social interaction, and a sense of accomplishment as central outcomes of her business activity. Designing products, selecting clothing models, interacting with customers, and receiving recognition from family members all contribute to a strong sense of personal fulfillment. Entrepreneurship thus appears in her narrative not as a response to exclusion or precarity, but as a late-life project of self-realization, dignity, and continued social participation.

6.1.12. Woman Entrepreneur 12

Woman Entrepreneur 12 is a 45-year-old married, childless physiotherapist with a doctoral degree, who first co-founded a relatively large physiotherapy center with three colleagues and later downsized to an individually owned, small-scale practice. She identifies herself as the first entrepreneur in a family shaped by a civil-servant mentality, with no prior experience of self-employment. When she left her previous job to open the first center in the mid-2000s, her parents were deeply anxious yet offered strong moral support and tolerated her taking on debt, and neither she nor her family made use of formal entrepreneurship schemes that were either not yet widespread or not known to them. Her most recent, much smaller practice was financed entirely from her own professional income and savings, and she only informed her family once it was already established, signaling increased financial and decisional autonomy. For her, entrepreneurship is above all a means to create a therapeutic environment aligned with her professional knowledge and ethical standards, rather than remaining subject to another employer's rules.

In the interview, she presents herself as a highly educated and professionally established actor whose entrepreneurial trajectory spans nearly two decades. She

emphasizes that she has been engaged in various forms of self-employment and partnership since 2005, moving between salaried clinical work, academic positions, and entrepreneurial arrangements. Rather than a single, linear transition into entrepreneurship, her account highlights repeated cycles of establishment, restructuring, and downsizing, shaped by both institutional constraints and professional priorities.

Her first entrepreneurial initiative emerged at a very early stage in her career, shortly after graduation. At that time, she was single and had no care responsibilities, which she explicitly identifies as a key enabling condition. She contrasts this period with later life stages, noting that entering entrepreneurship before marriage allowed her to accumulate professional confidence, decision-making capacity, and economic resilience. She reflects retrospectively that marrying later, at the age of 34, likely protected her entrepreneurial autonomy, and she explicitly states that earlier marriage might have produced different constraints.

Family background plays a complex but supportive role in her narrative. She repeatedly emphasizes that she is the first entrepreneur in a family shaped by a strong civil-servant mentality, with no prior experience of self-employment or trade. This absence of entrepreneurial precedent initially generated fear and anxiety among family members, particularly around financial risk and debt. Nevertheless, she stresses that her family provided consistent emotional support, even when material resources were limited and the decision to take on loans caused concern.

Her motivation to enter entrepreneurship is rooted primarily in professional ethics rather than economic necessity. She recounts persistent conflicts with institutional practices she perceived as incompatible with medical and professional ethics, including pressure to increase patient volume at the expense of care quality and to apply treatments she considered inadequate or misleading. These ethical tensions accumulated over time and ultimately made continued salaried employment untenable, positioning entrepreneurship as a means of protecting professional integrity.

The establishment of her first large-scale physiotherapy center took place under legally ambiguous conditions. At the time, physiotherapists were not formally

authorized to establish independent centers, requiring the business to be registered under the names of medical doctors. She explicitly describes this process as involving “courage born of ignorance,” underlining the risks associated with legal uncertainty, trust in intermediaries, and lack of clear regulatory guidance. This arrangement exposed her and her partners to economic losses and repeated difficulties during inspections by the Ministry of Health.

She distinguishes clearly between her earlier large-scale enterprise and her current small-scale practice. While the former resembled a polyclinic with extensive licensing, inspection, and staffing requirements, the latter operates as a consultancy-style physiotherapy practice with minimal personnel and significantly reduced bureaucratic burden. She frames this downsizing not as failure but as a strategic recalibration aimed at sustainability, autonomy, and reduced exposure to regulatory uncertainty.

Her access to financial resources varied across entrepreneurial phases. The first establishment relied heavily on bank credit and limited family support, as she had no prior savings at a young age. By contrast, her most recent practice was financed entirely through her own accumulated income and savings, and she deliberately informed her family only after the business was already operational. This choice is presented as evidence of increased financial independence and confidence over time.

Finally, she articulates a forward-looking but cautious orientation toward the future of her enterprise. Rather than expressing ambitions for rapid growth or expansion, she prioritizes professional satisfaction, ethical practice, and manageable scale. Entrepreneurship, in her narrative, functions as a means of aligning work with values and life rhythms, rather than as a pursuit of maximization or status.

6.1.13. Woman Entrepreneur 13

Woman Entrepreneur 13 is a 59-year-old married woman with two children, who studied business administration and finance and, after many years working in accounting offices, opened her own accounting, auditing and forensic accounting

practice. This is her first business, established shortly after marriage, and she describes herself as the first entrepreneur in the extended family. At the time she started, there were no targeted small-business support schemes comparable to current entrepreneurship grants, and she did not draw on other forms of institutional assistance beyond conventional banking services. Her office was financed mainly through the savings she accumulated from early wage labor, supplemented by some support from her husband, and has gradually evolved into a medium-scale professional services firm with employees and a sizeable client portfolio. Her motivation is to move from being a subordinate employee in other firms to being the signatory owner of her own practice, to receive direct recognition and remuneration for her expertise, and to claim visibility and authority as a woman in a male-dominated profession.

She was born in 1966 in Istanbul to a family originally from Sivas and moved to Ankara in the early 1980s for university education, where she has lived and worked since. She graduated from Gazi University Faculty of Business Administration and later completed a master's degree in finance, becoming a certified public accountant, independent auditor, and court-appointed forensic accountant.

At the time she started, there were no targeted small-business support schemes comparable to current entrepreneurship grants, and she did not draw on other forms of institutional assistance beyond conventional banking services. Her business was founded in 1989, at a time when digital technologies were only beginning to enter professional accounting practice, which made early investment decisions particularly risky and visible.

Her office was financed mainly through the savings she accumulated from early wage labor, supplemented by some support from her husband, and has gradually evolved into a medium-scale professional services firm with employees and a sizeable client portfolio. A significant portion of the initial capital was directed toward purchasing a computer at a time when such an investment was highly unusual in the sector; this decision required liquidating wedding jewelry and postponing home ownership, illustrating an early willingness to assume technological and financial risk.

She emphasizes that she had no entrepreneurial role models in her family and identifies herself as “the first” in her wider kinship network to establish an independent business, which made the decision socially unconventional but also personally significant.

Her motivation is to move from being a subordinate employee in other firms to being the signatory owner of her own practice, to receive direct recognition and remuneration for her expertise, and to claim visibility and authority as a woman in a male-dominated profession. In addition to professional autonomy, she highlights a strong desire to demonstrate women’s individual legal and economic personhood, recalling early encounters in which married women’s professional activities were legally and administratively subsumed under their husbands’ names.

Her entrepreneurial trajectory is further shaped by the long-term combination of paid professional labor, marriage, and motherhood, which she describes as manageable but structurally more demanding for women due to persistent expectations of care, emotional labor, and availability beyond professional work.

6.1.14. Woman Entrepreneur 14

Woman Entrepreneur 14 is a 45-year-old married woman with one child who, after approximately 26 years of experience in sales and the electrical sector, founded a small company supplying and designing electrical materials and projects. This is her first business and she was married with a child when she set it up. She comes from a working-class family with six daughters; her retired parents run small activities in their village and embody a culture of hard work rather than large-scale entrepreneurship. She applied several times to public entrepreneurship schemes aimed at supporting small businesses and women entrepreneurs, but she reports that her applications never resulted in actual payments, creating the feeling for her that these programs benefit only a very small fraction of applicants. The firm is therefore financed predominantly through her own long-term savings from salaried employment, complemented by some support from her husband. Her motivation is to convert decades of sector-specific knowledge and networks into her own business

rather than continuing as a salaried manager, and to script the second half of her career as an entrepreneur who controls projects, clients and income.

She was born in 1980 in Ankara and completed her secondary education in Antalya before returning to Ankara, where she has lived and worked since. She describes her educational trajectory as fragmented, noting that she completed secondary education through open education programs and initially aspired to become an engineer, an ambition that remained unrealized due to structural and personal constraints. Despite this, she emphasizes that her lack of formal engineering education did not prevent her from accumulating extensive sectoral expertise through long-term practical experience.

Her professional life prior to entrepreneurship spans more than twenty-six years within the same firm operating in the electrical and energy materials sector. She began her career in entry-level positions, including secretarial work, and gradually advanced into sales and ultimately sales management. She frames this long tenure as a period of intense informal learning, during which she acquired comprehensive knowledge of products, supply chains, customer relations, pricing practices, and sectoral dynamics. Retirement from this position constituted a critical turning point, prompting her to reassess the use of her accumulated experience.

Her decision to establish her own company emerged shortly after retirement and was preceded by a relatively short period of reflection. She emphasizes that entrepreneurship was not a long-standing plan but rather a response to the realization that remaining inactive after retirement would conflict with her personality and sense of purpose. She explicitly rejects the idea of "resting at home," describing herself as someone who derives meaning from productivity, movement, and visible output.

Family reactions to her entrepreneurial decision were mixed. While her parents strongly opposed the idea, emphasizing rest, security, and the risks of renewed economic responsibility after decades of work, her husband and sisters provided consistent encouragement. She repeatedly identifies her husband as her primary source of support, highlighting not only his financial backing but also his emotional

reassurance that “there was little to lose.” Her son is also described as a significant motivational force, offering encouragement and expressing pride in her efforts.

She situates her entrepreneurial experience within a highly masculinized and socially conservative sector. She describes frequent exposure to coarse language, gendered objectification, and informal communication styles among contractors and field workers, which she experiences as emotionally exhausting. In response, she reports actively regulating her bodily presentation, including clothing choices, use of perfume, and demeanor, in order to minimize sexualized interpretations and to be taken seriously as a professional actor.

Despite characterizing the electrical sector as “backward” in terms of gender norms, she emphasizes her determination to remain visible and present within these spaces rather than withdrawing. She frames endurance and persistence as necessary strategies, stating that “standing there” is often the only way to maintain authority in male-dominated environments. This ongoing negotiation between visibility and self-protection constitutes a central feature of her everyday entrepreneurial practice.

In terms of capital formation, she underscores that her initial financial resources were extremely limited. She established the company with minimal cash capital and later increased formal capital by transferring personal assets, including her private vehicle, to the firm. Rather than relying on bank loans or grants, she emphasizes reputation, trust, and long-standing relationships with suppliers as her primary economic resources. Several manufacturers and sales managers extended goods to her on the basis of personal credibility rather than immediate payment, which she describes as crucial for survival during the first years.

Her experience with institutional support mechanisms is characterized by deep frustration. Although she completed required entrepreneurship training programs and repeatedly applied for women-targeted grants and small-scale subsidies, she reports receiving no financial support. She explicitly describes these programs as symbolic rather than substantive, arguing that they benefit only a small and opaque subset of applicants and fail to address the needs of women entrepreneurs with limited initial capital.

Finally, she articulates a strong normative vision of women's entrepreneurship as a social good. She repeatedly emphasizes that women's economic activity contributes not only to household income but also to socialization, self-confidence, and the upbringing of children. Her recommendations focus heavily on material and infrastructural support for women entrepreneurs, including rent-free or secure office spaces, delayed tax and social security payments, accessible credit, and safe transportation. Entrepreneurship, in her narrative, is framed as both an individual achievement and a collective investment in social well-being.

6.1.15. Woman Entrepreneur 15

Woman Entrepreneur 15 is a 47-year-old single, childless electrical and electronics engineer with a master's degree, who worked in the energy sector before establishing a company that designs and installs solar power plants. This is her first business and she was single when she founded it, which made it easier to manage the travel and long hours required in a project-based, male-dominated field. She explicitly emphasizes that being unmarried and without childcare responsibilities constituted a structural advantage at the time of establishment, as it enabled her to be constantly present on construction sites, travel frequently, and respond flexibly to project-based demands.

She does not report an explicit entrepreneurial lineage in her family; instead, her trajectory is shaped by her own technical curiosity and professional experience. Her family background is characterized by a strong civil-servant mentality, which initially produced anxiety and concern rather than encouragement when she decided to leave secure salaried employment and start her own company. Family members perceived entrepreneurship as risky and unfamiliar, particularly because the energy sector was largely unknown to them.

After resigning from her job, she attended an entrepreneurship training course but decided not to use the small grant offered, which would barely have covered basic office furniture and, in her view, did not justify the bureaucratic requirements for a service-based engineering firm. Although she completed the KOSGEB

entrepreneurship training, she deliberately refrained from using the financial support, describing the application procedures as disproportionate to the scale and needs of an engineering consultancy and installation business. The company was thus launched with her personal savings from previous employment and has grown into a small-to-medium-scale firm managing large-budget projects and field teams. Her initial capital consisted primarily of her own accumulated savings and severance-related income, and she did not rely on family financial support or informal networks to ease bureaucratic or financial procedures.

Her motivation is driven less by economic hardship than by frustration with subordinate positions, and by a strong desire to apply her engineering skills in projects that bear her own name and to exist as a woman entrepreneur in a highly masculinized energy sector. She repeatedly stresses that her decision to become an entrepreneur was closely tied to professional autonomy and self-realization, expressing dissatisfaction with hierarchical organizational structures and gendered assumptions encountered during her earlier employment, such as being questioned about marriage plans and perceived as a potential “labor loss” due to presumed future family responsibilities.

Drawing on her previous experience in industrial maintenance and energy production systems, she entered entrepreneurship with a high level of technical confidence and self-perceived competence, describing herself as capable of establishing and managing an entire production process “from A to Z.” She conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a space of freedom where she can direct her own projects, develop technically complex systems, and escape gendered limitations associated with salaried positions in male-dominated engineering environments.

6.1.16. Woman Entrepreneur 16

Woman Entrepreneur 16 is a 44-year-old married woman with two children and a degree in economics. She began her career as a salaried accountant and, in her early twenties, established a small office primarily focused on publishing a medical journal, drawing on her accounting background as professional support rather than as

a parallel business activity. This was her first business and she was single at the time. She later married, became a mother, and after approximately one and a half years, closed the business. She comes from a family of civil servants; her parents and siblings all work in the public sector, and there is no prior entrepreneurial history in her extended family. Earlier in her life, her father refused to allow her to study at a university in another city, which led to years of unemployment and delayed education. When she later announced her intention to start a business, her parents strongly supported her decision, partly due to a sense of moral responsibility related to their earlier restrictions on her education and mobility, although conservative relatives disapproved of a 20-year-old unmarried woman running a business. The initial capital for the business was almost entirely provided by her father, and she did not benefit from institutional entrepreneurship support, as such schemes were either unavailable or unknown to her at the time. Although the business showed financial promise during its operation, it eventually became unsustainable primarily due to changing family expectations and her husband's strong preference for stable salaried employment over entrepreneurial uncertainty. Encouraged by her husband, who emphasized the burdens associated with tax obligations, rent, and administrative responsibilities, she closed the business and returned to salaried accountancy. Her initial motivation for entrepreneurship combined financial concerns with a desire for independence, professional identity, and future security. However, gendered expectations surrounding marriage, motherhood, and the importance of a secure income ultimately redirected her toward waged employment.

In the interview, she situates her entrepreneurial experience within a life-course narrative shaped by delayed education, early responsibility, and strong family control over mobility and life choices. She was born in Ankara in 1981 and raised in a family composed almost entirely of civil servants. She recounts that although she had gained admission to a university outside Ankara at a young age, her father refused to allow her to leave the city, resulting in several years of unemployment and a postponed educational trajectory. She describes this period as one characterized by frustration, loss of direction, and diminished self-confidence.

After eventually completing her degree in economics, she worked in the insurance sector and developed strong sales skills, which she later identified as the primary

resource motivating her to pursue entrepreneurship. She explicitly states that she entered her entrepreneurial venture not because she possessed sector-specific expertise in medical publishing, but because she trusted her ability to sell, persuade, and build client relationships. In retrospect, she identifies the mismatch between her skills and the technical requirements of the sector as a significant vulnerability that contributed to the closure of the business.

Her entrepreneurial initiative began at a very young age. She established her business at the age of twenty while still single, at a time when conservative relatives strongly opposed the idea of an unmarried young woman running a business. She recalls that extended family members openly criticized the decision, framing it as inappropriate and risky. In contrast, her father emerged as her primary supporter, both emotionally and financially. She emphasizes that her parents' support was partly shaped by a sense of moral responsibility stemming from their earlier decision to restrict her education and mobility.

The business she established was a small-scale sole proprietorship registered entirely in her own name and focused on publishing a scientific medical journal. The journal relied on advertising revenue from medical firms and subscription income from doctors and was published periodically. She characterizes the venture as promising and financially viable, noting that it generated sufficient income and professional satisfaction during its period of operation.

She highlights that she had no prior entrepreneurial experience within her family and had received no formal training in entrepreneurship, business law, or regulatory procedures. Instead, she relied heavily on a trusted accountant who guided her through the establishment process and handled most bureaucratic interactions on her behalf. As a result, she remained largely shielded from direct engagement with public institutions and participated mainly in signature procedures. While this reliance reduced immediate bureaucratic stress, she notes that it also limited her opportunity to learn formal administrative processes.

Marriage and motherhood constitute a decisive turning point in her entrepreneurial trajectory. She explicitly states that the closure of the business was not primarily due

to financial failure but to her husband's strong preference for economic security and stability. Following marriage and her transition into motherhood, her husband increasingly discouraged continued entrepreneurship, emphasizing the uncertainties associated with tax obligations, rent, and administrative responsibilities, and encouraging her to pursue salaried employment. She accepted this transition, framing it as a pragmatic decision shaped by family priorities rather than personal aspiration.

She contrasts the relative ease of entrepreneurship while single with the heightened constraints she experienced after marriage and motherhood. According to her, marital and maternal responsibilities significantly reduced her time, energy, and tolerance for risk, making self-employment feel unsustainable. She explicitly states that if she had remained single, she might have continued or re-entered entrepreneurship, but under her current conditions she does not consider starting a business again.

In evaluating her overall experience, she characterizes entrepreneurship as a positive but exhausting learning process. Although the venture ultimately closed after approximately one and a half years, she emphasizes that it provided a sense of independence, identity, and professional pride that she did not experience to the same degree in later salaried positions. She frames the experience not as a failure, but as an unrealized potential shaped by structural, familial, and gendered constraints.

Finally, she expresses strong normative support for women's entrepreneurship more broadly. Despite her own decision not to pursue entrepreneurship again, she argues that women should be actively prioritized in access to credit, incentives, and institutional support. She frames such support not as privilege but as compensation for the cumulative disadvantages women face in combining paid work, care responsibilities, and economic risk.

To facilitate readability, Table 4, which summarizes the interviewees' main characteristics such as age, marital status, number of children, education level, sector of activity, year of establishment, and sources of capital or support, is presented below in order to provide a clearer overview of the sample.

Table 4. Summary Profiles of Interviewed Women Entrepreneurs (N=16)

Interviewees	Age	Marital Status	Children	Education	Sector	Est. Year	Capital/ Support
WE1	29	Single	None	Agricultural Engineering (BSc)	Flower & chocolate design (Co-owner)	2023	Family Capital; No Institutional Support
WE2	27	Single	None	Social Work (BSc)	Counselling center (Owner)	2024	Family Capital; No Institutional Support
WE3	37	Divorced	1	Physical Education (BSc)	Pilates studio (Co-owner)	2020	Mainly Spouse Contribution; no Institutional Support
WE4	40	Married	2	Computer Engineering (BSc)	Software & AI Company (Owner)	2023	Family Capital+ Institutional Support
WE5	29	Single	None	Physiotherapy (BSc)	Vegan Restaurant (Owner)	2020	Self-Financed; No Grant/Institutional support
WE6	42	Divorced	1	High School Graduate	Hairdressing & Beauty Salon (Owner)	2014	No Grant/ Institutional Support; Relied on Loans from Relatives
WE7	38	Married	1	Language & Literature (BSc)	E-Commerce (Owner)	2024	Limited Household Savings (with Spouse Support); No Institutional Support
WE8	31	Single	None	Labor Economics and Industrial Relations (BSc)	Insurance Agency (Co-owner)	2023	Own Savings + No Institutional Support
WE9	34	Single	None	Business Administration (BSc)	Brand Owner (Co-owner)	2024	Own Savings; No Institutional Support
WE10	33	Single	None	Law (BSc)	Lawyer (Owner)	2018	Own savings; No Institutional Support
WE11	66	Married	3	Primary School Graduate	Clothing boutique (Owner)	2000	Family/Own Savings; No Institutional Support
WE12	45	Married	None	Physiotherapy (PhD)	Physiotherapy Centre (co-founded) then Owner	First 2005/ Second 2024	Own Savings; No Institutional Support
WE13	59	Married	2	Business Administration (BSc) & Finance (MSc)	Accounting/ Audit/Forensic Accounting (Owner)	1990	Own Savings + Spouse Support; Bank Support
WE14	45	Married	1	Open Education Graduate	Electrical Materials Supply (Owner)	2023	Own Savings+ Spouse Support; No Institutional Support

Table 4. (continued)

WE15	47	Single	None	Electrical & Electronics Engineering (MSc)	Solar Power Plant Installation (Owner)	2013	Own Savings; No Institutional Support
WE16	44	Married	2	Economics (BSc)	Medical Journal Publishing (Owner)	2001	Family Support; No Institutional Support

Having gained a closer understanding of the socio-demographic backgrounds, family configurations, sectors and motivational trajectories of these interviewed 16 women entrepreneurs, the next sections turn to the empirical analysis: their encounters with bureaucracy in the establishment and running stages of their businesses. In the following sub-sections, how gendered bureaucratic structures, street-level practices and institutional support schemes shape women's entrepreneurial journeys over time will be analyzed.

6.2. Encounter with Bureaucracy: Establishment Stage

This sub-section analyses the moment at which women entrepreneurs first appear before the state as "economic subjects" through business registration. Rather than a neutral sequence of technical steps, the establishment stage emerges as a dense intersection of bureaucratic procedures, financial constraints, family relations, care responsibilities and gendered interactions with street-level bureaucrats. Feminist bureaucracy literature (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984) has long argued that bureaucracy is not simply a rational and impersonal mechanism but a gendered structure whose seemingly neutral rules are enacted through masculine institutional cultures and interactional norms. The narratives of the 16 interviewed women entrepreneurs examined here make this argument concrete: the same tax office, registration system or municipal licensing procedure is experienced very differently depending on women's class position, age, marital and parental status, sector, sexual orientation and the presence or absence of family capital.

At the same time, the establishment stage is where entrepreneurial motivations collide most sharply with institutional and financial realities. For some interviewees, entrepreneurship is primarily a response to economic necessity and precarious wage

labor; for others, it expresses a desire for autonomy, professional self-realization and escape from hierarchical or hostile work environments. The experiences of a young, queer physiotherapist who turns sudden unemployment into a vegan restaurant, and an older, middle-class auditor who invests “house money” into computer technology at a time when almost nobody in her field used it, illustrate how similar bureaucratic regimes can be navigated in very different ways depending on the resources and risks women can mobilize.

In what follows, the establishment process is examined through the practical workings of registration bureaucracy, the ways women mobilize or avoid credit and debt, their ambivalent relationships with institutional support schemes, the time and care pressures that shape their capacity to deal with bureaucratic procedures, and their first encounters with street-level bureaucrats. Across these themes, age, class, education, marital and parental status and sexual orientation are treated as cross-cutting axes of variation that shape but do not determine women’s experiences.

6.2.1. Bureaucratic Procedures of Business Registration: Tax, Trade Registry, Social Security, Licenses and Notaries

For most participants, the establishment stage begins with tax registration, trade registry procedures, social security enrolment, municipal licenses and notarial acts. Formally, these processes are organized through standardized laws and regulations; and informally, they are filtered through institutional routines, opaque informational practices and gendered assumptions about who counts as a “real business owner.” In Weber’s ideal type, bureaucracy is expected to operate through legal-rational authority, impersonality, specialized expertise, and predictable rule-based procedures, leaving limited room for arbitrariness (Weber, 1947; Weber, 1978; Roth & Wittich, 1978; Bayırbağ & Göksel, 2013). However, the findings from the field study show that establishment-stage procedures are not consistently experienced in an impersonal and predictable way. Instead, women’s accounts point to discretionary communication, uneven guidance, and differential treatment in frontline encounters, which aligns with what Lipsky (1980) states about the street-level bureaucracy regarding discretion shaping implementation in practice. Across the 16 interviews,

three intersecting patterns stand out in women's accounts of establishment-stage business registration procedures: gendered bureaucratic complexity, intentional reliance on male accountants as institutional intermediary, and persistent assumptions that ownership and authority belong to men by default. Importantly, the fact that all 16 women described working with a male accountant was not the result of my sampling strategy or an intentional selection criterion. Rather, it emerged unexpectedly as a field pattern that cut across sectors, ages, and class positions.

Regarding the first pattern, women describe bureaucratic complexity as gendered because the burden is not only layered compliance, but also the unequal distribution of time, attention, and respect in everyday encounters. Woman Entrepreneur 6, a hairdresser with a high-school education, recalls that "every time they came, they found something new," and that the municipality "postponed" their procedures; she frames the delay explicitly through a gender lens: "If it were a man, he would have opened it in two days… because I am a woman… it took 10 to 15 days," adding that "if it is a man, they shake his hand," whereas "with a woman… 'wait, I'll come,' and they go," and she notes, "I remember that I waited more than an hour at the tax office." Woman Entrepreneur 3, a pilates studio owner and divorced mother, explains that in practice what could be a quick instruction becomes a prolonged interaction when she appears alone: instead of "sign this and go" attitude, she says that "a job a man would finish in 10 minutes gets prolonged with you," because "you are a woman," and she links this to unwanted conversation, intrusive attention, and sexualized treatment in a body-focused sector, stating that "the officers treat us the way they treat any woman who works with her body."

In more regulated professional sectors, complexity increases further, but women's statements show that the interaction is not uniform across social positions. Woman Entrepreneur 12, a physiotherapist with a PhD who also works as an academician, recalls the multi-layered compliance load: "We had to comply with Ministry of Health regulations, get the municipality license, and deal with SGK contracts… I was treating patients and at the same time chasing legislation," and she adds that her academic and doctoral degree shaped the tone of interaction, describing officials' approach as "more positive," even though the process still required "learning by

doing" under partial guidance filtered through individual interpretations. This relative positivity toward a woman with recognized technical and academic expertise suggests that street-level bureaucratic interactions are not uniformly gendered, but selectively mediated through perceptions of professional legitimacy. However, this does not indicate the presence of a coherent or standardized bureaucratic logic. On the contrary, it highlights the absence of consistent criteria in street-level encounters, where discretion operates through situational judgments rather than formal rules. These findings indicate that bureaucracy is not only gendered, but also classed and status-oriented, with educational credentials, institutional affiliation, and professional visibility shaping the tone and content of interaction. Finally, complexity can become risky at the outset when requirements are not communicated clearly: Woman Entrepreneur 16, a medical journal publisher who established her business in her 20s, recounts receiving an early penalty and being "summoned to court" after missing a procedural step she did not know existed. She explains this mistake as a result of being a young and inexperienced woman at the time, insisting, "I really did not know. If I knew, why would I not do it?" Together, these narratives show that "complexity" is not only administrative; it is gendered and interactional, produced through how institutional time, guidance, and credibility are unevenly distributed in everyday encounters.

For the second pattern, because women experience guidance as fragmented and the counter encounter as potentially gendered, many interviewees intentionally rely on male accountants as mediators, expecting both procedural translation and a more professional interactional setting. This reliance is not only a matter of technical expertise but also a strategy for reducing exposure to face-to-face institutional contact that women anticipate will be harder to navigate as women. Women Entrepreneur 10, who is a lawyer, frames this preference as a gendered communication problem in face-to-face institutional contact during the establishment process. She explains it as follows:

> "Although many procedures have shifted to digitalization, there are still establishment-stage steps that require you to be physically present in the institution. As a woman, it can be harder to explain your problem in public institutions, but if you are a man, you can resolve it faster. I do not know,

> maybe the reason is that they fear men might start a fight, or maybe women are perceived gentler. I do not know. As a woman, communicating with someone in a state institution feels a bit difficult to me. That is why I chose my accountant to be a man." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

The contrast that emerges between Woman Entrepreneur 12 and Woman Entrepreneur 10 is analytically revealing. While a medically credentialed, older, and married academic woman encounters a relatively respectful interactional tone, a younger, single law professional woman does not benefit from the same recognition. This suggests that street-level bureaucrats do not apply discrimination uniformly; rather, discrimination itself is differentiated. Gendered disadvantage is filtered through age, marital status, and perceived institutional authority, resulting in uneven and hierarchical forms of exclusion. In this sense, street-level bureaucracy reproduces not only gender inequality, but also stratified regimes of legitimacy, where some women are rendered more credible than others based on intersecting social positions. Crucially, Woman Entrepreneur 10's statement that "as a woman, communicating with someone in a state institution feels a bit difficult to me" demonstrates that this differential treatment is already anticipated and internalized, and the very fact that such difficulty is felt and articulated constitutes direct evidence that bureaucratic interactions are not neutral.

Woman Entrepreneur 2, a young and single counselling center founder, formulates the guidance problem sharply: "Institutions are not sufficient… you have to pull the answer to a question out with tweezers by asking again and again," and she explains why she could proceed: "My accountant was very knowledgeable, he told me step by step what to do… because his name was there, I could move forward. Otherwise… it would be very, very difficult." Woman Entrepreneur 1, a young and single floral and chocolate designer, similarly describes coordination and accompaniment: "The establishment procedures were coordinated with our male accountant… if I had to go to institutions, we went together," concluding that they "handled the process easily." Woman Entrepreneur 3, a divorced mother, links mediation directly to confidence and professionalism: when officials try to turn the encounter into prolonged conversation "because you are a woman," she says the presence of a man reduces that pressure and gives her confidence; in her words, "having a man with you is

unfortunately a big advantage." This mediator pattern is visible across generations. Entrepreneur 11, a women's clothing boutique owner from an older generation, describes her experience positively, saying that before online systems her male accountant "handled all my work," and that they completed procedures through visits to public institutions together; she frames institutional help as supportive rather than discriminatory, noting that officials addressed her as "auntie" (teyze) and said "we will sort it out for you," while her accountant reassured her in an "older brother" tone that he would handle everything. Analytically, this still indicates how establishment-stage procedures are navigated through trusted intermediaries. Digitization changes the form of work but not necessarily the mediator logic: before digitization, older participants describe dependence on accountants to physically move through offices; after digitization, even when many steps are online, trust still concentrates around a competent (often male) accountant who can operate portals and interpret requirements. Woman Entrepreneur 7, an e-commerce entrepreneur, states: "I had no physical connection with any institution… my accountant did most things through web portals… by entering my personal information, he opened the company," with only one brief visit to the tax office for documents. Finally, reliance can persist even when it conflicts with one's identity politics.

Woman Entrepreneur 5, who identifies herself as lesbian and feminist, explicitly expresses discomfort with having to rely on men for help; nevertheless, she reports completing "all establishment procedures" with a male accountant and legitimizes this reliance by saying she sees him "like an older brother." She links this dependency directly to how licensing encounters unfolded in practice. As she narrates it, one official would instruct her to "take care of" particular requirements, only for another official or an inspector to arrive later and tell her that those steps were unnecessary, asking why she had done them and insisting that something else was actually required. For this reason, she experiences the licensing process as a highly discretionary regime that depends on "which officer, which institution, which day" one happens to encounter. She recounts that her license was cancelled and reissued multiple times; at one point, it was cancelled on the basis of a structural intervention carried out thirty years earlier, long before her tenancy, even though the same premises had been licensed five times previously under other owners. She

underlines that this justification was mobilized against her because she was read as "marginal." Moreover, she believes that officials "do things more slowly and give less information" to someone like her, a pattern that reinforces the feeling that she is being told, in effect, "you don't belong here, why you are even trying this."

What emerges here is that the most problematic dimension of the encounter is not limited to Woman Entrepreneur 5's gender alone, but is intensified by her lesbian identity. This case makes the gendered nature of bureaucracy visible precisely at the point of intersection. The bureaucratic response she encounters is not only shaped by her being a woman, but by her being read as a woman outside the normative gender and sexuality regime. In this sense, the discretionary practices described above take on a double punitive character: she is sanctioned not merely for being female, but for being a "non-normative" woman. While women entrepreneurs already face a double transaction cost in bureaucratic navigation due to gendered assumptions and interactional burdens, this case demonstrates that the transaction cost escalates into a triple transaction cost when sexual identity places the individual outside dominant heteronormative norms. The accumulation of repeated cancellations, contradictory instructions, and delays thus reflects a form of stratified discrimination, in which gendered disadvantage is compounded by sexual identity, producing a qualitatively harsher and more exclusionary bureaucratic experience characterized by a triple transaction cost.

A related case shows that reliance on male mediation cannot be reduced to "low education." Woman Entrepreneur 16, an economics graduate who runs a medical journal publishing business, notes that despite her accounting training she still "did not know how to open a company and how to proceed" at the time of establishment, and therefore deliberately placed her trust in a well-regarded male accountant recommended through her network. Woman Entrepreneur 4, the founder of a software and AI company, similarly emphasizes how male accountants can become interactional gate-openers in public offices. She notes: "In some public offices, officials did not respond to my questions but to the male accountant next to me; therefore, I had to make extra effort to obtain a detailed explanation." She adds that she believes a male entrepreneur could resolve the same questions with less "need for proof," stating that he would face fewer demands to demonstrate credibility.

Regarding the third pattern, interviewed women entrepreneurs argue that gendered assumptions about ownership and authority shape establishment-stage procedures by determining who is addressed, who is presumed to be competent, and who is taken seriously as the "real" owner. How this assumption continues into the operational phase, including routine audits and day-to-day institutional communication, is examined in the subsequent section. An early-generation example is provided by Woman Entrepreneur 13, an accountant who founded her business in the late 1980s. When she went to the tax office to register herself as a taxpayer, she was told that she could not file a declaration in her own name and that a "family declaration" had to be issued under her husband's name. She recalls responding: "I said, I am an individual and I am the one who is working." Decades later, she still experiences the lingering effects of this gendered imaginary in everyday communication during the operation of her business: "They still call and ask, 'Are we going to speak to Mr. Orhan?' because of my surname," showing how the default assumption of the "male professional" continues to shape bureaucratic interaction at the level of language. A contemporary version of the same ownership script appears in Woman Entrepreneur 4, who notes that even though she could track many procedures online, when she appeared in person in public offices "people often assumed first that my husband or father must be the owner." She also reports a similar dynamic in a bank credit meeting: despite her technical presentation, the officer asked, "Will your husband sign as well?" seeking to tie collateral to a male relative. It is important to note that the requirement of spousal signatures in bank credit procedures is not, in itself, a formally gender-discriminatory practice, as similar signatures may also be requested from the spouses of male clients. However, what renders this encounter analytically significant is not the formal rule, but how it is communicated and experienced. In this case, the question functions interactionally to signal insufficiency and conditional credibility, producing the feeling that her technical competence and ownership claim are incomplete unless anchored to a male figure. The gendered effect thus emerges not from the regulation itself, but from the interactional framing through which authority and adequacy are implicitly questioned.

Age intersects with ownership credibility as well. Woman Entrepreneur 8, a 31-year-old working in insurance agency and intermediary services who partnered with an

older, highly experienced male co-founder, initially describes incorporation as formally "very systematic" and fast, noting that "everything progresses by procedure," that the company was opened "within a day," and that being in Ankara accelerated the process. Yet despite this apparently smooth formal pathway, she recounts clearly gendered institutional encounters during the establishment stage. Although the company was legally registered entirely in her name, she explains that when she went to public offices for business registration procedures, officials often addressed her partner as the main interlocutor and positioned her as if she were merely there as the "signatory authority." She emphasizes that because of her age and gender she faced strange looks and belittling questions such as, "Are you really the owner of the company?", and that her ownership was repeatedly questioned at the level of everyday interaction. Finally, Woman Entrepreneur 11, an older boutique owner, illustrates a softer, paternalistic variant: she says she did not experience gender-based problems and presents officials' address as supportive, describing being called "auntie" (teyze) and being told "we will sort it out for you," yet this support also positions her as someone to be assisted rather than presumed competent, reinforcing the same hierarchy through care rather than confrontation.

Taken together, these establishment-stage narratives show how women's encounters with bureaucracy regarding the bureaucratic procedures of business registration are shaped by three linked mechanisms: procedural complexity becomes gendered through discretionary treatment (Lipsky, 1980) and interactional delay; male accountants become intentional mediators because they are expected to convert opacity into a workable pathway and to secure a more professional encounter; and ownership and authority are repeatedly presumed male, from the demand for a "family declaration" to everyday assumptions about who should be addressed. In this sense, the field evidence complicates Weber's expectation of impersonal, predictable administration (Weber, 1947; Weber, 1978) by showing how discretionary practice and gendered recognition shape women's experience of formal registration procedures. In all cases, the gendered nature of bureaucracy appears less in explicit rules and more in who is assumed to be competent, who is addressed as the "real" business person and whose presence is mediated or shielded by male professionals.

6.2.2. Financing, Collateral and Debt: Family Capital, Banks and Informal Arrangements

Access to finance emerges as one of the most decisive and unequal dimensions of the establishment stage (Marlow & Patton, 2005; Coleman, 2000). Findings from the field study show that almost all interviewees identify initial capital as a major challenge, yet the sources they mobilize and the risks they take vary significantly according to class background, marital status, age, and the availability of family support. Entrepreneurial motivation is also deeply entangled with these financial configurations: women who begin entrepreneurial activity out of sheer economic necessity face different constraints than those who can draw on accumulated savings, severance pay, or the liquidation of personal assets, such as selling a car or converting wedding gold into equipment and start-up expenses. Across the 16 interviews, three intersecting patterns stand out in women's accounts of establishment-stage financing: whether women can mobilize family or spousal support as a safety net, whether they can access formal credit and collateral-based lending, and how they assemble initial resources through self-financing and informal arrangements when institutional finance (bank credit and collateral-based lending) and public support mechanisms (state-backed grants, subsidized loans, and entrepreneurship support programs) are unavailable, insufficient, or deliberately avoided.

As the first pattern, family or spousal support operates as a safety net that makes entrepreneurial risk thinkable, but it is also a gendered relationship that can involve conditions, monitoring, ambivalence, and unequal recognition of women's authority and ownership claims (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Powell & Eddleston, 2013). This pattern matters because it shows that "having support" is not simply an economic variable; it shapes who can take the first step with less fear, and it can also structure ownership feelings and authority inside the household.

Woman Entrepreneur 1, a 29-year-old single owner of a flower and chocolate shop, describes beginning without any institutional funding and relying entirely on her parents:

> "I did not receive any institutional support; it was completely family support… There is no entrepreneur in my family… At first, they did not see it very positively… But when they saw how determined I was, they said, 'you try, if it works or doesn't, we will do what we can'." (Woman Entrepreneur 1)

She links this cushion to emotional security, explaining that with stable parental incomes "even if the business fails, our world will not collapse."

Woman Entrepreneur 2, a 27-year-old single founder of a counselling center, similarly frames her family's relative comfort as reducing fear: "My family provided the capital when I set up the business… They saw a risk but they always supported me," and she explicitly notes that because her family's situation was relatively good, she did not feel as scared while taking the risk.

In several accounts, family support combined money with procedural and network resources that made establishment administratively possible. Woman Entrepreneur 4, who was single at the time she established her business and founded a software and AI company, recalls that her father acted as a guarantor when debt-related matters required one, while her mother mobilized accounting connections and effectively covered the accountant-related costs by arranging and financing those services through her contacts; in her narrative, "support" therefore meant both capital and the relational infrastructure that smooths interactions with institutions. A different variant appears in the narrative of Woman Entrepreneur 9, the brand owner. She describes her start-up funds as built through earlier family-company arrangements: she was paid a salary on the condition that she handled small errands and support tasks in the family workplace, yet she frames this income less as labor-based earnings than as family-derived accumulation. This configuration reduced fear of financial loss during establishment, but she also describes anxiety about paternal authority, worrying that failure would be read as "wasting" her father's money rather than simply losing her own, which made the household hierarchy salient even in a relatively privileged financial position.

Spousal support appears as another variation of this safety-net logic, but with sharper gendered power effects. Woman Entrepreneur 3, who established her pilates studio

while married, states: “I was married when I started my venture. I opened it with his financial support and it was like our joint place… The reason was that my civil servant salary was not enough… the economic conditions forced me to have a second job,” and she adds that alongside support came belittling masculine talk such as “nothing will come out of this” or “let’s open it, I am a generous man, so okay, let’s see what happens,” which undermined her sense of competence. Woman Entrepreneur 14, who was also married at establishment, likewise identifies her husband as the key supporter because her parents were retirees with limited means; she recalls him saying, “I’m behind you as much as I can, financially and emotionally,” and normalizing risk with “We don’t have much to lose. If it works, it works; if it doesn’t, we move on,” while also emphasizing that his initial contribution was small and that she later sold her own car to increase capital.

Woman Entrepreneur 13, a certified accountant who founded her business in the late 1980s, offers a particularly vivid example of spousal income as a stabilizer for professional risk-taking. She notes that her husband’s high salary helped cover rent and early expenses, and she describes choosing a major technology investment at a time when “almost nobody had a computer,” saying: “I put money that could have bought a house into a computer.” In her account, converting wedding gold into cash to purchase equipment was not only an entrepreneurial decision but also a household-level negotiation, made possible because her husband agreed to a form of spending that reallocated what could have been conventional family wealth into business infrastructure.

For the second pattern, access to formal credit is shaped by collateral, credit history, and institutional recognition, and women’s narratives show that exclusion from bank lending is both structurally produced and experienced as gendered (Coleman, 2000; Marlow & Patton, 2005). This pattern matters because it highlights how creditworthiness is not only a financial evaluation but also a social judgement that can deepen inequality at the very moment women try to formalize their enterprise.

Woman Entrepreneur 6, a hairdresser who was divorced at establishment, makes the mechanism explicit by linking later credit exclusion to earlier informal employment

and unpaid insurance: “I wanted to take out a loan, I could not. Because I did not have social security… They would not even give me a credit card.” She explains that years of unregistered work in a male-dominated hairdresser salon left her without the formal record required for bank products. Woman Entrepreneur 5, a 29-year-old single owner of a vegan restaurant, describes direct refusal and humiliation at the bank counter: “No bank gave me money. I went to a bank and asked for investment… I had asked for around one, one and a half million, they laughed.” She interprets this not only as a technical rejection but as being seen as a young woman without credible capital standing, someone not taken seriously as an investment subject.

By contrast, Woman Entrepreneur 7, who runs home-based e-commerce and was married at establishment, offers a case where limited credit was possible and strategically bounded. She notes that she and her husband used their savings and took “a very small loan” specifically to buy machines, adding that she avoided any procedure that would strain her. Woman Entrepreneur 8, who operates an insurance agency in a partnership arrangement, indicates that formal routes can remain selective even for relatively established ventures. She explored bank credit and financial supports, but her applications were rejected due to sectoral ineligibility, which pushed her back toward personal savings and partnership capital. Together, these cases show that formal credit is not evenly distributed even among entrepreneurs; when women lack collateral, formal work records, or recognized sectoral eligibility, the bank route can be practically closed.

Regarding the third pattern, when institutional finance and public support mechanisms are unavailable, insufficient, or consciously avoided, women assemble initial resources through self-financing and informal arrangements, which can enable autonomy but also concentrate risk on the individual and her immediate network (Winborg & Landström, 2001). This pattern matters because it reveals a gendered do-it-yourself infrastructure of entrepreneurship, where women turn household assets, severance pay, savings, and neighborhood trust into capital, often because formal financial channels are not accessible, responsive, or viable for them at the point of establishment.

Woman Entrepreneur 6, the hairdresser, describes building her salon through community-based, repayable help rather than formal bank credit: “Friends helped, tradespeople around me helped, one bought my materials, one paid for the walls to be painted,” and she stresses that she repaid these supports over time as she earned, meaning that entry was enabled through trust but followed by long repayment obligations within her immediate social environment. Woman Entrepreneur 5 explains entering entrepreneurship with savings accumulated from selling vegan products from home before establishment, precisely because banks refused her investment request. Woman Entrepreneur 10, a 33-year-old single lawyer, frames her establishment as primarily self-financed through savings accumulated during three years of salaried work with social security; she notes that her father provided limited, practical help by supporting office furniture purchases and assisting with rent for a short period, but she explicitly refused broader transfers despite her father’s strong financial position. She also describes deliberately avoiding bank loans, stating: “I did not apply to banks for a loan because I did not have a situation where I could show an income that a bank would lend against,” signaling a conscious decision to step away from a process she anticipated would be closed to her.

Woman Entrepreneur 15, a 47-year-old single founder of a solar power plant company, similarly relied on savings and severance pay from previous work, noting that she could initially afford only a basic company form and that she did not receive family support because her family’s financial situation was not strong. Woman Entrepreneur 13 again illustrates high-stakes self-financing through household assets and risk management, combining the conversion of wedding gold into equipment with an unusual step for the period: insuring that equipment against theft. Woman Entrepreneur 14 shows how self-financing can be layered onto spousal support, emphasizing that after a small initial contribution she sold her car to expand capital. Woman Entrepreneur 16, a medical journal publisher who established her business in her 20s, offers another route. She notes that her business required relatively modest funds and was financed almost entirely by her father, while she avoided bank credit partly because she did not know how such procedures worked and preferred not to enter unfamiliar financial processes. Across these narratives, self-financing and informal support appear not as marginal exceptions but as recurring techniques for

crossing the establishment threshold under constrained or unattractive institutional finance.

Taken together, regarding the financing, collateral and debt, these three patterns show that financing at the establishment stage is not only an economic issue but a gendered social structure. A family or spouse safety net can lower fear and enable entry, but it can also reproduce paternalistic dynamics, conditional support, and blurred ownership and authority. Formal credit often depends on collateral and formal work histories that many women do not have, especially those pushed into informal labor, and refusal can be experienced as a judgement about who counts as a credible economic subject. When institutional finance and public support mechanisms are inaccessible or not worth the procedural cost, women build enterprises through savings, severance pay, liquidation of household assets, and informal neighborhood credit, which makes entry possible while also internalizing vulnerability within personal networks and the enterprise itself. Importantly, each of these themes is supported by multiple statements across the interview set rather than a single outlier story, indicating repeated mechanisms that pattern women's establishment-stage financing across different positions and life circumstances.

Precisely because access to formal finance is uneven and often constrained by collateral requirements, work-history records, and institutional recognition, institutional and public support mechanisms become more consequential at the establishment stage. The next sub-section shows, however, that the practical usability of these supports is itself shaped by administrative requirements, eligibility filters, and the everyday bureaucratic conditions through which entrepreneurs encounter the bureaucracy.

6.2.3. Institutional Supports and the Bureaucracy of "Support"

Women entrepreneurs in Türkiye encounter a broader ecosystem of support programs, including KOSGEB entrepreneurship supports as well as other public or quasi-public instruments such as TÜBİTAK-linked entrepreneurship programs and various grant- or training-based initiatives (Durukan, 2021; Arıcan Kaygusuz &

Genç, 2022). Within this landscape, KOSGEB's entrepreneurship supports are organized through program-based instruments and accessed through an application-and-implementation pathway that requires eligibility checks, documentation, and procedural follow-up (Özdemir et al., 2016). KOSGEB's support model typically combines entrepreneurship-oriented financial supports with eligibility conditions tied to formal business registration and sector/activity classifications, and it often requires applicants to complete standardized steps such as trainings, documentation, and follow-up reporting (KOSGEB, n.d.).

Yet the existence of this support landscape does not necessarily translate into equal, easy, or effective use in practice. Public support schemes therefore occupy an ambivalent place in women's narratives: while they are widely known and often discussed as potential enablers, they are also frequently experienced as distant, burdensome, or practically inaccessible at the moment of establishment. Findings from the field study show that women entrepreneurs referred almost exclusively to KOSGEB as the recognizable "support" institution; none of the interviewees reported having actually benefited from another program. Within this group, some women had not been aware of KOSGEB at the time of establishment (especially older interviewees whose businesses began before the contemporary support landscape), others knew and applied but did not receive support, only a small minority reported receiving a KOSGEB-related benefit, and several explicitly chose not to pursue support because they expected the bureaucratic effort to outweigh the likely return.

Accordingly, this sub-section examines the bureaucracy of "support" as a set of practical access conditions that shape who can convert formal programs and support schemes into real resources. In other words, it asks why support mechanisms that exist on paper are not experienced as equally usable across women's different life circumstances and sectors, and it traces the bureaucratic filters through which "support" is mediated. Women's accounts converge around recurring patterns that help explain this gap: uneven awareness across generations; a perceived mismatch between the value of support and the procedural cost of accessing it; exclusion through sectoral classifications (operationalized through formal activity/sector

codes); time demands that collide with care responsibilities; and perceived arbitrariness or extreme selectivity that undermines trust and discourages repeat engagement.

First, a recurring pattern concerns awareness gaps and historical change. Middle-aged and older women situate today's support landscape against earlier periods in which such schemes were absent, limited, or practically invisible to them, suggesting that the expansion of institutional supports is a real development compared to the past, yet one that does not translate into equal access. Woman Entrepreneur 11, who is 66 years old and opened her first boutique around twenty years ago, reflects on this period by saying: "If there were supports like KOSGEB back then, I didn't know." Her statement points less to a deliberate refusal of support and more to an awareness gap, suggesting that even when programs may have existed, they were not necessarily visible or legible to women at the moment of establishment. Woman Entrepreneur 12, who is 45 and established her first physiotherapy center in the mid-2000s, similarly recalls that "such incentives either did not exist or we were not aware of them," underlining both institutional and informational gaps. Similarly, Woman Entrepreneur 13, who is 59 and started her business in the late 1980s, contrasts earlier reliance on bank loans with the current landscape and offers a qualified recognition of progress, stating that "if you know the way and the procedure, it can be done; supports are more now." Read together, these accounts suggest that the landscape of institutional supports has expanded over time and is perceived by middle-aged women as an improvement relative to earlier decades. It can be said, however, that this expansion does not necessarily translate into equally accessible opportunities for all women entrepreneurs; the extent to which supports become usable resources appears to vary across life circumstances and sectors. The following patterns examine these unequal access conditions in greater detail, focusing on the bureaucratic and practical mechanisms through which "support" is enabled, limited, or effectively foreclosed.

Accordingly, as a second pattern, women repeatedly frame institutional support as symbolically meaningful but substantively limited, especially when low perceived benefit is coupled with heavy procedural workload. Woman Entrepreneur 1 recounts

approaching KOSGEB during the establishment of her floral and chocolate business and disengaging quickly because the offer felt irrational relative to the procedural requirements. She describes being told that they could receive "only around 5,000 liras," which she characterizes as "ridiculous," and adds: "Then we gave up… Even for that support you had to find the right activity codes, and we could not find any that matched… To receive support, we were told we had to attend training for a certain number of hours… the amount was not worth it." Her narrative illustrates how "support" can become a rational non-choice: when women already have access to family capital, the opportunity cost of paperwork and time can exceed the expected value of the program.

Similarly, Woman Entrepreneur 15 articulates the same calculation:

> "I didn't get KOSGEB support because the procedure was too long. There wasn't much support given to those working in the energy sector. At that time, they only gave 5,000 liras. I didn't want to chase after it; the money I would have received wasn't worth dealing with that procedure." (Woman Entrepreneur 15)

Read together with Woman Entrepreneur 1, this account shows that women's disengagement is not simply about "not wanting support," but about assessing distribution of value: the same bureaucratic burden is experienced as far more reasonable when the potential payoff is substantial, and far more irrational when service work is treated as low-value and therefore not worth supporting.

For other women, disengagement occurs before application because the support bureaucracy is already narrated as costly, slow, and uncertain within women's networks. Woman Entrepreneur 2 did not apply at all, largely due to negative social learning drawn from her mother's earlier experiences. She frames this as a deterrent that operated even though she needed support: "I know these processes from my mother. It takes a very long time; you have to take many steps… She had to pay extra costs and there was always the possibility that nothing would come out of it… People around me also said that not much comes out of it, so I did not apply… I needed it, but I didn't get it." In this sense, bureaucracy does not only filter applicants through formal requirements; it also produces reputational signals that shape who would see the process as worth attempting.

This deterrent logic is reinforced by further accounts that combine procedural burden with additional exclusionary criteria. Woman Entrepreneur 7, who is 38 years old, states that she did not receive any institutional support during establishment, even though she would have wanted both financial and procedural assistance. She explains that when she researched available supports, she was not eligible due to an age limit, and she was also unable to access some EU-type grants because she works alone, noting that such schemes typically require a project structure and a team rather than a single-person operation. After speaking with people who had previously applied to KOSGEB and hearing negative evaluations, she concluded that for a small-scale entrepreneur like herself the procedure was too long, and she therefore never applied to KOSGEB.

A related procedural barrier appears in the way several women describe the support system as opaque, producing intermediaries and informal brokerage. Woman Entrepreneur 5, who runs a niche vegan business, states that she did not receive KOSGEB support and describes the search for information as itself discouraging: the website appeared "messy," without clear guidance on "where and how to apply," requiring hours simply to understand the process.

She describes a field of intermediaries who have emerged around this opacity, presenting themselves as "KOSGEB specialists" (often through accountants' networks), who pre-screen business plans, advise on suitability, and then take a commission if the support is obtained. She frames this as a form of brokerage that turns "support" into a space where multiple actors attempt to "take a share," and she ultimately chose to avoid it: rather than spending time on a confusing process and paying commissions, she preferred to generate the equivalent amount through her own business activity.

As a third pattern, exclusion by sectoral classification emerges as a particularly salient mechanism. In practice, many schemes are accessed through formal sector/activity categories, which means that eligibility is shaped by administrative classification categories as much as by entrepreneurial need. Woman Entrepreneur 3 explains that when she and her partner inquired about support for their pilates studio, they were told that sports sector was not an eligible sector:

> "We were told that in the sports sector there is no investment support, as if it is not seen as a 'serious' business… If I had opened, say, a bakery, that is considered a 'female job' but sports is not." (Woman Entrepreneur 3)

Her distinction is analytically valuable because it shows how sectoral coding can combine economic hierarchies with gendered cultural hierarchies. Some women-concentrated activities may fit recognized categories, while others associated with women's bodies, leisure, or non-traditional femininities can be positioned outside the scope of "proper" investment.

Woman Entrepreneur 15 extends this point from a different angle by showing how the same gendered sectoral coding can operate through unequal valuation rather than outright ineligibility. Working in the energy sector, she describes KOSGEB as procedurally heavy yet substantively thin for her sector, and contrasts this with manufacturing-oriented activities that were funded at much higher levels:

> "If I had been in manufacturing sector, making things like pastries, I could have received a much higher level of support. I know that at the time, those in the production sector were able to get support of around 80,000 liras when purchasing their machinery. But those amounts were not available for my sector." (Woman Entrepreneur 15)

This comparison matters because it shows that gendered assumptions do not only sort women into "female jobs"; they also shape which sectors are imagined as deserving public investment. In her account, a business, like pastry production, is culturally recognizable as a women's domain and institutionally legible as equipment-based "production," whereas a technically masculinized field such as energy is not treated as a women-coded domain and is therefore effectively devalued within support design, resulting in minimal amounts that make the procedural burden irrational.

Woman Entrepreneur 8 describes a parallel experience in a different field. She and her partner researched grants, worked with a consultant (an intermediary in the KOSGEB), paid consultancy fees, and gathered documents, only to receive a negative outcome. She reports that no reason was provided, and that she later learned through her bank contact that insurance and agency services were categorized as

incompatible with supported activity areas. Her account suggests that sectoral ineligibility can operate as an eligibility barrier that often becomes visible only after substantial investments of time, money, and documentary labor have already been made. This, in turn, reinforces the perception that support designs are anchored in a narrow conception of "legitimate" enterprise, frequently oriented toward manufacturing or selectively defined "innovation" fields, while leaving many women-concentrated service sectors effectively outside the scope of eligibility.

A fourth pattern is that even when women are not excluded by sector, the time architecture of supports can function as a gendered barrier. Woman Entrepreneur 6, a divorced woman, wanted to apply for KOSGEB support, but the compulsory entrepreneurship training course required as part of the application process was practically impossible under care constraints. She recounts that she had to attend the course for a specified number of hours, but with a small child and no one to help, she could not leave home. In her case, a formally neutral requirement effectively eliminated single mothers without access to childcare. This pattern is important because it shows how the "bureaucracy of support" can reproduce gendered inequality not by stating gendered rules, but by embedding time demands into eligibility pathways in a context where unpaid care is unequally distributed.

The fifth pattern is that perceptions of arbitrariness and extreme selectivity emerge as a trust-undermining dynamic. After applying repeatedly to KOSGEB, Woman Entrepreneur 14 illustrates how this perception can erode women's engagement with support mechanisms. She describes submitting multiple online applications, being assigned an advisor, and then receiving neither a response nor any explanation for why she was not selected. She also refers to later schemes aimed at women entrepreneurs, including small-scale credits, and states that none were paid to her "despite being a woman entrepreneur." Pointing to what she experienced as extremely low selection rates, for instance "100.000 applied, 15 received support," she concludes that criteria are unclear and outcomes unpredictable. She summarizes the cumulative effect of these experiences bluntly: "From what I've seen, KOSGEB has no real benefit at all; it's completely pointless." A different variant appears in the narrative of Woman Entrepreneur 9, the brand owner. She states that she never

applied for KOSGEB support because she did not want any KOSGEB-associated institutional trace or visibility behind a luxury brand, and instead prioritized incentives associated with the Ministry of Trade, which she was unable to obtain in that period. She reports that she was told they could assist more after one full year had passed, because she had not yet met the "first year" condition at the time. She also notes uncertainty about equal treatment, reflecting that she accessed the process through acquaintances and is not sure whether the same level of attention would be available to everyone. This account highlights how "support" may be mediated not only by formal eligibility rules, but also by informal perceptions of relationship-based access, further intensifying doubts about transparency and fairness.

Of the 16 women entrepreneurs interviewed in the field study, only one reported actually receiving the KOSGEB support. Woman Entrepreneur 4 states that she completed KOSGEB's applied entrepreneurship training and that the approved support package made her initial investments possible, noting: "These funds covered equipment, a server, and the salaries of my first two employees." It is not possible to generalize from this single case; however, it is noteworthy as it shows how, when obtained, support can contribute to concrete early-stage business needs. At the same time, the fact that benefiting from support remained exceptional within this sample offers a modest indication that access conditions and bureaucratic processes may be experienced as discouraging or constraining for many women, as further elaborated in the patterns discussed elsewhere in this sub-section.

Taken together, findings from the field study suggest that institutional support programs are experienced less as concrete enablers and more as bureaucratized opportunities that are unevenly reachable and frequently misaligned with women's lived conditions of establishment. Awareness gaps across generations, low perceived value relative to administrative cost, sectoral exclusions produced through activity-code eligibility, time requirements that collide with care responsibilities, opaque decisions, and the emergence of intermediaries that monetize bureaucratic complexity all contribute to an environment in which many women either never apply or disengage quickly. As a result, programs that formally "support women entrepreneurs" risk reproducing gender and class inequalities by primarily reaching

those who already have the time, knowledge, and networks to navigate complex procedures, while leaving more precarious women to rely on family capital, personal savings, or informal borrowing.

6.2.4. Time Rigidities of Bureaucratic Procedures and the Care-Related Mismatch

Entrepreneurship is often discussed in the entrepreneurship literature as a route through which women may gain flexibility to accommodate care and domestic responsibilities, especially compared to standard wage employment (Schindehutte et al., 2003; Williams, 2004). However, findings from the field study show that the establishment stage can work in the opposite direction. Bureaucratic procedures are organized around rigid institutional time, including fixed weekday office hours, sequential steps across multiple offices, repeated returns for signatures and documents, and waiting periods that require physical presence. This bureaucratic time rigidity matters because it is not experienced merely as inconvenience; it can become a practical access condition that differentially burdens women whose everyday lives are already structured around care and household coordination.

In the interviews, establishment of an enterprise was repeatedly described as a process that "takes time" in a very specific way. It requires being available during the same daytime hours when childcare must be arranged, and domestic responsibilities intensify. Even when the formal steps are known, the need to queue, return with revised documents, and move between public institutions turns time into a threshold that must be met. Women who can reorganize their day around these hours can comply, while women whose time is already "spoken for" by care obligations face a sharper mismatch. Accordingly, this sub-section examines two recurring patterns emerging around women's ability to align with bureaucratic time: first, cases in which women can absorb rigid office-hour demands because their marital status and care responsibilities allow greater scheduling control; and second, cases in which the same rigid timetable becomes difficult or practically unworkable for women whose daily lives are structured by marriage, childcare and other caregiving obligations.

First, several women entrepreneurs suggest that when women are single, childless, and not responsible for dependents, bureaucratic time rigidity is often experienced as manageable even if exhausting. Woman Entrepreneur 5 explicitly frames singlehood and having no caregiving responsibilities beyond herself and her cats as "a great comfort," which gives her more control over how she allocates her time. In this context, she could respond to the municipality's time demands in a way that would be far harder for a mother with daily care obligations. Her own licensing experience illustrates the scale of the time demand: she describes spending two months in the municipality, effectively following a full weekday schedule in the institution, "from nine to five." This does not mean the bureaucracy becomes easy, but it indicates that the same rigid timetable is less likely to be experienced as a direct care time conflict when there are no dependent care schedules to coordinate. A similar logic appears in Women Entrepreneur 2's reflection that being unmarried and reduced domestic obligations during establishment made it easier for her to concentrate on founding the business.

Second, where women are married, have children, or are divorced with limited support, the same rigid institutional schedule is far more likely to become a felt barrier because it collides with care temporalities and with the need to keep household life running. In the pilates studio case, Woman Entrepreneur 3 describes establishment as inseparable from motherhood and from the time demands of her work. She states that she could not have done it alone, referring to motherhood and to the fact that their business runs into late hours, then adds that her son was around one year old when she was starting out. For her, the encounter with bureaucracy is shaped by the need to complete establishment steps during standard administrative hours while also sustaining a care routine. This is where the rigidity of bureaucratic office hours becomes central: even if procedures are formally "manageable," the requirement to appear repeatedly at institutions during weekday hours forces women to compress care, paid work, and establishment labor into the same limited time.

The most explicit account of how time rigidity becomes exclusionary comes from Woman Entrepreneur 6, a hairdresser who was in the process of divorce and caring for a small child with no available caregiver. Her narrative shows how establishment

requires repeated visits and repeated deferrals, which multiply the time cost. She describes constantly being directed from one place to another and being told to return later, and she estimates that opening the shop took ten to fifteen days of such back-and-forth. She then makes the gendered comparison directly, saying that if she had been a man, the shop would have been opened in two days. In this account, the problem is not only that procedures exist, but that they are organized through a daytime, presence-based schedule that is difficult to sustain for a divorced mother without backup care. The same requirement that is perceived to be "managed" by a single, childless woman becomes a much heavier constraint when care cannot be postponed, delegated, or purchased, and when bureaucratic encounters themselves become drawn out through repeated postponements.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that bureaucratic time rigidities matter because they function as a practical condition of access during establishment stage. The institutional schedule assumes that the entrepreneur can repeatedly appear during weekday office hours and absorb waiting and delays. In the field study, women without caregiving responsibilities often described this as tiring but feasible, whereas women with children or limited support described it as a sharper mismatch that increases pressure, prolongs establishment, and in some cases is explicitly perceived as harder for women than for men.

6.2.5. Encounters with Street-Level Bureaucrats: Credibility, Gendered Discretion, Bodily Readings and Misattributed Authority

Finally, the establishment period is also the moment when women entrepreneurs first meet street-level bureaucrats such as tax officers, municipal staff, inspectors, police, and bank employees as business owners rather than as ordinary citizens or private individuals. Street-level bureaucrats are the ones who interact directly with "service users" (Kencana, 2017). In these encounters, women entrepreneurs appear primarily as "service recipients" seeking information, approval, signatures, or compliance recognition, and they must translate their entrepreneurial identity into bureaucratically legible form in real time. In other words, they must continually demonstrate, in the moment of interaction, that they are the legitimate business owner, not an accompanying figure or proxy.

Encounters with street-level bureaucrats during the establishment stage therefore matter not only because officials process permits, inspections, and paperwork, but because they are key figures where bureaucratic authority is enacted through everyday interaction and the exercise of discretionary authority (Lipsky, 1980). Feminist scholarship has long argued that bureaucracies are not neutral rule systems; they are organizational and interactional arenas in which gendered assumptions about competence, authority, and who counts as a legitimate economic actor are reproduced in routine practice (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Guy & Newman, 2004). Findings from the field study show that women's first encounters with street-level bureaucrats often function as credibility tests: women describe having to perform seriousness, manage sexualized or paternalistic attention, and at times contend with an informal credibility hierarchy in which masculine-coded authority is treated as the default route to responsiveness and procedural progress.

Accordingly, this sub-section examines these first encounters along four recurring dimensions that structure women's establishment narratives: informal credibility hierarchies that treat men as default economic actors; the role of bodily presence and age in producing misrecognition; the ways classed style and intra-gender dynamics shape moralized judgements in routine contact; and discretionary, paternalistic, or sexualized forms through which administrative "help" or "obstruction" is delivered during permits, registrations, and licensing.

The first recurring pattern in the interviews is the women's sense that their male counterparts are taken more seriously at the very moment of establishment, when they have to ask questions, request guidance, and push procedures forward in tax offices, chambers, and municipal desks. Woman Entrepreneur 2 openly reflects on this. Her statement below captures the informal hierarchy of credibility that underpins supposedly neutral procedures: the same questions, when asked by a young woman, require more insistence to receive an answer.

> "I think it would be faster if a man dealt with the institutions, because when men speak it feels as if they are taken more seriously… As a woman, going to ask something or to get detailed information means having to put in a bit more effort, to struggle and insist more… My accountant is male, so he must

> have taken the first steps in most places. That is why I think being a woman is a disadvantage, yes." (Woman Entrepreneur 2)

In her account, the issue is not only what the procedure requires, but how credibility is informally distributed in face-to-face encounters. Women must invest additional interactional effort simply to secure basic information and responsiveness during the establishment process.

The second dimension concerns how age and bodily appearance shape how women are read in establishment stage encounters. Younger women whose faces and bodies are read as "childlike" describe a distinctive form of misrecognition in which their legal status as owner or manager is contradicted by interactional assumptions. Woman Entrepreneur 8, who owns an insurance agency with a male business partner, explains that despite being the company's 100 percent legal owner, officials repeatedly treated her as if she were present only "by proxy," as though she were there on behalf of someone else rather than as the initiating economic actor. During company registration and document signing, she was met with surprised looks and remarks such as: "Are you the one starting this company?" Similarly, Women Entrepreneur 1 describes being treated as "kids playing at business" in their first visits to tax offices or chambers, with officials asking "Where is the real owner?" or assuming she is there to help a father or husband. In this sense, establishment encounters are not only about papers; they are also moments when bodies are "read," and younger-looking women may be positioned as assistants, representatives, or temporary stand-ins rather than as legitimate owners.

The third dimension shows that gendered difficulty is not produced only through interactions with men; it can also be reproduced through woman-to-woman encounters, where female bureaucrats enact bureaucratic power via moralized judgements about style, class, and "proper" femininity. Woman Entrepreneur 9, the founder of a handbag brand who deliberately cultivates a polished, stylish appearance as part of her brand identity (carefully chosen clothes, accessories, and well-groomed hair), describes an establishment-stage encounter in which she attended her company formation appointment and, after arriving only five minutes late, was told by a female official that her paperwork would not be accepted that day

and that she would have to wait a further three days. In her narrative, the significance of this incident lies in selective rigidity and intra-gender discipline: she experienced the refusal as a woman bureaucrat "making it difficult for another woman," possibly triggered by irritation at her polished appearance and perceived affluence. She further notes that, in the same office and at the same moment, she witnessed a male applicant who arrived fifteen minutes late still having his paperwork accepted, which made the incident feel not merely strict but unevenly enforced. This perceived double standard deepened her disappointment, as she interpreted the delay as something she was made to endure specifically as a woman. Here, the rule is not just applied; it is experienced as moralized and relational, turning minor lateness into a punitive delay and positioning the woman entrepreneur as someone who must be "taught a lesson" through withheld service. For her, this was not a neutral application of rules but a gendered and moralized one: an elegant, self-confident woman entrepreneur is perceived as someone who should be symbolically "disciplined" by withholding service, while male clients are quietly accommodated.

The fourth dimension concerns the discretionary forms through which administrative "help" or "obstruction" is produced during establishment, especially through sexualized attention and interactional delay. Woman Entrepreneur 3's account is instructive here because it shows how routine establishment procedures can be informally reshaped by officials' interactional choices. She describes how institutional contact with male officials can drift away from the procedural task and into unsolicited conversation:

> "In public institutions the biggest difficulty is that the work takes a long time. It takes longer just because you are a woman. When you try to solve something with a male bureaucrat, first he wants to chat with you… In Türkiye, pilates is seen as a sport you do in short tights, with a sexy body… The work that a man would get done by going in and getting a signature, they make you suffer through it. They talk, they prolong it…" (Woman Entrepreneur 3)

What matters in this narrative is that bureaucratic discretion becomes operational through time. Steps that look straightforward on paper, such as licensing-related procedures or fire-safety approval, become contingent on whether the official keeps

the encounter procedural rather than stretching it through implicitly gendered, sector-coded chat. Analytically, this points to a gendered form of discretionary power exercised without altering any formal rule. The barrier is produced through the capacity to slow procedures down and to make progress depend on navigating a socially charged interaction, so that delay itself functions as a mechanism of control and an uneven burden during establishment.

The sharpest illustration of discretionary obstruction emerges in Woman Entrepreneur 5's establishment narrative, which also makes visible the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. As a young lesbian entrepreneur who does not fit normative and heterosexual femininity, she describes how even accessing the most basic information, such as which license category she should apply for, became a months-long struggle. She stresses that institutions offer no clear, written guidance, yet behave as if everyone already knows the rules, and she explains: "I don't fit a heterosexual woman profile… Then, when you look like that, they treat you as if some strange creature has come up to them asking, 'Brother (*Abi*), how do we do this?'" In her account, this is not simply an information gap; it is a credibility problem enacted through bureaucratic practice. She describes being sent back and forth, not being taken seriously when asking for clarification, and experiencing municipal offices as spaces where her presence was treated as anomalous and therefore not worthy of straightforward guidance. In this dimension, discretion operates through delay, ambiguity, and refusal to translate rules into actionable instruction.

These interviews show that establishment stage encounters with street-level bureaucrats are not experienced as purely technical exchanges. They are interactional sites where legitimacy is tested and where gendered assumptions about authority are enacted in routine practice. Across the four dimensions, women describe a recurring set of mechanisms: men are treated as default economic actors in the very moment women seek information and procedural progress; younger-looking women are misrecognized as proxy or "not really" the owner; classed style can trigger moralized discipline by women officials toward women service recipients; and discretion is enacted through sexualized attention, paternalism, delay, and selective rigidity that

reshapes what establishment “costs” in time. In this sense, establishing a business is not only a legal and administrative process but also an early confrontation with the gendered character of bureaucracy as it operates through face-to-face interaction (Lipsky, 1980; Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Guy & Newman, 2004).

Taken together, these findings point to a set of invisible costs that women must absorb while carrying out bureaucratic procedures during the establishment stage. Beyond formal requirements, women describe having to continuously calibrate their bodily presence and interactional conduct in ways that are entirely unrelated to written rules: how to dress, whether to wear perfume, whether smiling might be read as inappropriate familiarity, or whether seriousness must be overperformed to avoid being dismissed. These micro-adjustments are responses to the anticipated reactions of street-level bureaucrats and to the risk that deviation from gendered expectations may trigger delay, obstruction, or moralized scrutiny. In this sense, bureaucratic encounters generate not only procedural demands but also a layer of behavioral and interactional work that women must perform in order to secure recognition and keep processes moving.

Analytically, this configuration can first be understood as a double transaction cost borne by women entrepreneurs. On the one hand, they must comply with procedural requirements shared by all entrepreneurs; on the other, they must engage in continuous behavioral and interactional management to be treated as legitimate economic actors, avoid sanction, and obtain responsiveness from bureaucratic authorities. These two forms of cost operate simultaneously and cumulatively during establishment-stage encounters. When gender intersects with additional dimensions of difference, such as non-heterosexual identity, these costs intensify further. For women whose appearance or self-presentation falls outside heteronormative and gender-conforming expectations, bureaucratic encounters may generate a triple transaction cost, in which procedural demands are compounded not only by gendered credibility work but also by sexuality-based scrutiny, moralization, and heightened monitoring. Importantly, these pressures are not produced only through interactions with male officials. As illustrated by the case of the brand-owning woman entrepreneur, gendered discipline can also be enacted through woman-to-woman

encounters, where female bureaucrats exercise authority through moralized judgements about style, class, and "proper" femininity. In such cases, selective rigidity, delayed service, or withheld assistance function as forms of intra-gender regulation, adding yet another layer to the costs of bureaucratic engagement.

Therefore, the findings of the study suggest that women's bureaucratic encounters are not best captured by a single additive logic, but rather by a multiple transaction cost dynamic. Procedural requirements, gendered interactional expectations, sexuality-based scrutiny, and intra-gender disciplinary practices may accumulate, overlap, and reinforce one another across encounters. In this sense, bureaucracy does not merely impose neutral administrative costs, but produces differentiated and layered transaction costs that translate intersecting social positions into concrete disadvantages in time, effort, emotional labor, and institutional access during the establishment stage.

6.3. Encounter with Bureaucracy: Running Stage

Bureaucracy is often conceptualized as a rule-bound system designed to secure predictability and impersonal administration (Weber, 1947; Weber, 1978). Feminist organizational scholarship, however, demonstrates that bureaucracies and organizations are rarely gender neutral in practice: norms of authority, competence, and credibility are often masculinized, shaping how women are addressed and how rules are enacted (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1988; Martin, 2003). In addition, street-level bureaucracy research shows that policy implementation is mediated through frontline discretion, where guidance, time, and sanction are distributed through interactional judgement rather than purely formal criteria (Lipsky, 1980; Brodkin, 2012). Taken together, these perspectives highlight that women entrepreneurs engage with the bureaucracy not only as economic actors but also as service recipients navigating gendered bureaucratic interfaces. Across the 16 cases, the interviews show how the same formal rules are translated into markedly unequal encounters, as sector, age, status, and embodied cues shape who is treated as a credible rights-holder, who receives workable guidance, and who is exposed to delay, dismissal, or sanction.

This section examines running-stage encounters with bureaucracy, where compliance is not a problem "solved" at registration and left behind, but a continuous set of interactions that must be managed to keep the business operating. In this section, three dimensions of running-stage bureaucracy are analyzed. First, enforcement differs sharply by sector: in some industries oversight is experienced through frequent on-site inspections and explicit sanction talk, whereas in others it is experienced through document-based gatekeeping and procedural control. Second, partial digitalization reorganizes rather than eliminates opacity: information gaps, desk-bounded responsibility, and shifting interpretations persist, and their consequences are patterned by age and professional status. Third, municipal licensing, routine approvals, and everyday institutional contact are filtered through respectability judgements and networked navigation, shaping who is taken seriously as a business owner and who bears the costs of uncertainty.

6.3.1. Running-Stage Encounters with Street-Level Bureaucrats: Sectoral Enforcement Regimes and Gendered Discretion

If the establishment stage is the moment when women first confront street-level bureaucrats as business owners and service recipients, the running stage is where these relationships solidify or become strategically managed. The running stage is analytically important because it is the phase in which women's encounters with the bureaucracy become repetitive, routinized, and cumulative. What is important here is not the encounters themselves, but how recurring encounters make the everyday maintenance of legitimacy an ongoing burden for women entrepreneurs, requiring continual emotional labor, time, and strategic compliance work to pre-empt escalation and manage the risk and uncertainty that accumulate over time.

Gendered bureaucracy becomes most visible at the point of contact, where discretion is exercised through tone, interpretation, escalation, and selective recognition (Acker, 1990; Lipsky, 1980). Inspectors, municipal officers, tax officers, and bank employees do not simply enforce rules; they interpret respectability, decide how strictly procedures apply, and distribute sanction-like outcomes through warnings, delays, repeated visits, or the withholding of routine facilitation. Because discretion

is enacted through both face-to-face interactions and file-based routines, it is also a key stage where gendered power operates in practice, often intersecting with class position, age, sexuality, and perceived vulnerability.

The central focus of this sub-section is how discretionary enforcement differs across sectors and how sectoral enforcement regimes structure women's everyday exposure to bureaucratic power. In some domains, control takes the form of frequent and physically intrusive visits, especially in what participants describe as high-control sectors such as food, beauty, and health. In more professionalized sectors such as law, auditing, insurance, or engineering, oversight is more commonly document-based and less physically intrusive. These sectoral patterns shape not only the frequency and form of encounters, but also the kinds of risks women must anticipate and the strategies they develop to manage bureaucratic relations. Accordingly, this sub-section traces sectoral differences through three configurations drawn from the interviews.

In food service, Woman Entrepreneur 5 describes an enforcement regime that feels both disproportionate and moralized, especially when read through her visibly queer identity and political positioning. She highlights the ordinary nature of her work to underline the perceived mismatch between activity and scrutiny: "I'm literally just chopping mushrooms and putting them in bread," yet she frames her business as one of the most frequently targeted premises and "one of the places that gets fined the most." Crucially, she contrasts how discretion is exercised toward her versus toward male counterparts: in her account, even minor issues can move directly to formal reporting and punishment, whereas male counterparts are more likely to receive informal guidance and warnings that prevent the issue from becoming an official case. She captures that alternative form of discretion through the kind of phrase she believes a well-connected man would hear: "Brother, look, do it like this, I will not even note it down."

In this account, discretion is not simply administrative judgement; it functions as an interactional and political sorting mechanism that determines whose minor deviations are recorded, escalated, and punished, and whose are handled quietly

through advice and informal tolerance. This selective exercise of discretion has clear transaction cost implications. While all entrepreneurs face some procedural transaction costs associated with compliance, inspections, and enforcement, Woman Entrepreneur 5 incurs additional transaction costs as minor issues are repeatedly transformed into formal sanctions, generating time loss, financial penalties, uncertainty, and ongoing exposure to inspection. As a woman, she already bears a double transaction cost, as gendered credibility assessments require extra effort to be recognized as a legitimate economic actor. Her visibly queer appearance and positioning outside normative gender expectations further intensify these costs, introducing a third layer of scrutiny and moralization that converts routine bureaucratic encounters into sites of heightened monitoring and sanctioning. In this sense, gendered interactional costs are compounded by sexuality-based assumptions, producing what can be understood as a triple transaction cost within bureaucratic enforcement.

In the beauty sector, Woman Entrepreneur 6 depicts a different configuration: high inspection frequency combined with procedurally unstable enforcement and acute vulnerability to sanction. She reports regular visits by municipal officers and occasional checks by health authorities. While these visits formally focus on hygiene and device use, she emphasizes that inspectors themselves often do not know the full procedure, producing contradictory instructions that turn compliance into negotiation:

> "There are many gaps on the ministry side. They do not really know the full procedure either. They tell me, 'This is the machine you are not allowed to use,' and I have to say, 'No, it is not. This is the one you told us we could use.' I have a lot of trouble because of this." (Woman Entrepreneur 6)

She also reports that sanction talk is readily invoked, including warnings such as "we can close this place if you do not fix this." Crucially, she frames the harshness of tone as a gendered exploitation of vulnerability: "I do not think they would speak this harshly to a male counterpart. I am aware that because I am a woman and more vulnerable, they know a closure threat will scare me more."

Here, the gendered dimension is not only the presence of inspection, but the way discretionary threats acquire disciplinary force when the entrepreneur has minimal

economic buffers and when vulnerability is legible to the official. As a lower-income, divorced woman whose salon is her sole livelihood, she has very little safety margin; even the prospect of a fine or temporary closure threatens day-to-day survival, which amplifies the emotional weight of each visit.

A second illustration of how inspection becomes gendered through tone and repeated contact appears in Woman Entrepreneur 8's running-stage narrative, especially in early visits from the tax office. Her emphasis is not only that officials came often, but that the interaction was structured by age and gender as a credibility deficit. She describes the officer's approach as persistently negative toward her as a young woman, to the point that she interprets it as psychological intimidation:

> "When the business first opened, officials were coming very often, especially from the tax office. That man's attitude, his manner as an officer, his approach toward me in particular as a woman and as someone younger, was really very negative. The first time he came, I thought maybe we are meeting for the first time, maybe he is tense, maybe he wants to project a different image, and maybe he wants to look more serious. But when it continued on the second and third visit, I became convinced that this is the structure itself. There is psychological mobbing in what he does. He may be good at his duty, but I can say that as a human being he is very weak." (Woman Entrepreneur 8)

Analytically, this shows that "inspection" can also operate as an affective bureaucratic practice: a formally routine check becomes a repeated scene of intimidation when gender and age shape how authority is performed and how compliance is demanded.

Health-related services illustrate a further configuration, where oversight may be routine but the capacity to interpret and respond to it varies by regulatory literacy and professional identity. Woman Entrepreneur 12, a physiotherapist with a doctorate who also works as a faculty member, emphasizes that institutions are "not sufficient" and that unclear guidance can generate "serious difficulties," yet she also states that status shifts the interactional climate of inspection encounters. As she explains, when inspectors arrive, her academic identity changes the way she is addressed and treated in a positive direction: "When they come for an inspection, my academic identity changes the way I am treated in a positive sense; they even address me as 'Hocam'."

In this account, education does not remove oversight; it reorganizes the interactional balance of the encounter by increasing perceived legitimacy and the entrepreneur's confidence to ask questions, contest demands, and insist on procedural clarity.

Finally, in the legal field, Woman Entrepreneur 10 shows how running-stage control may operate through procedural gatekeeping rather than classic inspections of a workplace. Her example centers on the discretionary refusal to record a statement, which functions as a form of procedural vulnerability:

> "You are going to make a statement, and they do not write your statement into the record. But if they did not write the statement of a senior male lawyer, they know what would happen to them there, and they cannot treat a man like that. A senior male lawyer can raise his voice very loudly there. He can defend himself very well. A female lawyer can do it too, but because the other side senses that a woman is less powerful and weaker, they adopt that attitude in the first place." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

This case clarifies that gendered sanctions in professionalized sectors can be interactional and procedural: not necessarily an administrative fine, but institutional non-recognition that undermines professional agency and forces women to spend additional effort securing basic procedural acknowledgment. She frames this as a gendered asymmetry that becomes visible when compared to the anticipated consequences of treating a senior male lawyer in the same way.

Overall, the running-stage material shows that sector is not a background variable; it is a structuring condition that shapes how discretion is encountered and how sanction threats gain force. The form of control differs across sectors (on-site inspection, shifting interpretations, and record-based procedural gatekeeping), yet women's accounts converge on a shared pattern: across these different enforcement regimes, they are evaluated through gendered credibility and vulnerability logics. In high-control and feminized sectors, this often appears as rapid escalation, contradictory instruction, and the ever-present risk of fines or closure; in professionalized sectors, it appears as selective recognition, procedural obstruction, and credibility politics. What links these configurations is that discretion becomes gendered through who is granted warnings, guidance, patience, and respectful address, and who is instead

exposed to intimidation, dismissal, or sanction without the protective cushion of informal tolerance.

6.3.2. Institutional Insufficiency under Partial Digitalization: Information Gaps, Access, and the Age Gradient

Bureaucracies often claim neutrality, yet gendered outcomes can be reproduced through ordinary organizational processes, including the distribution of information, responsiveness, and recognition (Cockburn, 1988; Acker, 1990). In the running stage, this matters because women's encounters with the bureaucracy become repetitive, routinized, and consequential through ongoing obligations such as declarations, payments, renewals, and navigating document-based requirements, corrections, and follow-up procedures. Findings from the field study suggest that some interviewees experience digitalization as an improvement compared to earlier periods, particularly because it reduces day-to-day encounters with street-level bureaucrats and limits exposure to face-to-face gatekeeping. Digitalization often reduces burdens associated with in-person bureaucracy, including repeated visits, long queues, and direct exposure to front-desk gatekeeping, discretionary judgement, and the affective strain of being evaluated at the front desk. Yet it does not resolve the deeper problem women describe as institutional insufficiency, nor does it fully remove the gendered stress of having to encounter bureaucratic actors face-to-face in the steps that remain physical, discretionary, and guidance-dependent. Instead, partial digitalization often relocates uncertainty into information gaps, desk-bounded responsibility, and shifting interpretations, particularly at the points where women still need institutional guidance or still have to appear physically and negotiate discretionary treatment. These gaps can serve as indirect discipline by transferring the time burden and the risk of procedural error onto service recipients (Brodkin, 2012). Not every digitalization narrative is explicitly gendered; however, gender becomes visible in how women describe digitalization as protection from gendered face-to-face encounters, and in how digital literacy, time, and access to guidance are patterned by age, status, sector, and class.

This sub-section examines the running-stage effects of partial digitalization through two analytic points, and the importance of doing so is that it shows how

digitalization reconfigures rather than neutralizes bureaucratic power. The first point concerns informational opacity under partial digitalization. Women describe a bureaucratic terrain in which procedures shift, guidance is fragmented, and responsibility is bounded to desks or platforms in ways that make it difficult to assemble an actionable pathway. The second point concerns an age gradient in gendered access. Younger women tend to narrate remaining face-to-face encounters as explicitly gendered and age-coded in tone, intimidation, and unequal guidance, while older women more often describe the same bureaucratic procedures in terms of competence, fragmentation, and dependence. Importantly, older women also note that bureaucratic encounters can be smoother when communication aligns with masculinized norms or when male-to-male rapport is available, which indicates that gender can operate as an interactional advantage even in accounts that do not foreground direct discrimination.

Some interviewees initially frame digitalization in the running stage through the everyday relief it offers, especially because it reduces the need for face-to-face negotiation with bureaucratic actors. Woman Entrepreneur 1 explains that, during the running stage, her monthly responsibilities are largely reduced to collecting receipts and documents and delivering them to their male accountant, who manages all declarations, payments, and correspondence with the tax office through online platforms. She highlights the convenience of digital systems and online banking and expresses satisfaction that routine compliance can be handled without having to confront street-level bureaucrats in person. Woman Entrepreneur 6, a divorced hairdresser with a small salon, similarly contrasts the pre-digital period, when she would call institutions, receive partial or incorrect information, and then be told at the counter “No, there is no such procedure,” with the relative predictability of the current system: “Now we do everything on e-Government (e-Devlet). At least we don’t have to argue with anyone; our tax debt appears there; we see it and pay it.” For her, being able to check status online reduces anxiety precisely because it limits dependence on potentially misleading counter staff and reduces exposure to confrontational interaction in routine compliance.

These accounts are reinforced by younger, university-educated women and those in technology-related sectors, who tend to treat digitalization as practical assets in the

running stage. Woman Entrepreneur 4, a software engineer, notes that she could follow most trade registry and tax procedures through e-government and online platforms, reducing the need for physical visits. Woman Entrepreneur 15, an engineer in large-scale solar projects, treats online banking, e-declaration, and digital reporting as everyday tools and emphasizes that technological literacy is non-negotiable for entrepreneurs. Across such narratives, the value of digitalization is not only speed, but reduced dependence on discretionary face-to-face encounters where guidance can be uneven and interaction can become gendered.

At the same time, the first analytic point becomes visible once women emphasize that digitalization is incomplete and that institutional insufficiency is concentrated in the remaining guidance-dependent steps, many of which still require face-to-face encounters in the running stage. Woman Entrepreneur 7, who runs a micro e-commerce business, captures both the promise and the limits of platform-mediated routines. She describes how routine obligations such as monitoring tax debt and making monthly payments could initially be handled smoothly through digital systems and banks, reducing the need for direct contact. Yet she frames the running stage as procedurally unstable because regulations and platform requirements change without reliable guidance:

> "I pay my tax every month. I do this through digital platforms, through banks. Other than that, I have not experienced any inspection… But this year, with a new regulation, sellers and sales on e-commerce platforms and products have started to be subject to inspection like normal retail sales. Some procedures changed… but it is not possible to obtain clear information about these issues. A procedure that does not cause a problem now can become a problem a few weeks later. There is total uncertainty." (Woman Entrepreneur 7)

Her account shows how digitalization can reduce direct contact while producing interpretive ambiguity, where compliance feels unstable because the definition of correct procedure can shift without institutional clarification.

Opacity becomes even sharper when systems malfunction. In a separate episode, Woman Entrepreneur 7 describes being trapped in a digital loop when a Bağ-Kur premium payment failed to appear in the system:

> "Whichever number I called, they transferred me to another number, to another institution, and I never got a result. In the end I just waited, and then I learned that because it had not yet fallen into the system, it was showing as a debt even though I had paid." (Woman Entrepreneur 7)

For her, the problem is not digital systems themselves but the absence of a reachable human being when an error occurs:

> "They say everything is digital now, but when there is a problem in the digital system you cannot find a real human being to talk to… People want to find someone on the phone and move forward with reliable information. When institutions cannot provide this, you lose trust in them." (Woman Entrepreneur 7)

This complicates optimistic narratives about digitalization. Queues may disappear, but when errors occur, small entrepreneurs can end up in an invisible line inside the system, with no accountable interlocutor and prolonged uncertainty.

Woman Entrepreneur 10 generalizes this problem as desk-bounded responsibility and non-transferable guidance. Even where digital systems exist, she argues, many procedures still require physical presence, and the deeper issue is that institutional guidance remains fragmented across desks:

> "Public institutions are definitely not sufficient in terms of obtaining information or guidance. Even if you go to one court clerk's desk and they do not know the matter, they still do not direct you to another desk that does know, they do not help you. Nobody wants to do anything outside their own job… It is not possible for you to reach any information through solidarity or mutual help." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

In her account, digitization becomes analytically relevant not as a generic modernization ideal but as a concrete strategy to reduce dependence on discretionary face-to-face encounters where guidance is uneven and time costs are externalized onto service users:

> "We have switched to the e-system, actually… Of course, there are parts that have not switched to the e-system. We still have to go and do many things physically. If those stages were also transferred more technologically into the e-system, then at least, as women, we would be exposed to this bureaucracy less." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

Together, these accounts show how partial digitalization can simultaneously reduce certain burdens while intensifying the consequences of opacity and responsibility gaps when something changes or goes wrong.

The second analytic point, the age gradient in gendered access, becomes clearer in older women's narratives that contrast earlier face-to-face tax bureaucracy with contemporary digital processes and emphasize the uneven consequences of this shift. Woman Entrepreneur 13, a 59-year-old accountant and auditor who has worked in the field since 1990, recalls that in earlier years taxes were paid regularly every month through long queues, physical files, and paper-based communication, with no online transactions and repeated visits to the tax office. From her perspective, today's electronic filing systems, online payment options, and daily deadline monitoring have rationalized some aspects of the system and reduced the risk of accidental delinquency, provided one can keep up with technological change. In contrast, Woman Entrepreneur 11, a 66-year-old boutique owner, explains that as a woman who does not know how to use computers, she could not sustain the business in a regime where tax-related responsibilities are routed through electronic platforms without her accountant. She says she is grateful that her accountant deals with everything and describes the prospect of personally navigating online systems and constantly changing rules as frightening. While both women are in broadly similar age cohorts, this contrast suggests that the experience of digitalization is mediated not only by age but also plausibly by educational background, such that higher education can enable digital confidence, whereas low education can make digitalization feel exclusionary and anxiety-producing.

Younger women, by contrast, more readily narrate access to guidance as explicitly gendered and age-coded in the remaining face-to-face segments of bureaucratic life. Woman Entrepreneur 8 describes routine contact with the Ankara Chamber of Commerce as one of the most official and frequent institutional processes for her business. Familiarity over time helps, yet she still reads a pressure dynamic grounded in masculinized authority:

> "The officer there started to recognize me… I can handle my work smoothly and easily thanks to him, but I clearly feel this: because he sees himself as superior and more experienced as a man, he tries to establish pressure over

> me as a woman… In general, reaching information is harder for women… The window they look at men through and the window they look at a young woman through are not the same… We are left alone in this." (Woman Entrepreneur 8)

Situated in the broader discussion of partial digitalization, this account identifies where gendered bureaucracy endures. While digital tools can reduce exposure to front-desk discretion, as long as key procedural steps still require in-person attendance, access to guidance and the distribution of pressure remain mediated through gendered and age-coded interaction.

Older women more often narrate the same bureaucratic space through competence and fragmentation rather than direct discrimination, which is analytically important because it shows how age and established status can soften interactional edges without eliminating structural barriers. Woman Entrepreneur 13, a 59-year-old accountant and auditor, explicitly frames her critique in institutional rather than gendered terms. She states that she does not want to interpret these experiences primarily through gender but through declining institutional capacity and the absence of multi-competence across desks. As she puts it, there is "a drift towards deficiency," and "no multi-directionality": if someone in a state office knows one procedure, they do not know the others, even though, in her view, they should be aware of the overall process. Instead, officials respond by narrowing responsibility to their desk, saying "this is not my area." She gives the tax office as a clear example: when you ask about a matter related to temporary tax, an officer replies, "I am the VAT officer," which she calls an absurd answer because it leaves the citizen without actionable guidance. She concludes that because staff lack knowledge, this becomes a practical obstacle for service users: if you go to any tax office or public institution and explain what you want to do, "believe me, you will not be able to get an answer the first time." At the same time, she adds an interactional qualification that complicates a purely institutional reading: "If you are a man, and the person in the public institution is also a man, you can communicate more easily." She states that she does not want to interpret these experiences primarily through gender but through declining institutional capacity and the absence of multi-competence among bureaucrats.

Woman Entrepreneur 14, a 45-year-old entrepreneur, similarly links the guidance gap to technical insufficiency and the mismatch between staff training and specialized issues:

> "Even if bureaucrats try to help us, we get stuck at the point of obtaining information because technically they are not sufficient… the officer studied teaching but he sits there although he does not understand electricity." (Woman Entrepreneur 14)

Woman Entrepreneur 15 provides a sector-specific version of the same diagnosis, emphasizing that non-specialized bureaucrats often do not know what to request for specialized areas:

> "He works in environment and urbanization, and he does not know solar energy or a power plant, but he is still sitting in that position as an officer… Not every officer understands everything. They do not even know what they should ask for, so… it becomes difficult to reach information and to be guided." (Woman Entrepreneur 15)

Taken together, these accounts suggest that institutional insufficiency is reproduced not only through individual front-desk behavior, but also through organizational arrangements that fragment responsibility and distribute competence narrowly, leaving service recipients to bridge informational gaps themselves; moreover, sectoral and organizational gender norms can still shape who is expected to undertake the most visible, risky, and authority-laden forms of procedural follow-up. Digitalization also reorganizes discretion rather than eliminating it. For Woman Entrepreneur 5, the vegan restaurateur, tax procedures have become more predictable since she can see debts instantly in the system and pay online. Yet enforcement and collection remain politically contingent and discretionary. She describes being advised by older male tradesmen not to pay taxes immediately but to wait for an amnesty, only to be later confronted with unexpected interest rates and harsher collection when priorities shifted. Digitalization did not protect her from sudden changes; instead, it became a channel through which shifting fiscal priorities turned into sudden and concentrated pressure.

Finally, a temporal comparison appears in Woman Entrepreneur 16's retrospective account. She recalls an earlier period defined by queues and paper-based routines

and links her reluctance to re-enter entrepreneurship to a perceived worsening of the gender climate:

> "In the past, there were no online transactions. There were queues and lines, and I was constantly waiting in line for my turn. At that time, we paid our taxes and everything else even before the due date, so I never had problems with inspections or penalties. I was also working with a male accountant, and back then I did not experience serious difficulties. I am not sure how it would be now, but with what I know today, I would never want to open a company again, because attitudes toward women have changed in a more negative direction compared to the past." (Woman Entrepreneur 16)

This reinforces the running-stage claim that the form of contact may change, yet the broader conditions under which women must secure legitimacy can remain deeply gendered.

Taken together, these narratives show that digitalization changes the form of contact but does not neutralize bureaucratic experience. It can reduce face-to-face confrontation and make some procedures more predictable, yet incomplete digitalization sustains dependence on opaque counter-based interaction, where time uncertainty and inconsistent guidance function as indirect sanction mechanisms by increasing the likelihood of missed steps, delays, and procedural vulnerability. Digitalization also creates new inequalities between those who can read the system and those who cannot. At this point, the core problem cannot be reduced to being a woman alone. Rather, it is shaped by limited education, heavy care responsibilities, and restricted access to financial resources. Women with high education, networks, and time can assemble guidance from official sources, online systems, and peer knowledge. Women with limited education, heavy care burdens, and precarious finances often experience digitization as an added layer of complexity that must be outsourced to accountants or endured without understanding. Because women as a social group disproportionately carry care responsibilities and face more constrained educational and financial opportunities, formally gender-neutral digital rules can still produce gendered outcomes in practice. In this sense, what is at stake is a form of indirect discrimination. Although digital regulations appear identical for everyone, they pose greater obstacles for socially disadvantaged groups.

Administrative modernization, therefore, has not replaced gendered bureaucracy with a neutral digital system; it has reconfigured where and how gendered and classed hierarchies shape access to information, voice, and protection. In face-to-face encounters, rules were likewise formally the same for all, yet street-level bureaucrats exercised discretion in ways that enabled gender-based discrimination. With digitalization, rules again appear uniform; however, inequality now emerges through unequal access to information, digital literacy, and institutional support. These informational asymmetries frequently force women back into face-to-face encounters in order to resolve system failures or clarify missing steps, thereby reactivating discretionary and gendered interactions.

6.3.3. Being Read as a "Proper" Entrepreneur in the Running Stage: Gendered Credibility and Everyday Bureaucratic Encounters

Findings from the field study indicate that, in the running stage, women's difficulties during encounters with bureaucracy are not limited to sectoral enforcement regimes or to the problem of obtaining information. A further mechanism operates through everyday institutional encounters themselves, being recognized as a "proper" entrepreneur. In these encounters, the same procedural steps can become easier or harder depending on whether a woman is read as competent, serious, and legitimate, or as inexperienced, or morally "out of place." In this sub-section, three interrelated dynamics are examined. First, routine institutional encounters are filtered through respectability judgements that can take the form of paternalism, flirtation, or trivialization, producing uneven seriousness and responsiveness. Second, in male-coded sectors, women's entrepreneurial authority is often treated as non-obvious and must be repeatedly established in interaction, including through who is addressed first and whose expertise is presumed. Third, front-desk interactions and everyday gatekeeping practices translate embodied signals such as age, style, and presentation into everyday markers of credibility, shaping not only the tone of encounters but also the speed and feasibility of procedural progress.

The first pattern concerns the way seemingly "friendly" contact can carry gendered assumptions that quietly downgrade women's business legitimacy. This becomes

visible in conventionally feminized, small-scale retail where bureaucratic contact is not necessarily punitive, yet is organized through a light, relational register that can slide into flirtation, personal interest, or treating the business as a pleasant curiosity rather than a serious economic activity. Woman Entrepreneur 1, who runs a floral and chocolate shop, explains that this dynamic was not confined to the establishment stage. In the running stage as well, when municipal officers came for checks or follow-ups, they sometimes asked where the shop was located and framed the interaction in a tone that suggested a social drop-by rather than a procedural encounter, for example, “Where is your shop, let us come by and visit as well.” In her narrative, the issue is not deliberate obstruction but the way this register signals that the business is read as aesthetically pleasing, harmless, and socially “non-threatening.” The gendered consequence is that the encounter shifts away from clear, predictable facilitation and toward positioning the entrepreneur as a young woman running a “nice place.” In such a frame, minor compliance issues in the running stage are more likely to be conveyed as something to be politely fixed rather than treated as an operational risk that warrants timely, consistent institutional attention, an arrangement that may feel seemingly supportive, yet still reproduces an uneven distribution of seriousness. What is analytically salient here is the lowered position that is felt and communicated through the interaction, rather than any explicit obstruction, revealing how gender operates through subtle shifts in tone and perceived seriousness.

A similar dynamic appears in the more benevolent, yet still gendered, discretion described by older women. Woman Entrepreneur 11 recounts being reassured by officials when minor irregularities occur and being told variations of “We will take care of it, do not worry.” Age and maternal respectability operate here as a shield. She is less likely to be suspected of intentional wrongdoing and more likely to be treated as someone who might make an honest mistake. Yet this protection arrives through a paternalistic framing that positions the woman entrepreneur as someone who should be calmed down and guided rather than engaged as an equal counterpart. Importantly, women’s accounts suggest that the same “small mistake” can be read very differently depending on who commits it. Where an older woman can be treated as a “respectable auntie” whose error will be quietly corrected, younger, single,

divorced, or queer women report that comparable irregularities are more likely to be met with scolding, rapid escalation, or even closure talk. Discretion, in other words, does not simply soften rule application. It also functions as a moral sorting mechanism that distributes patience, reassurance, and procedural generosity unevenly across gendered and life-course categories.

The second pattern concerns credibility work in male-coded sectors, where women's entrepreneurial authority is often treated as exceptional and therefore slower to recognize. In these settings, the gendered mechanism is not only what rules apply, but how interaction is organized, who is presumed to be in charge, who is addressed first, and who is treated as the technical mind behind the work. Woman Entrepreneur 15, who designs and implements solar power plants, describes that municipal and institutional actors often direct their initial questions to male subcontractors or engineers, assuming they are the real decision-makers. Only after she repeatedly introduces herself as founder and manager does the encounter shift toward recognizing her authority. She notes that recognition is eventually secured through calm insistence and technical competence, but that it takes a bit longer for officials to accept a woman in such a role. In this configuration, gender operates as an interactional delay built into routine procedural contact. Women must spend additional time converting formal status into social recognition, even when their legal position is clear.

The third pattern concerns counter-level encounters and everyday gatekeeping, where embodied signals become informal tests of seriousness and legitimacy. These dynamics are not merely symbolic. They directly shape procedural access, speed, and the likelihood of being dismissed or facilitated. Woman Entrepreneur 10's account is especially instructive here. As someone who spends much of the running stage in continuous contact with street-level bureaucrats in courts and police stations, she describes how everyday gatekeeping can attach moralized judgements to women and vary sharply by the gender of the bureaucrat and the embodied signals of the applicant.

First, she reports a patterned contrast in tone between male and female bureaucrats in the running stage, especially in settings controlled by court clerks' desks.

> "If you are a young woman, a male officer's approach to you can be gentler and more polite. But a female officer's approach to you can be harsher. I experience this a lot in my professional life. I experience it especially at court clerks' desks." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

Analytically, what matters is not simply different tones, but the way gendered credibility is produced through these tones. The encounter becomes a site where a young woman's authority is treated as more contestable, and where "helpfulness" can be withheld without appearing to violate any formal rule. This pattern also constitutes an implicit critique of representative bureaucracy, which assumes that increasing the numerical presence of women in bureaucratic positions will lead to more equitable outcomes for women service users. Representative bureaucracy refers to the idea that bureaucrats who share social characteristics with citizens will better represent their interests (Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006). However, as this case illustrates, shared gender does not automatically translate into solidarity or protection. Instead, female bureaucrats may reproduce or even intensify dominant institutional norms, disciplining other women in line with professionalized expectations of seriousness, authority, and compliance.

Second, she connects recognition and respect to moralized readings of appearance, showing how professional legitimacy can be effectively switched on or off through clothing and shoes.

> "These are parameters that can change even with the shoes and the dress you wear. The attitude of a male clerk, or an officer in police stations is never the same as the attitude of a female counterpart. You feel that difference in working life. When you go in high heels, you are taken seriously, they address you as 'Ms. Lawyer.' But when you dress more casually, I would not call it sloppy but sporty, then they see you as more inexperienced, less senior, and there are rude manners. You lose that respect by not wearing high heels." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

This account foregrounds a distinct running-stage mechanism. Credibility is not treated as a stable attribute attached to a professional title, but as something that must be continually performed and is continuously read through gendered signs. The same bureaucratic desk can therefore function as a filtering device where women must signal seriousness in ways that are not demanded from male counterparts.

What further sharpens the gendered dimension in her narrative is that gatekeeping is not limited to how one is spoken to. It can become a concrete time and risk cost through the refusal to provide basic scheduling information, even when officials clearly know the system. She describes this refusal as an everyday form of non-facilitation that externalizes time costs onto the applicant and increases procedural risk. The gendered element lies in how such indifference is experienced as easier to impose on a young woman whose time, authority, and practical constraints are treated as less worthy of consideration.

> "For example, the police tell you, 'Come to the court tomorrow.' Tomorrow at what time should I come? Am I supposed to devote my whole day to this? They do not say, 'Come tomorrow at 12.' They just say, 'You will be at the court tomorrow.' But he knows what time it will be, he knows the system, and if he wanted to help, he could. These things are not done." (Woman Entrepreneur 10)

Woman Entrepreneur 9's running-stage narrative adds another layer by showing how classed femininity and aesthetic visibility can provoke moralized resentment and translate into gatekeeping. She recounts a formative episode in which a female bureaucrat refused to process her file when she arrived five minutes late during the establishment stage, and she interpreted the refusal as connected to irritation at her appearance. She explains that the experience frightened her enough that, in later face-to-face institutional visits, she deliberately chose plainer, less conspicuous clothing in order to be read as a reasonable business owner and to reduce the risk of being singled out. This illustrates a broader mechanism. Procedural access is not only regulated by formal schedules and rules, but also shaped by the moral atmosphere of the counter, where certain types of femininity can be read as "too visible," "too confident," or insufficiently deferential. Even without an explicit sexist remark, the encounter can still be experienced as gendered because the woman's credibility as a business owner feels conditional. It appears to hinge on whether her appearance aligns with local expectations of modesty, seriousness, and deference, and when it does not, routine steps can be slowed down, blocked, or turned into a lesson about "knowing one's place."

Taken together, these accounts show that a key running-stage mechanism operates through gendered recognition in everyday bureaucratic interfaces. Women's

procedural pathways are shaped not only by what the law says or which documents are required, but by how credibility is distributed in interaction. This occurs through paternalistic reassurance that can quietly downgrade authority, through flirtation or personalizing talk that shifts the frame away from professional seriousness, through delayed recognition in male-coded sectors where women are not presumed to be the principal actor, and through counter-level gatekeeping where appearance, age, and presentation are converted into informal indicators of status. This mechanism is analytically distinct from sectoral enforcement regimes and from informational opacity. It highlights that the running stage is sustained through repeated encounters in which women must secure not only compliance, but also recognition as "proper" entrepreneurs, and the costs of that recognition are unevenly borne along gendered lines.

6.4. Coping Strategies of Women Entrepreneurs with Male-Dominated Bureaucracy

Faced with information gaps, arbitrary discretion, limited support and gendered disrespect, women do not relate to bureaucracy as passive victims. Across the 16 cases, it is possible to observe that over time woman entrepreneurs have developed patterned ways of "making the system workable" on their own terms. Four categories of coping strategies stand out: reliance on intermediaries, especially male accountants; mobilization of informal networks of kin, neighbors and peer entrepreneurs; deliberate self-limitation in growth, formalization and continuity decisions; and adjustment of body, voice and demeanor to anticipated bureaucratic expectations. These strategies mitigate immediate risks but also, paradoxically, help reproduce the very gendered and classed inequalities that make them necessary.

6.4.1. Reliance on Intermediaries: The Accountant and the "Man who Knows"

The most pervasive coping strategy across all 16 cases is the delegation of direct interaction with the fiscal and administrative state to intermediaries. Notably, each woman interviewed works with a male accountant, and in specific crises also turns to an older man who "knows how bureaucracy works." These intermediaries are

experienced as both reassuring and unavoidable: they "take care of everything," yet their expertise is difficult to evaluate, and women often feel they have no real choice but to trust them. While professional expertise is clearly a key factor in this reliance, the systematic preference for male rather than female accountants reflects women's anticipatory awareness of not being taken seriously as women in bureaucratic settings. The concern is not that female accountants lack competence, but that, as women, they may be granted less authority, move more slowly through bureaucratic channels, or fail to elicit the same level of responsiveness from officials as male counterparts. In this sense, reliance on male intermediaries functions as a strategy to compensate for gendered credibility deficits embedded in bureaucratic interaction.

For many women, the accountant is the main point of contact with the tax office and, in general bureaucratic institutions. After the establishment stage, monthly declarations, restructuring applications and correspondence with the tax administration are managed by the accountant. Woman Entrepreneur 1 describes her role in the running stage simply as "collecting invoices and documents" and handing them to their accountant, who then deals with the tax office on their behalf. Woman Entrepreneur 2 similarly explains that, in both the establishment and running stages, institutional guidance is so weak that she constantly falls back on her male accountant:

> "In my opinion, institutions are not sufficient in providing information or guidance… You ask a question and you do not get a clear answer. In the end I always ask my accountant. When I leave the institution, I immediately call and say, 'They said this and that, what does it mean?'" (Woman Entrepreneur 2)

Woman Entrepreneur 16, who opened a small publishing and accounting office herself in her early twenties, recounts the same pattern of dependence:

> "I go into the institution, come out again, and then immediately call the accountant. I say, 'Hakan Abi, they said something like this, what am I going to do?' He says, 'Do not worry, it is nothing, just pass by, I will ll handle it.'" (Woman Entrepreneur 16)

In these narratives, the accountant is not only a technical specialist but also a masculine authority figure who shields women from stressful face-to-face encounters

with the state. This clearly reduces anxiety and saves time, but it also produces a structural dependence: women remain at one remove from the legal and fiscal language that governs their businesses.

Older women highlight how digitalization has changed, but not diminished, this reliance. Woman Entrepreneur 13, an accountant and auditor herself since the late 1980s, recalls standing in long queues in tax offices, "everything on paper, everything with a stamp," and contrasts this with the present, where "everything is electronic" and deadlines can be monitored on a daily basis. Yet she stresses that those who cannot or do not want to navigate electronic platforms now rely on accountants even more. Notably, despite being an accountant herself, she continues to rely on a male intermediary when dealing with tax authorities, pointing to the persistence of gendered mediation even in a digitalized context. The 66-year-old boutique owner, Woman Entrepreneur 11, openly states that she would not have opened a shop in today's environment without an accountant who "handles all the online things" and tells her when and what to pay. For her, the accountant is the only reason the digitized tax procedures remains accessible at all.

Digitalization, in other words, does not eliminate the need for intermediaries; it reconfigures it. The experience of Woman Entrepreneur 7, who runs a small e-commerce business from home, is telling. After paying her Bağ-Kur premium, the system continued to show her as indebted. She tried to resolve this by phone:

> "Whichever number I called, they transferred me to another number, another institution, and I got no result… In the end I just waited, and later I learned from my accountant that the payment hadn't yet fallen into the system. I had paid, but the system still showed a debt." (Woman Entrepreneur 7)

She concludes that "everything is said to be digital now, but when there is a problem in the digital system you cannot find a real person to talk to." In this context, the accountant becomes the only stable human interface with an increasingly impersonal and fragmented state, turning digitalization itself into a driver of intermediary dependence. On the other hand, in sectors where, municipal discretion is particularly strong, women also mobilize other male intermediaries who "know the ways of the

municipality.” The queer vegan restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, faced repeated threats of closure due to licensing disputes despite months of her own attempts to clarify requirements at municipal counters. Only when an older man with experience in municipal procedures took up her case and accompanied her to offices did blockages begin to lift and her license was eventually approved. She narrates this with clear ambivalence: gratitude that her restaurant survived, but also frustration that, “once again, a young woman’s business was ‘rescued’ by an older man who knows the system,” despite her strong political and feminist discomfort with relying on such figures.

Taken together, these experiences show that reliance on intermediaries is both a rational coping strategy and a mechanism of structural dependence. It lightens the cognitive load and emotional stress of dealing with opaque, rapidly changing rules, yet it also keeps women at a distance from institutional knowledge and reinforces a bureaucratic culture that continues to assume a male subject as the default economic actor.

6.4.2. Mobilizing Informal Networks: Family, Neighbors and Peer Entrepreneurs

The second coping strategy is the mobilization of informal networks: relatives inside institutions, neighbors and fellow tradespeople, friends with sector-specific experience and, in some cases, politically or familially connected acquaintances. These ties supplement or substitute for (lack of) formal guidance and support programs and often determine how fast (or whether) a bureaucratic problem can be solved. While the use of informal networks is not unique to women and has become increasingly common in contemporary bureaucratic systems more generally, women’s accounts suggest that such networks carry particular significance for them because formal channels are experienced as less accessible, less responsive, and more discretionary. In this sense, informal ties do not merely accelerate procedures, but compensate for structurally uneven access to institutional voice and credibility.

For some young entrepreneurs, relatives who work in public institutions become crucial gate-openers. The floral and chocolate shop owner, Woman Entrepreneur 1,

explains that her aunt, who works in the Ministry of Agriculture, did not just offer general information but directly intervened when an official document was issued incorrectly during the establishment stage. Rather than queuing again and "starting from zero," she called her aunt, who quickly contacted the relevant unit and had the paper corrected and reissued. Here, the facilitating factor is not the gender of the relative, but her positional access and institutional competence. This case therefore cannot be read simply as "women supporting women," but rather as evidence that insider knowledge and institutional familiarity are decisive resources in navigating bureaucratic opacity. In her narrative, what might have become a weeks-long delay turned into a minor hiccup thanks to this internal connection. Institutional know-how and access, in other words, flow through kinship ties rather than through transparent public guidance.

In more precarious contexts, neighborhood relations function simultaneously as financial and bureaucratic support. Woman Entrepreneur 6, who opened her own hair salon after years of uninsured work in another man's shop, describes how nearby tradesmen quite literally helped her "build" the workplace when she lacked capital and credit:

> "Friends helped, the tradesmen around me helped… One bought the counter, one paid for the walls to be painted." (Woman Entrepreneur 6)

These same neighbors continued to advise her on what municipal inspectors "usually look at," which documents she must keep visible, and when trouble might be coming. With no institutional briefing or accessible written guidance, the local marketplace relations become her main source of procedural knowledge: watching how others are treated, listening to their stories and imitating their strategies.

Informal networks also play a decisive role in resolving acute bureaucratic crises. The queer vegan restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, offers a particularly telling example. After months of contradictory messages from different municipal officers, repeated threats of closure and a license that was cancelled and reissued several times, she recalls a turning point that came not from any formal mechanism but from an unexpected family connection:

> "My sister got married recently; it turned out that her husband's uncle was someone who knew municipal work. It's such a ridiculous story… Once again, a young woman's business was 'saved' by a white, older man." (Woman Entrepreneur 5)

This uncle, an older man who "knows how the municipality works," takes over the file, accompanies her to offices and speaks directly with key officials. This moment sharply illustrates the central role of street-level bureaucrats and the importance of knowing those who can "speak the language of bureaucracy." What ultimately determines the outcome is not formal legality or procedural compliance, but the ability to mobilize authority within discretionary and interactional spaces where rules are interpreted, negotiated, and selectively enforced. Only then do the procedures move forward and the risk of closure recedes. She narrates this with deep ambivalence: gratitude that her restaurant survives, but also political and feminist discomfort at having to rely on patriarchal authority to remain in business.

Networks are equally visible in the experience of the handbag brand founder, Woman Entrepreneur 9. During the establishment stage, the most exhausting part for her was not setting up the company, as "you can start a company in five minutes" she notes, but the problem was navigating trademark registration and potential supports for branding and packaging. A friend told her that there might be a printing-related incentive from the Ministry of Trade. Rather than simply walking in and asking, she first activated her family connections:

> "I went to the Ministry of Trade. They welcomed me very nicely… but I called through someone in my family who had connections there. Otherwise, you can't just walk in from the door and say 'I want support. Because without an intermediary you don't even know which unit you are supposed to go to, and even if you go, you either get kept waiting for a long time or you are sent from one desk to another. And as a woman, there is also a high chance that you won't be taken seriously or that they will just brush you off with vague answers." (Woman Entrepreneur 9)

Here, access to a theoretically public support mechanism is mediated by private networks. The possibility of being "welcomed nicely" at the ministry depends less on entrepreneurship training or official channels and more on whether one can reach someone via "a connection from someone in their family".

Peer networks inside sectors play a similar buffering role in the running stage, but women's statements suggest that this buffering is not only about "information" in a generic entrepreneurial sense. For them, calling an experienced colleague or a trusted contact also works as a way of securing credibility and reducing the risk of being brushed off, redirected, or treated as someone who "does not really understand" in bureaucratic encounters. The insurance agency owner, Woman Entrepreneur 8, explains that when she receives new circulars, audit notices, or compliance requests, she immediately phones a more experienced colleague in the sector; they talk through "what it really means" and how others are responding before she decides on her own course of action. Importantly, this colleague is a senior male actor within the sector, whose experience and gendered authority are perceived as enhancing the credibility of the advice provided. While this interaction could be read as professional peer support, women's narratives do not foreground a discourse of explicit women's solidarity. Rather than relying on female peer networks, the preference for experienced male contacts reflects an anticipation that men's interpretations and presence carry greater institutional weight in bureaucratic encounters. In this way, the peer call produces not only procedural clarity but also an interactional script and a sense of legitimacy before she steps into a potentially discretionary encounter, one that is implicitly shaped by male-coded authority and credibility.

Likewise, several other participants mention consulting chamber officials they personally know, bar-association contacts, or fellow boutique owners when they face unexpected inspections or fines, describing these contacts as a protective resource against fragmented information and uneven front-desk treatment.

Taken together, these examples show that "who you know" is a key determinant of how women entrepreneurs experience bureaucratic encounters. Women's accounts suggest that networks operate as gendered infrastructural support: they do not only provide information, they also increase the chance of being treated as a competent, legitimate official counterpart. Importantly, the findings do not indicate that women's solidarity itself emerges as a dominant coping strategy. Rather than collective feminist networking, what becomes visible is an individualized reliance on

informal ties, including peers, relatives, and trusted acquaintances, who are in practice most often men and whose perceived authority and institutional familiarity are expected to compensate for bureaucratic opacity, discretionary treatment, and institutional unreliability. While male entrepreneurs may also benefit from informal ties and personal contacts to navigate bureaucracy, what distinguishes women's experiences is that such networks often function less as a convenience and more as a compensatory mechanism. Women who can draw on such ties often describe smoother interactions and fewer delays, while those without them face the same formal rules with less protection against being brushed off or redirected, and with a greater need to rely on trial and error while continuously asserting their legitimacy as the representative of their own enterprise.

6.4.3. Deliberate Self-Limitation: Staying Small, Exiting, Avoiding Supports

The third coping strategy is deliberate self-limitation: choosing not to grow, not to formalize further, not to apply for available support schemes or even to exit entrepreneurship altogether. Women frame these decisions not as failures but as pragmatic responses to the cumulative burden of bureaucracy, risk and care responsibilities.

One form of self-limitation is keeping the business small to avoid additional layers of obligation. The boutique owner, Woman Entrepreneur 11, explains that she has never seriously considered expanding or applying for grants:

> "When I opened the first shop, I started with small amounts; we were able to cover it… I didn't feel the need for support, and I didn't think about it. The processes are complicated; I didn't want to deal with it." (Woman Entrepreneur 11)

Her second shop, opened years later, is similarly kept at a size she describes as "manageable." She explicitly associates growth with "more paperwork, more stress" and judges that at her age, and without a partner to share administrative burdens, staying small is the most rational option.

Younger women sometimes limit their engagement with the state by consciously avoiding public support schemes that appear on paper as opportunities. Woman

Entrepreneur 2, whose mother had previously struggled with such programs, decides not to apply at all:

> "I know these processes from my mother. It takes a very long time; you have to take many steps… She had to pay extra costs and there was always the possibility that nothing would come out of it. So, knowing that the process was very difficult, I did not take that step." (Woman Entrepreneur 2)

Here, self-limitation is a way of protecting oneself from what is perceived as a high-effort, low-return bureaucratic trade-off. Rather than naïvely "missing out" on opportunities, she draws on intergenerational knowledge to avoid what she sees as administratively cumbersome paths.

At the more dramatic end of the spectrum, self-limitation takes the form of exiting entrepreneurship altogether when the balance between bureaucratic load, economic reward and family expectations becomes untenable. The story of Woman Entrepreneur 16 is emblematic. She opened her first business, which is a small office combining medical journal publishing and accounting, in her early 20s, with strong financial backing from her father. After marriage and the births of her children, however, she found herself unable to sustain the combined demands of childcare, housework and running the office. She recalls that her husband encouraged her to close:

> "My husband said, 'don't bother with taxes and rent, let it go. It's better to have a small, secure salary and a peaceful mind.'" (Woman Entrepreneur 16)

Under this combined moral and practical pressure, she shut down the business and returned to salaried employment. Looking back, she reads this not simply as a personal choice but as an outcome of a broader gendered valuation of security over autonomy for women: entrepreneurship is tolerated as a short episode before "normal life" (marriage, motherhood, stable wage work) reasserts itself.

Across these cases, self-limitation is not merely an internalized lack of ambition. It is an active strategy to conserve energy, manage risk and preserve a sense of control in an environment where growth often means more exposure to arbitrary inspections,

more complex declarations and more conflict with family norms. In this sense, the system operates through an internal logic of self-regulation: the very conditions that already make entrepreneurship difficult for women simultaneously discipline those who manage to overcome them, effectively signaling that growth itself should be avoided. What emerges is a form of bureaucratic auto-control, in which women are not explicitly prevented from advancing, but are subtly steered toward staying small, contained, or exiting altogether.

6.4.4. Adjusting Body, Voice and Demeanor to Bureaucratic Expectations

As a final strategy, women adapt not only their organizational strategies but also their bodies, voices and demeanors to what they anticipate from bureaucratic encounters. These embodied adjustments, which operate in both the establishment and running stages, form a fourth line of coping with gendered and moralizing state practices.

Some women consciously adopt a more "masculine" communication style in order to be taken seriously. The pilates studio owner, Woman Entrepreneur 3, repeatedly describes how interactions with male officials' drift into flirtation or patronizing chat. What should be a quick signature or a short information exchange often turns into an extended conversation about her body and pilates as a "sexy" sport. Over time, she develops a defensive repertoire for institutional visits: she avoids sportswear, chooses more neutral, non-revealing clothes, and deliberately speaks in a firmer, more distant tone. In her words, in public institutions "it takes longer just because you are a woman" and you have to "show that your masculine side is dominant and you have to act like 'tough guy' (ağır abi)" so that officials understand that you are there to do business, not to entertain them.

Others try to minimize their bodily presence in different ways. The electrical and construction-sector entrepreneur, Woman Entrepreneur 14, offers a stark example of anticipatory self-discipline. She describes the contractor milieu she works in as made up of "people with little education" who "see womanhood in a very different way", not as mother or spouse, but simply as a sexual object. In response, she explains that

she deliberately chooses covered, non-form-fitting clothes when meeting contractors or going to institutions and sometimes “even avoids using perfume” so as not to “attract” the men she has to deal with. She is clear that this is not about her personal morality but about self-protection in a sector she describes as far from “modern” in gender terms: in order to be recognized as an engineer and business owner, she feels compelled to erase visible signs of femininity in bureaucratic and professional settings.

Classed and aesthetic codes add another layer. The founder of a leather handbag brand, Woman Entrepreneur 9, builds her business identity around elegance: carefully chosen clothes, accessories and styling. Yet she recounts that this very aesthetic sometimes appears to provoke hostility rather than respect in public offices. She describes arriving at an institution a few minutes after the official opening time and being told by a female official that her work could not be processed because she was “late,” only to see male applicants who arrived much later being promptly served. After similar episodes, she started to tone down her appearance on days when she had to go to institutions (choosing plainer clothes and minimal make-up) in an attempt to avoid triggering what she reads as moralized resentment toward a young, stylish woman who appears “too confident” for her place.

Age and life-stage further shape these embodied strategies. Younger women like Woman Entrepreneur 1 recall being treated as “kids” in their early visits to chambers and tax offices, which initially led them to dress more “seriously” and to over-perform politeness in order to counter the assumption that they were just “playing at business.” By contrast, the older boutique owner, Woman Entrepreneur 11, says she has not faced obstacles “because I am a woman” and interprets being addressed in a familiar, age-coded way as respectful friendliness rather than discrimination. Framing this paternalistic tone as “kindness” can also operate as a practical coping strategy: it helps her keep encounters calm, avoid escalation, and move paperwork forward. Yet analytically, the same tone can still reproduce a subtle hierarchy, because it positions her as someone to be reassured and guided through the process rather than fully recognized as an authoritative business owner, even if she herself does not name it as gendered inequality.

For women who do not fit heteronormative standards of femininity, these embodied negotiations take yet another form. The queer vegan restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, experiences both establishment and running-stage encounters with inspectors and municipal officers as densely moralized and deeply gendered. She is sharply aware of how her openly lesbian identity and non-normative appearance are read as "strange" and out of place, and she explicitly resents the idea that a man should have to "save" her business. Yet when months of going to the municipality "from nine to five" produced no clear answer and a closure decision loomed, she eventually accepted the help of an older male relative who "knows municipal work" and took over negotiations on her behalf. For a politically conscious woman who would, in principle, least want to be rescued by a man, this is a deeply ambivalent compromise: she temporarily brackets her own critiques of patriarchy in order to keep the restaurant open and her workers employed. Analytically, this can be read as a form of strategic self-concealment by stepping back from the front line of bureaucratic interaction and allowing a male figure to appear as the face of the business which is chosen not out of ignorance or consent to the gender order, but as a survival tactic within it.

Finally, some women opt for strategic invisibility by delegating their physical presence in institutions to men. Several participants mention asking husbands, brothers or male partners to accompany them or to sign documents in tense situations, on the grounds that "things move faster" and conversations are "more respectful" when a man is in the room. In the case of Woman Entrepreneur 5, an older male relative who "understands municipal work" eventually becomes the primary visible negotiator with the municipality during a licensing crisis, while she remains in the background. In these instances, the adjustment is not only of clothing or tone but of who appears as the face of the business before the state.

Taken together, these narratives show that coping with bureaucracy is not limited to learning procedures or hiring the suitable accountant. Bureaucratic encounters demand a parallel effort in which bodies, voices, and demeanors are actively adjusted in anticipation of street-level bureaucrats' gendered expectations. Adjusting clothing, suppressing femininity, avoiding perfume, lowering or hardening one's voice,

withholding smiles, or strategically managing visibility become survival strategies rather than matters of personal preference. In this sense, bureaucracy functions not only as an administrative apparatus but also as a performative arena, in which women are compelled to demonstrate legitimacy through carefully managed self-presentation. The bureaucratic encounter thus resembles a theatrical scene, structured by implicit scripts and audience expectations, where women must wear a "mask" in order to be recognized as serious, competent economic actors. This performative work, imposed precisely because they are women, transforms routine administrative compliance into an ongoing negotiation of authority, respectability, and self-protection, revealing the deeply gendered character of everyday bureaucratic practice.

6.5. Women Entrepreneurs' Suggestions and Recommendations

The interviewed women entrepreneurs do not only describe problems; they also formulate concrete suggestions and implicit policy directions based on the bureaucratic encounters that shaped their entrepreneurial activity. Taken together, their proposals fall into several recurring clusters: information and guidance (clear, sector-specific instructions and responsive clarification); recommendations that shift the focus from businesses to institutions themselves (accountability, complaint mechanisms, and monitoring street-level practice); proposals around finance, credit, and the timing of obligations (accessible support, collateral rules, and temporal relief); and measures addressing care, safety, and time (childcare, safe transport, and safer work environments). Across these clusters, women also emphasize that digitalization must be paired with accessible human support, that peer networks and mentoring infrastructures should be institutionally enabled, and that both inspections and banking require explicit gender-sensitive standards. These recommendations emerge directly from women's everyday struggles with institutions and collectively offer a grounded roadmap for designing more gender-sensitive and socially just bureaucratic frameworks.

The first cluster of recommendations concerns information: where women learn what is required to open and run a business, and whether anyone is available to clarify

rules that are constantly changing or unevenly applied. Many participants insist that basic guidance should not depend on luck, personal acquaintances or the interpretive work of accountants. The floral and chocolate shop owner, Woman Entrepreneur 1, how explained her reliance on an aunt working at a ministry, states that for her, and for newcomers like her, it would make an enormous difference if ministries and municipalities produced simple, sector-specific guides that explain, in plain language, which documents and licenses are needed at each step. She imagines short booklets, online texts or introductory trainings that would have "saved a lot of time and worry" in the establishment phase and reduced the need to constantly call or visit different institutions.

The social work specialist who opened a counselling center, Woman Entrepreneur 2, pushes this further by linking information to responsiveness. She recalls asking questions at a counter, receiving vague or evasive answers, and only understanding what to do after calling her accountant outside the building. On this basis, she argues that institutions should not simply publish rules, but also organize themselves so that when a citizen reports a problem, a concrete step is taken rather than the complaint disappearing. She would like to see complaint channels that actually lead to follow-up and some form of monitoring of institutional behavior, so that people know where to turn if they feel mistreated or misinformed.

Digitalization adds another layer to these demands. The home-based e-commerce entrepreneur, Woman Entrepreneur 7's experience of Bağ-Kur premium debt payment, that was eventually solved by her accountant, makes her to draw the conclusion that although "everything is said to be digital now", when a digital system fails there is no accessible, knowledgeable person to speak to. She suggests that institutions should ensure an easily reachable, real person who can provide clear guidance when online systems break down. The insurance agency owner, Woman Entrepreneur 8, voices a similar frustration and explicitly suggests that telephone support should be strengthened. For her, online portals are useful, but when a question cannot be resolved there, there must be easily reachable staff on the phone who actually understand the procedures, so that people are not forced to spend hours travelling and waiting in line.

The second cluster of suggestions shifts the focus from businesses to institutions themselves. Women repeatedly insist that, so long as inspections and audits only target firms and never scrutinize the practices of street-level bureaucrats, arbitrary and gendered behavior will continue. The queer vegan restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, formulates this strongly. After months of inconsistent instructions, repeated visits, heavy police and municipal presence and frequent fines, she argues that “institutions themselves must be audited.” In her view, municipal officers, inspectors and other public employees exercise wide discretion with almost no transparency; some interpret rules loosely in favor of those with connections, while others apply them in ways that punish “non-conforming” businesses. She therefore calls for mechanisms that monitor how often different sectors and neighborhoods are inspected, how long licenses take to be processed, and how decisions are taken, and for channels through which citizens can report problematic conduct with some expectation that it will be investigated.

The social work specialist, Woman Entrepreneur 2, who experienced direct humiliation in an institutional encounter, points in the same direction. For her, complaint systems must not be purely symbolic. There should be clear procedures for examining reports of discriminatory or disrespectful behavior, informing complainants of the outcome, and intervening when a pattern appears. Without this, she fears that women will continue to avoid confronting officials and will instead retreat into long-term dependence on male intermediaries.

Professional women in highly regulated sectors add another nuance. The physiotherapist with a doctorate, Woman Entrepreneur 12, notes that inspections by the Ministry of Health and social security are generally professional but often inconsistent and subject to frequent rule changes. She argues for more stable, clearly communicated criteria and for inspectors to be trained not only in technical medical standards but also in how to interact respectfully with women professionals who own and manage health facilities. The auditor, Woman Entrepreneur 13, similarly emphasizes that unexpected and poorly communicated changes in tax rules generate insecurity, and that institutional responsibility should include timely, comprehensible information rather than leaving professionals to discover changes indirectly.

The third set of proposals revolves around finance, credit and the timing of obligations. Here, the narratives of women from very different class backgrounds resonate with one another. Many agree that existing “support” schemes for entrepreneurs are both too small and too bureaucratic. The software and AI entrepreneur, Woman Entrepreneur 4, notes that small grants framed as support for new businesses are often limited to amounts that barely cover office furniture, whereas enterprises like hers require resources for training, specialist staff, software and infrastructure. She argues that if support is to be meaningful, it must be calibrated to the actual structure of the sector and the scale of investment needed. She also emphasizes that encouraging firms to employ women, or to offer women-friendly working conditions, should be part of national economic policy and that such firms could be prioritized in support criteria.

From a different position, the hairdresser, Woman Entrepreneur 6, recounts how her lack of formal social security records and collateral excluded her from bank credit and left her dependent on neighbors and friends for the most basic start-up expenses. For women in her situation, she suggests, what would really help are micro-credit mechanisms or small grants that do not require male guarantors and that recognize the realities of working-class women who move in and out of registered work. The floral shop owner, Woman Entrepreneur 1, also mentions low-interest loans from public banks or cooperative structures as a more realistic tool for small family businesses than high-threshold grant programs.

The insurance agency owner, Woman Entrepreneur 8, offers a detailed critique of age- and size-based criteria in support schemes. She explains that she repeatedly failed to qualify for Bağ-Kur premium support and similar programs because they required being below a certain age or having a larger number of employees. Starting a business at the age of 37-38 with almost no capital and no staff, she found herself outside the scope of every major program she researched. On this basis, she argues that support criteria should be loosened for women who begin entrepreneurship later in life or at a micro scale, for example by extending premium support to those who work alone and by introducing even small reductions in tax or rent-related obligations, which would be very significant when margins are tight.

The electrical engineer in solar projects, Woman Entrepreneur 15, formulates perhaps the most radical financial recommendations. She stresses that many women, including herself, remain “two or three steps away” from investment opportunities because they lack the capital and cannot meet collateral demands. She argues that grants should be given to women according to the actual work they plan to do and that schemes should not be encircled by so many criteria that only a tiny group qualifies. She also proposes that, for the first years of a business, women entrepreneurs should be allowed to postpone tax, VAT and social security payments so that they can stabilize their enterprises before returning money to the state. Without such temporal relief, she suggests, women are constantly forced to choose between meeting obligations and keeping the business alive. For high-risk, capital-intensive sectors like energy, she also calls for longer time frames and support mechanisms structured around the slow, project-based rhythm of those industries.

The fourth group of recommendations centers on care, safety and time. Several women insist that childcare is not a “separate social issue” but a central dimension of entrepreneurship policy. The pilates studio owner, Woman Entrepreneur 3, underlines the strain of teaching late classes, caring for a child and dealing with municipal, tax and social security procedures during working hours. She argues that mothers who start businesses should receive direct childcare support, ideally through affordable nurseries close to commercial areas or through specific subsidies for childcare costs. Without such support, the entrepreneurship that is often presented as a solution to work-family conflict risks becoming another site of exhaustion. This tension is particularly striking given that entrepreneurship is frequently promoted as an effective policy tool for increasing women’s employment and improving work-life balance, yet in practice it often fails to deliver on these promises precisely because care responsibilities remain unaddressed.

The tech entrepreneur, Woman Entrepreneur 4, explicitly articulates similar policy demands. She suggests that if a woman is a mother, there should be face-to-face childcare provision, because many women either cannot find anyone to look after their children or end up spending more on care than they earn. She also argues that firms that employ women should be supported in order to increase women’s

employment and benefit from what she calls “women’s vision” in business life. Finally, drawing on her own experience of late-night work, she proposes transportation support for women working after dark, so that those leaving offices or client sites in the evening can travel safely and at reasonable cost.

Safety and place also appear in the recommendations of the solar engineer, Woman Entrepreneur 15. Working in a male-dominated industrial area, she notes that after a certain hour she does not feel safe walking through the zone as a woman. She therefore imagines safer office spaces or hubs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs within or near such areas, both to reduce exposure to harassment and to foster networks among women in heavy industrial sectors. For women like the early-stage publisher-accountant, Woman Entrepreneur 16, who eventually closed her business under the combined weight of childcare, low and unstable income and a husband urging her to return to salaried work, such measures appear retrospectively as the kinds of supports that might have made continuity thinkable.

Digitalization itself is another major theme in women’s recommendations. Older professionals such as Woman Entrepreneur 13 emphasize the advantages of electronic systems, such as no more long queues with folders, greater predictability of deadlines etc., but also note that those who cannot or do not want to navigate complex portals now depend even more heavily on their accountants. Younger micro-entrepreneurs like Woman Entrepreneur 7 and Woman Entrepreneur 8 stress that digitalization is only beneficial if it is accompanied by accessible human support. They want online systems that function smoothly, but they also want to be able to pick up a phone and reach someone who can actually solve a problem when the system fails. The solar engineer, Woman Entrepreneur 15, adds that if women are to participate in more technical sectors, digitalization must be accompanied by free or very low-cost training for both citizens and public employees, so that everyone involved has the skills to use the systems they are required to rely on.

Several women underline the importance of peer networks, mentoring and collective infrastructures. Although not all of them use the language of “policy,” their stories point to the need for institutional support to women’s networks. The queer feminist

restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, notes that being part of women's circles and activist networks helps her interpret economic and political developments and offers her a sense of not being alone when facing municipal pressures. Early-stage entrepreneurs such as Women Entrepreneurs 1, 2 and 8 describe how they constantly exchange information with other small business owners, for example about inspectors, about new rules or about how to fill forms, and how crucial this is in the absence of reliable institutional guidance. Building on these experiences, many suggest that chambers, municipalities and ministries could support the creation of more structured women's networks and mentoring schemes, for example by hosting regular meetings, facilitating contacts between experienced women founders and newcomers, or creating spaces where women can share knowledge about sectoral risks and institutional behavior.

Finally, a number of recommendations focus on inspections and banking as particularly gender-sensitive domains. The pilates studio owner, Woman Entrepreneur 3, and the electrical sector entrepreneur, Woman Entrepreneur 14, both describe how ordinary institutional encounters become charged with sexualized or moralizing overtones, leading them to modify their dress and demeanor as a form of self-protection. The queer vegan restaurateur, Woman Entrepreneur 5, recounts dense, moralized oversight of her premises. From these experiences, they derive the demand that inspections be governed by clear behavioral rules and that inspectors receive training on gender, sexuality and diversity, with real consequences when those rules are violated. In banking, women such as the lawyer, Woman Entrepreneur 10, and the engineer, Woman Entrepreneur 15, describe being evaluated through the lens of male guarantors, future marriage and motherhood rather than in terms of their own assets and plans. They therefore argue that banks and public financial institutions should systematically reconsider how they assess women's creditworthiness, reduce the automatic recourse to fathers and husbands as guarantors, and provide guarantee mechanisms that allow women to stand as economic subjects in their own right.

Across these diverse proposals, a small set of principles emerges from women's own narratives. They call for information that is clear, proactive and backed by reachable

humans rather than opaque and fragmented; for institutions that are themselves monitored and held responsible for how they treat citizens; for financial support that is substantial, accessible and sensitive to sector and life-course; for an understanding of entrepreneurship that is compatible with care responsibilities and personal safety; for digitalization that simplifies rather than complicates everyday life; and for networks and regulations that recognize women not as exceptions or dependents, but as legitimate economic actors. These suggestions fall outside the framework of the systemic bureaucratic transformation envisioned by feminist theory; instead, they foreground practical adjustments within existing institutional arrangements that address the concrete problems women encounter. Such changes would not, on their own, dissolve the gendered nature of the state; they would, however, open up spaces in which women entrepreneurs could engage with bureaucracy without constantly paying the price in lost time, compromised dignity, and exhausted bodies.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Feminist scholarship has long challenged the assumption that bureaucracy is a neutral apparatus of rules. Rather, it shows that bureaucratic rationality, hierarchy, and "objective" procedure have historically been organized through masculinized norms of authority and competence, making legitimacy and credibility unevenly accessible across genders (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Martin, 2013). Building on the view of organizations as gendered processes, this study aims to demonstrate how gender inequality is reproduced not only through formal structures such as division of labor and decision-making hierarchies, but also through routine interactions and organizational "subtexts" that appear neutral while privileging masculine-coded ways of speaking, asserting, and being recognized (Acker, 1990; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Cockburn, 1991). In this sense, gender operates as a practical ordering principle in the daily workings of the bureaucracy, shaping who is treated as a legitimate actor, how guidance is distributed, and how institutional time, patience, and responsiveness are allocated.

Similarly, entrepreneurship is not a neutral field either. Dominant definitions of the "successful entrepreneur" are built around autonomy, risk-taking, assertiveness, and self-reliance, traits that have historically been coded as masculine. This framing quietly treats men as the default entrepreneurial subject and positions women as a visible "exception" who must demonstrate competence and legitimacy more actively in order to be taken seriously (Ahl, 2006; Calás & Smircich, 1991; Marlow & Swail, 2014). This matters because entrepreneurship is rarely separate from the bureaucracy in practice. Entrepreneurs must repeatedly enter bureaucratic arenas through permits, inspections, licensing, taxation, and public support schemes, and these encounters often involve discretion and informal problem-solving rather than purely rule-bound

processing. Such informal channels tend to be embedded in male-dominated networks, which can shape who gains faster access, clearer guidance, or easier resolution of obstacles (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001). In Türkiye, where formal procedures frequently operate alongside relational and discretionary bureaucratic practices, women's exclusion from these networks can mean slower progress, higher uncertainty, and greater exposure to arbitrary treatment during bureaucratic encounters (Heper & Keyman, 1998; Özbebek Tunç & Alkan, 2019). Against this theoretical and contextual backdrop, these dynamics make the bureaucratic interface a decisive arena where women entrepreneurs' legitimacy is tested and negotiated.

This study examines women entrepreneurs operating in different sectors in Ankara and approaches their encounters with bureaucracy not merely as a technical chain of procedures, but as a field of power operating within a gendered power setting and continuously reproduced through everyday interactions. The main aim of the study is to show how women entrepreneurs navigate and negotiate bureaucracy across two stages, namely establishment and running, how this negotiation is shaped by institutional cultures and norms of masculinity, and what practical strategies women develop in order to remain visible, credible, and functional within this structure. The core conclusion is as follows: bureaucracy implements rules and procedures that appear neutral on paper through everyday routines that distribute interactional resources unequally, such as recognition, being taken seriously, speed, patience, and guidance. For this reason, women entrepreneurs confront not only formal requirements but also an implicit legitimacy test woven into masculine codes, and they experience more frequent and different problems than men and male entrepreneurs, as service recipients, because women's authority is less "assumed" during bureaucratic encounters.

This study answers the research questions by developing an argument grounded in the empirical findings and by making the causal link between bureaucratic encounters and entrepreneurial outcomes visible. The qualitative data from the field study show that when recognition and being taken seriously are distributed unequally during bureaucratic encounters, women entrepreneurs must invest additional effort of

proof and verification in order to be recognized as “competent economic actors.” This added effort generates time loss, delays, stress, and uncertainty, thereby producing an interactional layer of costs that compounds the standard transaction costs embedded in bureaucratic procedures. In this sense, bureaucratic encounters generate not only procedural transaction costs common to all entrepreneurs, but also a double transaction cost for women, arising from the need to repeatedly establish credibility and legitimacy in gendered interactional settings.

As uncertainty and cumulative costs increase, many women entrepreneurs come to rely more heavily on male intermediaries and informal networks to navigate bureaucratic processes. While these arrangements may reduce administrative burden and transaction costs in the short term, they also reinforce the perception that recognition and institutional access “flow more smoothly” through male-coded channels, thereby contributing to the institutional reproduction of gender inequality. The findings further indicate that when gender intersects with other marginalized positions, such as non-heterosexual identity, these dynamics can intensify. In such cases, women entrepreneurs may face a triple transaction cost, in which procedural costs are compounded not only by gendered interactional demands but also by sexuality-based norms, assumptions, and heightened scrutiny within bureaucratic encounters.

In this way, bureaucratic encounters cease to appear as isolated or incidental “difficulties” and instead function as an accumulative mechanism that shapes concrete economic outcomes over time. These outcomes include the pace and costs of establishment, patterns of compliance and inspection exposure during the running stage, access to finance and institutional support, decisions about remaining small or pursuing growth, and in some cases withdrawal from entrepreneurship altogether. The central aim of the study is to explain this accumulative functioning, namely how gendered and intersecting dynamics within everyday bureaucratic encounters translate into layered/multiple transaction costs and, ultimately, into material consequences for women’s entrepreneurial trajectories.

The study consists of six main chapters that gradually lead to this argument. The chapters are connected around a shared analytical purpose and move from a

conceptual foundation to gendered critiques, then to historical and institutional context, and finally to a detailed field analysis of everyday encounters. Read together, they show that routine bureaucratic steps are not merely administrative transactions. These are moments in which women entrepreneurs' legitimacy as business owners and as service recipients is either recognized without resistance, questioned through small doubts, slowed down through silence and misdirection, or made conditional on additional evidence. Women respond by developing a practical navigation strategy that reduces uncertainty, secures recognition, and keeps the business standing, even when formal rules remain the same. Taken as a whole, this strengthens the study's main claim: outcomes are shaped not only by what rules say on paper, but by how they are enacted in bureaucratic encounters, how quickly information and decisions are delivered, and whether the woman is treated from the outset as the legitimate representative and decision maker or as someone whose authority must first be proven.

The Chapter 1, Introduction, sets the direction of the study by explaining why the relationship between entrepreneurship and bureaucracy constitutes a critical field of tension for women and how focusing on women entrepreneurs in Ankara makes it possible to observe bureaucratic power closely. It establishes the framework around how women entrepreneurs experience bureaucracy, how these experiences vary by social positioning, and how women form coping and navigation strategies. Within this framework, bureaucracy becomes not only a regulatory apparatus but also a frontline bureaucratic interface where women's recognition as economic subjects and as service recipients is granted, delayed, or made conditional. In light of this, the study is guided by the following overarching research questions: How do women entrepreneurs in Ankara experience and navigate bureaucratic processes during the establishment and running stages, and how are these encounters shaped by gender norms and power relations? The chapter also emphasizes that the focus is not merely on which procedures exist, but on how these procedures operate in everyday bureaucratic encounters and how their operation influences women's entrepreneurial agency, legitimacy, and capacity to exercise empowerment.

Chapter 2 revisits Weberian bureaucracy and its claims of predictability, rule-based decision-making, and impersonality, while also showing how these "neutral" ideals

are transformed in everyday institutional practice through gendered organizational processes and interactional routines that shape whose authority is recognized and how decisions are enacted (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Martin, 2013). It foregrounds analytically the distinction between service providers and service recipients and demonstrates, through feminist critiques, that bureaucracy operates as a gendered structure. This analytical perspective treats neutrality as an institutional discourse and shows how gendered outcomes can be produced through discretion, organizational culture, and implicit norms. Findings from the field study align with this claim. Women entrepreneurs repeatedly convey that interactions which seem small in isolation become, over time, a regular pattern of disadvantage: unanswered questions, unexplained referrals, unjustified waiting, and personalization through condescension, flirtation, or moral framings. Credibility is not presumed in advance; it is produced in the course of interaction, tested through repeated encounters, and can be secured only to the extent that women are recognized as "proper and competent economic actors." The chapter's contribution is to connect these recurring micro-level practices to broader analytical concepts, so that what appears as scattered "minor problems" can be read as a patterned and institutionalized form of inequality rather than as isolated personal incidents.

The Chapter 3 situates entrepreneurship conceptually and historically and examines how women's entrepreneurship is framed and debated in the literature. It argues that entrepreneurship is often narrated through an individualized success discourse that renders invisible the structural inequalities shaping women's entrepreneurial journeys, such as care burdens, sectoral segregation, safety concerns, access to networks, and access to finance (Ahl, 2006; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Marlow & Swail, 2014; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001). At the same time, it notes that the gendered dimension of entrepreneurship has most commonly been addressed in the literature through questions such as why women become entrepreneurs, which economic and social motivations drive them into entrepreneurship, what barriers constrain their performance, and what kinds of policies or support mechanisms are needed to increase women's participation and strengthen business growth (Ufuk & Özgen, 2001; Ahl, 2006; Hart et al., 2011). The fieldwork reinforces this analytical shift by showing that these structural dimensions

are not merely background conditions but lived constraints that become visible in women's everyday struggles to sustain entrepreneurial continuity. Women's motivations often combine economic necessity, a search for autonomy, an escape from hierarchical workplaces, and the desire to build a business aligned with values and identity. Under these conditions, bureaucratic encounters do not remain an external paperwork burden. They become an institutional condition that sustains or weakens the autonomy women seek, because access, timing, and recognition shape whether women can practically enter entrepreneurship and remain in it as legitimate and continuous economic actors.

The Chapter 4 addresses historical transformation of bureaucracy and entrepreneurship in Türkiye through a gendered perspective and establishes the broader context in which experiences in Ankara are situated. Tracing a line from Ottoman legacies through Republican state-building and the post-1980 neoliberal restructuring, the study aims to show that bureaucratic practices and the expansion of entrepreneurship have evolved together, producing sectoral hierarchies and a hybrid institutional order in which formal regulation is routinely mediated by informality and dependence on relational networks (Findley, 2014; Zürcher, 2004; Berkes, 1998; Ahmad, 1993; Öniş & Şenses, 2022; Heper & Keyman, 1998; Özbebek Tunç & Alkan, 2019; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001). Within this political-economic landscape, women's entrepreneurship has been framed as a key and often dominant policy instrument for increasing women's employment and social inclusion, particularly via entrepreneurship training, incentive schemes, and microcredit or SME support programs (Şahin, 1997; Özar, 2004; Ecevit, 2007; Toksöz, 2012; Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016). However, these measures are often insufficient in practice because women's effective access to rights, services, and supports is filtered through everyday bureaucratic encounters where discretion, informal gatekeeping, and masculine-coded expectations of authority continue to shape both the outcome and the bureaucratic treatment women receive, including the level of guidance offered, the willingness to facilitate, and the timeliness of processing. This matters for the empirical findings because women's narratives repeatedly reveal that outcomes are shaped not only by formal compliance but also by access to a knowledgeable intermediary, the ability to read institutional signals, and the capacity to mobilize

informal ties. In this setting, predictability is secured less through rules themselves than through one's position within relationship-based channels, which disproportionately raises the time, uncertainty, and transactional burden for women whose legitimacy is less readily presumed.

The Chapter 5 explains the research design. Semi structured interviews conducted with 16 women entrepreneurs in Ankara provide the empirical basis for capturing affective, relational, and symbolic dimensions that remain outside institutional language. The analysis combines thematic coding with an intersectional lens to trace how positions such as age, education, class, marital status, motherhood, sector, and sexual orientation can increase or reduce bureaucratic vulnerability. Ethical approval No. 0373-ODTÜİAEK-2025 was granted by the Middle East Technical University Human Research Ethics Committee on 20 August 2025. The researcher's partially insider position within bureaucratic environments increases access and interpretive sensitivity, while reflexive notes and follow up questions are used to preserve analytical distance. This methodological choice is directly linked to the argument of the study because it enables the study to capture how bureaucracy is experienced at the moment of contact and what consequences are produced through that experience.

The Chapter 6 provides the empirical core and examines women entrepreneurs' encounters with bureaucracy mainly in two stages: establishment and running of their businesses. In the establishment stage, the most visible mechanism is that procedural difficulty, combined with interactional inequality, produces a gendered complexity. The same formal steps translate into different costs depending on whether women receive clear guidance, whether they are taken seriously in the first encounter, and whether they are recognized as the principal decision maker and owner of the business or treated as a secondary figure accompanying an assumed male authority. Women point to fragmented information, incomplete guidance, and how face to face contact often becomes a recognition test in which seriousness is assessed through tone of voice, confidence, and embodied presentation. In these moments, bureaucratic encounters take on the character of a performative scene: decisions about how to dress, whether to avoid perfume, how firmly or "masculinely" to speak, and how much emotion to suppress become part of an

implicit script that women must follow. Bureaucracy thus operates not only as an administrative system but also as a theatrical scene, in which women are compelled to perform a carefully managed version of legitimacy, often by masking aspects of themselves precisely because they are women. Here the study's argument that constructs bureaucracy as a regime of recognition becomes concrete. Women do not only complete procedures. They also perform legitimacy, and this additional proof and verification effort turns into a causal line that produces time loss, stress, and dependence.

The field study points to a consistent pattern when the interviews are read in a structured sequence, they converge on seven core findings that cluster around two stages, establishment first and then running. In the establishment stage, unequal recognition makes identical procedures take longer and require extra explanation, insistence, and repetition, which forces women to invest additional proof and verification effort. This is compounded by an information environment that is often fragmented and unclear; because guidance is not distributed evenly, women reduce uncertainty by turning to male intermediaries and informal networks. Accountants, in particular, help women move through administrative ambiguity, yet this reliance can also reproduce a gendered division of bureaucratic competence. The establishment stage is further shaped by finance and creditworthiness criteria that more easily exclude women with care related interruptions and lower collateral capacity, concentrating fragile entrepreneurship in narrower circles. Finally, support programs and training requirements may exist "on paper," but become practically out of reach because of procedural costs and institutional time structures, shaping growth decisions and encouraging strategies of staying small. In the running stage, inspections and routine controls reveal the gendered operation of discretion, where speed and predictability become tied to relational dynamics more than written rules. Digitalization can reduce exposure to gendered face to face interaction, but when systems fail without an accessible human counterpart, it relocates uncertainty and shifts problem solving costs onto those with less time and fewer resources. Together, these findings show a causal chain, which is gendered dynamics within everyday bureaucratic encounters translate into concrete outcomes over time, including the

pace and costs of establishment, compliance exposure, access to finance and support, growth decisions, and business continuity.

The first establishment stage finding is that when recognition and being taken seriously are distributed unequally, the same procedure does not operate as the same procedure. Women describe having to repeat themselves, justify their presence, and insist on being addressed as the responsible owner and decision maker. What is nominally a standardized requirement becoming a longer and more exhausting process that demands additional proof and verification effort. This produces time loss and delays at the very moment when speed is crucial for opening and formalizing a business, and it also creates stress and the expectation that "being prepared" means carrying extra documents, extra explanations, and extra patience.

The second establishment stage finding concerns the information environment. Women repeatedly describe guidance as partial, inconsistent, or simply absent, so that rules become navigable not through clarity but through piecing together scattered signals. The practical problem is not only the content of the rules, but the uneven distribution of explanations and interpretive help in the encounter. In response, women reduce uncertainty by relying on informal networks, acquaintances, and often male coded intermediaries who are perceived as more readily listened to. The result is that "access to information" becomes itself an unequal resource, shaping how quickly women can establish their businesses and how much risk they absorb in the process.

The third establishment stage finding is the central role of accountants as intermediaries. Across cases, reliance on an accountant, often a male accountant, is described as a way to translate bureaucratic language, anticipate risks, and prevent costly mistakes. This reliance can lower the administrative burden in the short term and make the process more predictable. Yet the same mechanism can deepen dependence by concentrating institutional knowledge outside the entrepreneur, reinforcing the idea that bureaucratic competence is carried by others and often by male coded figures.

The fourth establishment stage finding concerns finance and creditworthiness. Women's narratives show that starting a business often depends on personal savings,

limited family contributions, severance pay, gold, selling a car, or small scale borrowing rather than formal investment or strong family wealth. This is important because credit systems and support mechanisms frequently rely on collateral, uninterrupted formal work histories, and traceable records. Women with care related interruptions or informal work histories are more easily excluded from credit and finance, even when they have viable business ideas and strong motivation. As a result, early-stage fragility becomes concentrated in narrower circles, and the cost of failure becomes more unequal because a few months of disruption, a penalty, or a delayed payment can be existential rather than manageable.

The fifth establishment stage finding is that support programs operate as a bureaucratic filter rather than a straightforward opportunity. Participants often describe supports as present "on paper" but practically unattractive or unreachable because low benefit levels combine with high procedural costs, sectoral exclusions appear through activity codes, training hours conflict with care responsibilities, and selection criteria are experienced as unclear. The decision not to apply, in this sense, is not a lack of ambition but a rational assessment of a burden benefit imbalance. This is also where class and sector priorities become visible. In this study, only one participant obtained KOSGEB support, and her trajectory highlights what it often takes to pass through such programs: high education, procedural confidence, time availability, and the capacity to complete training and documentation demands. Support is therefore not simply a matter of need; it tends to align with an applicant's ability to mobilize time, knowledge, and networks, and with operating in areas that fit policy priorities. This contrast reinforces the risk that programs designed as "gender neutral" disproportionately benefit women who already have resources, while more precarious women remain reliant on family, savings, and small-scale borrowing.

Time is another establishment stage mechanism, not as a background condition but as a structural constraint. Bureaucratic systems often require repeated face to face visits during office hours and normalize long waiting. For women with care responsibilities, the institutional time structure becomes a condition of access, complying depends on reorganizing care, postponing paid work, or absorbing stress

and exhaustion. This creates a causal link between unequal care labor and bureaucratic disadvantage. The mismatch is not an individual failure of planning; it is the outcome of an institutional bureaucratic design built around an implicit woman model that does not carry asymmetric care responsibilities, and it silently filters who can in practice benefit from formal rights and programs.

In the running stage, the first core finding is how inspections and routine controls make discretion visible. Although inspection regimes differ by sector, women's accounts show a consistent gendered logic in how discretion is felt: tolerance, warnings, and sanction intensity are shaped by whether the entrepreneur is perceived as competent and authoritative. Women describe encounters in which authority is personalized through condescension, flirtation, or moralized talk, and professionalism is read through age, clothing, and embodied presence. In these moments, speed and predictability are determined less by written rules than by relational dynamics. Even when there is no explicit discrimination, the cumulative effect of small interactional inequalities becomes a concrete burden through silence, misdirection, slowing down, being pushed into patience, and having to repeatedly demonstrate seriousness.

The second finding concerns digitalization in the running stage. Digital steps can reduce exposure to gendered face to face interaction and can, in some cases, standardize processes. Yet when digital systems malfunction, when information conflicts across platforms, or when requirements shift without explanation, women suggest that the crucial issue becomes the absence of an accessible human counterpart. Digitalization does not eliminate uncertainty; it relocates it. The costs of resolving contradictions and errors are then redistributed onto those with less time, lower procedural confidence, and fewer resources for interpreting institutional language. In this sense, digitalization can reduce one form of exposure while producing a new inequality in who can absorb the work of troubleshooting and follow up.

The Table 5 below provides a summary of these findings and relevant coping strategies.

Table 5. Gendered Bureaucratic Encounters across Stages and Coping Strategies of Women Entrepreneurs

Stage	Core Finding	Mechanism of Inequality	Outcomes	Coping Strategies
Establishment	Unequal recognition in first encounters	Being taken seriously is unevenly distributed; women must repeat, justify, and insist	Delays; increased verification effort; stress	Over-preparation; carrying extra documents; assertive communication; adjusting body, voice, and demeanor
Establishment	Fragmented information environment	Guidance is partial, inconsistent, or absent; uneven distribution of explanations	Uncertainty; slower establishment; higher risk exposure	Mobilization of informal networks (family, neighbors, peers); reliance on male intermediaries
Establishment	Male accountants as intermediaries	Bureaucratic knowledge concentrated outside entrepreneur; male-coded authority	Dependency; distance from institutional knowledge; reduced autonomy	Reliance on male accountants or male intermediaries; delegation of bureaucratic tasks
Establishment	Gendered exclusion from finance	Credit and support systems favor uninterrupted formal work histories and collateral	Fragile capital; higher cost of failure; limited investment options	Self-financing; family or small-scale borrowing; careful cash flow planning
Establishment	Support programs as filters	Small benefit, heavy burden; unclear criteria; sectoral exclusions	Non-application; restricted growth; missed opportunities	Deliberate self-limitation: selective application, staying small, prioritizing manageable opportunities
Establishment	Institutional time structures	Office-hour dependence; care responsibilities create additional constraints	Exhaustion; delays; missed deadlines	Care reorganization; time management; postponing paid work; scheduling strategically
Running	Gendered discretion in inspections	Authority is not automatically assumed; interactions shaped by age, clothing, demeanor; paternalistic tone or moralizing	Unpredictability; stress; relational burden	Adjusting body, voice, demeanor; emotional labor; politeness; projecting competence

Table 5. (continued)

Running	Digitalization and relocated uncertainty	Malfunctioning systems; conflicting or changing information; lack of accessible human counterpart	Time burden; stress; errors; Greater administrative burden on those with limited procedural knowledge and few contacts	Reliance on intermediaries; repeated follow-up; mobilization of informal networks; monitoring digital platforms closely

Taken together, the revised ordering makes the causality clearer across stages. Establishment stage inequalities around recognition, information, intermediaries, finance, support, and institutional time structures shape the pace, costs, and fragility of formalization. Running stage inequalities around discretion in inspections and the uneven burdens of digital problem-solving shape compliance exposure, predictability, and stress over time. In combination, everyday bureaucratic encounters become an accumulative mechanism that risks business continuity and entrepreneurial trajectories in concrete, material ways.

Coping strategies are approached as rational adaptations to institutional, administrative and procedural conditions. Reliance on male intermediaries, mobilizing informal networks, deliberately staying small, and embodied compliance emerge as a consistent strategy. Women describe using male accountants or knowledgeable figures for smoother recognition, activating family, neighbors, and entrepreneurial peers to overcome administrative ambiguity, staying small or avoiding support schemes to reduce exposure, and adjusting voice, tone, clothing, and posture to meet bureaucratic expectations. These strategies make everyday survival possible, yet they also generate a structural side effect: they can strengthen the legitimacy conferring role of male figures and deepen dependence, reproducing the regime of recognition women are negotiating.

In both phases, it should also be underlined that those experiences are shaped not only by gender but also by age, motherhood, marital status, education, class position, sector, and sexual orientation, and these function not as fixed variables but as changing dimensions. For example, younger women may navigate digital systems more easily yet be taken less seriously and be treated as non-decision makers. Single

and childless women may tolerate waiting and repeated visits more easily, yet they confront respectability tests and assumptions of a male guarantor. Divorced women with children may face the most intense time mismatch and may be effectively excluded by program requirements such as mandatory courses. Education and class shape the ability to read regulations, contest decisions, and absorb penalties and delays; for some, small fines are manageable problems, while for others they are existential threats. Sector matters as well: in feminized sectors businesses may be coded as "harmless" yet treated condescendingly; in male dominated sectors technical competence may be questioned more. Sexual orientation and conformity to dominant femininity norms can also differentiate experiences, and non-normative visibility can increase moral surveillance and inspection risk. Family culture and intergenerational risk attitudes cut across all these dimensions and shape how women justify entrepreneurial decisions and what forms of support they can access.

These findings consolidate the study's main analytical claim. For women entrepreneurs in Ankara, bureaucracy functions not only as a regulatory apparatus but also as a recognition order that determines who is treated as a legitimate economic actor in everyday bureaucratic interactions. When being taken seriously is granted unevenly, women have to invest ongoing effort to demonstrate competence and secure legitimacy, and this sets in motion a causal chain: interactions take longer, guidance becomes harder to obtain, uncertainty increases, and women are pushed toward male intermediaries and informal networks to keep processes moving. This ongoing effort can involve tolerating delays as "normal," shifting to a more guarded or firm communication style, adjusting body language and voice to expected codes of authority, or strategically bringing a male figure into the interaction to be heard faster.

Importantly, gendered bureaucracy rarely presents itself as explicit exclusion. It is more often produced through the accumulation of small, routine practices that look minor in isolation but become consequential over time, such as unreturned questions, vague directions, unexplained referrals, slowdowns without justification, condescending talk or moralizing undertones, flirtation that undermines professionalism, and the recurrent assumption that a woman is not the primary

decision maker. Under these circumstances, the formal promises of a rational and predictable bureaucratic procedure are weakened in practice. What shapes speed, clarity, and outcomes are not only what the rules say, but also how street-level interactions interpret those rules, how discretion is exercised, and whether the entrepreneur's authority is presumed or repeatedly put to the test.

These observations have direct implications for how women's entrepreneurship is theorized and evaluated. While development- and policy-oriented scholarship often frames women's entrepreneurship as an empowering route to autonomy and economic agency (Green & Cohen, 1995; Demirez, 2016; OECD, 2004; Minniti & Naudé, 2010), these framings frequently under-specify the institutional conditions under which entrepreneurship is enacted and sustained, particularly its routine dependence on bureaucratic interfaces. This omission matters because when bureaucracy is treated as a neutral backdrop or reduced to a technical sequence of procedures, the difficulties women describe are easily interpreted as individual problems to be managed through resilience, skills, or "better" networking. The findings instead indicate that these difficulties are patterned features of everyday bureaucratic practice: they organize the unequal distribution of time, information, guidance, and recognition, and they repeatedly subject women's entrepreneurial authority to scrutiny rather than treating it as presumed.

This study highlights implications for the literature on women's entrepreneurship by insisting that entrepreneurship must be analyzed not only in economic, motivational, or sectoral terms, but also through the institutional practices that structure entrepreneurs' everyday bureaucratic encounters. The difficulties women face cannot be reduced to a lack of capital or a deficit of self-confidence. They are produced through organizational and procedural arrangements, including fragmented and inconsistent information provision, institutional time designs that normalize repeat visits and waiting, inspection and enforcement styles that rely on discretionary judgment, the presence or absence of a reachable and accountable human counterpart when digital systems fail, and the uneven exercise of discretionary power across entrepreneurs. In this sense, policy narratives that promote women's entrepreneurship as a route to inclusion and employment through training, incentives,

and microcredit or SME support schemes (Sallan Gül & Altındal, 2016) often overstate what such measures can achieve on their own, because access is filtered through everyday bureaucratic practice where informality and discretionary gatekeeping remain decisive. The fact that many participants establish businesses with limited resources, rather than drawing on strong family wealth or established entrepreneurial legacies, reinforces an additional conclusion: women's entrepreneurship is often a demanding mode of economic agency sustained under unequal care responsibilities and unequal conditions of bureaucratic recognition. In this context, bureaucratic design is not a neutral backdrop. It can widen or narrow women's room for maneuver, shaping whether entrepreneurship becomes sustainable autonomy or a fragile activity continuously exposed to delay, uncertainty, and attrition.

Taken together, these implications also clarify why women's accounts repeatedly translate into practical calls for institutional change rather than simply more individual "capacity-building." Interviewed women entrepreneurs' recommendations highlight several aspects to be considered. Women's suggestions indicate what change could look like at the level of everyday institutional encounters. They ask for clear, proactive, sector-specific guidance instead of fragmented and hard-to-interpret information, and they stress that digital services must be backed by reachable, real human support when problems arise. They also shift attention away from placing the burden of adaptation on women entrepreneurs and toward improving institutions themselves, calling for better trained and more consistent bureaucrats, clearer service standards, and oversight mechanisms that can review conduct, respond to complaints, and ensure follow-up in practice. In addition, they argue that financial support should be meaningful and realistically accessible, with criteria sensitive to sectoral investment needs and life-course positions, including more flexible rules that do not exclude women through rigid age limits, firm-size requirements, or narrowly defined eligibility rules. They underline that entrepreneurship cannot be separated from care responsibilities, safety, and time constraints, since bureaucratic institutional schedules, mandatory trainings, and repeated in-person visits often function as barriers. Finally, they highlight the need to enable peer networks and mentoring infrastructures so that guidance and recognition do not depend on personal

connections. Such steps may not be sufficient on their own to dismantle entrenched gendered hierarchies, but they specify where bureaucratic practice can be made more transparent, accountable, and equitable in everyday terms. However, they can substantially reduce the everyday costs through which inequality is reproduced, especially by making information transparent and consistent, ensuring reachable and competent human support, and reshaping institutional time arrangements to better fit care responsibilities, all of which represent the most direct leverage points for disrupting the causal cycle identified in this study.

This convergence across participants, already visible in their shared recommendations, is also evident in the patterned structure of the interview data. The relatively early achievement of thematic saturation should not be read as a limitation of the sample, but as an empirical finding in its own right. The repetition observed across interviews reflects the extent to which bureaucratic obstacles, credibility tests, and interactional burdens constitute a widely shared experiential pattern among women entrepreneurs in Ankara. Despite differences in age, marital status, sector, educational background, and economic conditions, participants repeatedly described strikingly similar mechanisms through which bureaucratic encounters shaped their entrepreneurial agency, legitimacy, timing, and capacity to sustain business continuity. The convergence of narratives across diverse social positions indicates that these experiences are not isolated or sector-specific, but rather point to a contextually pervasive pattern embedded in the institutional and bureaucratic environment of Ankara. It is precisely this patterned recurrence across heterogeneous cases that explains why thematic saturation was reached within a relatively limited number of interviews.

At the same time, and despite the strength of these recurring patterns, the study has clear limitations stemming from its design. Since the research is qualitative and based on non-probability sampling, the findings cannot be generalized to all women entrepreneurs in Türkiye. The aim is to develop insights grounded in women's lived experiences that are deep, conceptually clear, and sensitive to context. The research is limited to Ankara and is situated in the period of September and October 2025; therefore, the results reflect a particular administrative and socio-economic context.

The analysis is based not on institutional records but on narrated experiences, and narratives may be affected by dynamics of memory and what participants are able to share. The study centers women's perspectives and does not include systematic interviews with male entrepreneurs or street-level bureaucrats; therefore, it does not offer a directly gender-comparative audit. In addition, bureaucracies function differently across countries and administrative traditions, and the relationship between entrepreneurship and bureaucracy-facing procedures may be mediated through distinct legal cultures, degrees of discretion, and informal practices in different countries. These dynamics are also likely to vary with the broader gender regime of a society including how patriarchal norms are institutionalized, how cultural expectations position women in public and economic life, and how women's authority is recognized or contested in everyday interaction. For this reason, just as the study cannot provide a comprehensive framework for Türkiye as a whole, it also cannot support general claims at a global level. The analysis is deliberately grounded in the Turkish context and does not incorporate comparative country cases; future research could usefully extend this line of inquiry by examining women entrepreneurs' bureaucratic encounters across different national contexts and bureaucratic traditions. Such comparative work would be especially valuable for clarifying which mechanisms are context-specific and which travel across settings, and it constitutes a promising research agenda for the emerging intersection of bureaucracy and women's entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, this study shows that women entrepreneurs' relationship with bureaucracy is not merely about learning rules and filling out forms. It is an arena in which women's recognition, legitimacy, and continuity as economic actors are continually negotiated through everyday bureaucratic encounters. Women negotiate not only with documents and deadlines, but also with time constraints, embodied performances of credibility, voice and tone, networks of support, and masculinity expectations embedded in bureaucratic culture. This negotiation can sometimes open pathways and make progress possible; yet it can also generate cumulative strain, deepen reliance on intermediaries, and push women toward delibarete self-limitation, dynamics that may gradually undermine business sustainability and, in some cases, lead women to step away from entrepreneurship. For this reason, strengthening

women’s entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to economic empowerment alone. It also requires transforming how bureaucratic encounters are organized and enacted; how information is provided; how institutional time is structured, and how discretion is exercised, especially at street level. As long as bureaucratic practice remains structured by gendered expectations of authority and credibility, women’s entrepreneurial trajectories will continue to be shaped by an unrecognized burden of additional effort, time, and cost. By foregrounding women’s narratives, this study makes visible the routine bureaucratic encounters through which this burden is produced, and it identifies leverage points through which bureaucratic practice can be reconfigured so that women’s entrepreneurial continuity is not predicated on continual self-legitimation, sustained endurance, and compensatory informal arrangements. Instead, women’s entrepreneurial continuity should be supported through transparent and accessible information, predictable timelines, consistent and accountable discretion, and institutional practices that recognize women as legitimate economic actors without requiring continual proof of credibility.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu 20.08.2025
Gönderen : ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu
İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Başvurunuz

Sayın Doç. Dr. Asuman Göksel,
Sayın Hande İrem Sadi,

"Bürokrasiyle Karşılaşmalar: Türkiye'deki Kadın Girişimciler Üzerine Bir İnceleme" başlıklı araştırmanız ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0373-ODTÜİAEK-2025 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Doç. Dr. Aslı KILIÇ ÖZHAN
Üye

Doç. Dr. Çağrı TOPAL
Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar AYKAÇ LEIDHOLM
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First Name(s) / Surname(s): Hande İrem SADİ

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

2019-2026	Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye
PhD Degree	Political Science and Public Administration
Thesis Title:	Encounters with Bureaucracy: The Case of Women Entrepreneurs in Ankara
Thesis Advisor:	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asuman Göksel

2016-2019	Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye
Master's Degree	Political Science and Public Administration
Thesis Title:	The Politics of Women's Rights Reforms during the Early Republican Era: State Feminism versus Pioneer Women
Thesis Advisor:	Prof. Dr. Erden Attila Aytekin

2009-2015	Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye
Bachelor's Degree	Political Science and Public Administration

2005-2009	Ankara Anatolian High School, Ankara, Türkiye

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

2024-continues Coordinator, General Directorate of Health Information Systems Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, Ankara, Türkiye

2023-2024 EU Consultant, General Directorate of Health Information Systems Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, Ankara, Türkiye

2022-2023 Project Assistant, General Directorate of Health Information Systems Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye

2017-2017 Assistant Business Development Specialist

Akademi Sancak Savunma, Danışmanlık ve Eğitim Şirketi, Ankara, Türkiye

2015 Internship, Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye

2013 Internship, Turkish Grand National Assembly

LANGUAGES & OTHER COMPETENCES

Mother Tongue	Turkish
Other Languages	English (Advanced-C2 Proficient User)
	French (Advanced-C1 Proficient User)
Other Competences	Competent with all Microsoft operating systems and office Program

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Son yıllarda kadın girişimciliği hem ulusal hem de uluslararası düzeyde ekonomik kalkınma, istihdam artışı ve kadınların güçlenmesi söylemleri içinde bir politika hedefi hâline gelmiştir. Kadınların girişimcilik yoluyla ekonomik hayata katılımı, çoğu zaman özerklik, bağımsızlık ve güçlenme ile ilişkilendirilmektedir. Ancak bu iyimser çerçeve, girişimcilik faaliyetinin gündelik pratiklerde nasıl kurulduğunu ve sürdürüldüğünü çoğu zaman görünmez kılmaktadır. Girişimcilik, piyasa içinde izole bir faaliyet değil; kamu kurumlarıyla, düzenleyici mekanizmalarla ve bürokratik süreçlerle sürekli temas hâlinde gerçekleşen bir pratikler bütünüdür. Dolayısıyla girişimcilik deneyimi, girişimcilerin devletle doğrudan temas ettiği ve girişimcilik faaliyetinin fiilen mümkün hâle geldiği bürokratik alanlar üzerinden şekillenen, yalnızca ekonomik değil aynı zamanda kurumsal bir deneyimdir.

Bu çalışma, Ankara'da farklı sektörlerde faaliyet gösteren kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle kurdukları ilişkileri, bürokrasiyi teknik, tarafsız ve cinsiyetsiz bir idari mekanizma olarak ele alan hâkim yaklaşımların ötesine geçerek incelemektedir. Çalışmanın temel çıkış noktası, bürokrasinin yalnızca belgeler, prosedürler ve yazılı kurallardan oluşan nötr bir düzen olmadığı; aksine gündelik etkileşimler, kurumsal kültür, takdir yetkisi ve örtük normlar aracılığıyla toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini yeniden üreten bir örgütsel alan olduğudur. Bu bağlamda tez, kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle karşılaşmalarını münferit sorunlar, bireysel yetersizlikler ya da uyum eksikliği olarak değil, yapısal ve tekrar eden örüntüler olarak ele almakta ve bu örüntülerin kadınların girişimcilik deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışma yedi ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde çalışmanın amacı, bağlamı, kapsamı ve araştırma soruları ortaya konulmaktadır. İkinci bölümde bürokrasi kavramı Weberyen ideal tipten hareketle ele alınmakta ve feminist örgüt kuramı çerçevesinde eleştirel biçimde tartışılmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, girişimcilik

kavramını tanımsal ve tarihsel boyutlarıyla ele almakta; girişimciliğin farklı türlerini ve girişimci profillerini incelemektedir. Bölüm, girişimciliğin tarihsel evrimini özetledikten sonra kadın girişimciliğine odaklanmakta; kadın girişimci kavramının literatüre dâhil oluşunu ve kadınların girişimciliğe yönelimini şekillendiren temel dinamikleri ele almaktadır. Dördüncü bölüm Türkiye'de bürokrasi, devlet ve girişimcilik ilişkisini tarihsel ve kurumsal bir bağlam içinde ele almaktadır. Beşinci bölüm çalışmanın metodolojisini ve nitel saha araştırmasının tasarımını sunmaktadır. Altıncı bölüm, kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle karşılaşmalarını işletmenin kuruluş ve yürütme aşamaları üzerinden analiz etmekte; bu karşılaşmaların ürettiği belirsizlikler, maliyetler ve eşitsizlikler karşısında kadınların geliştirdikleri başa çıkma stratejilerini ve deneyimlerden türetilen politika önerilerini sunmaktadır. Yedinci ve son bölümde ise çalışmanın temel bulguları bütüncül biçimde tartışılmakta ve sonuçlar değerlendirilerek genel bir çerçeve sunulmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada birinci bölüm, çalışmanın problemini, bağlamını ve araştırma sorularını kurarak, kadın girişimciliği ile bürokrasi arasındaki ilişkinin neden analitik olarak kritik bir alan olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bölümün temel iddiası, girişimciliğin yalnızca piyasa koşulları, bireysel motivasyonlar ya da kişisel yetkinlikler üzerinden şekillenmediği; aksine kurumsal yapılara, bürokratik süreçlere ve bu süreçlerin gündelik işleyişine derinden gömülü olduğudur. Girişimcilik faaliyeti, soyut bir "serbest piyasa" alanında değil; vergi dairelerinde, belediyelerde, ruhsat ofislerinde, denetimlerde, izin süreçlerinde ve kamu görevlileriyle yüz yüze karşılaşmalar içinde gerçekleşmektedir. Bu nedenle tez, bürokrasiyi girişimcilik ekosisteminin tali bir unsuru olarak değil, girişimcilik pratiğinin kurucu bir bileşeni olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Birinci bölüm, özellikle kadın girişimciler açısından bu ilişkinin neden daha karmaşık ve sorunlu bir hâl aldığını tartışmaktadır. Bürokrasi çoğu zaman tarafsız, kurallara dayalı ve herkes için eşit işleyen bir sistem olarak tahayyül edilse de uygulamada bürokratik süreçlerin bu ideal tipe birebir karşılık gelmediği vurgulanmaktadır. Oysa bürokratik kurallar, soyut metinler olarak değil; kamu görevlilerinin yorumları, açıklamaları, yönlendirmeleri ve takdir yetkisi aracılığıyla uygulanmaktadır. Bu noktada bürokrasi, yalnızca "ne yapılması gerektiğini" belirleyen bir mekanizma değil, aynı zamanda "kimin nasıl muhatap alınacağını" tayin eden bir etkileşim alanı hâline gelmektedir.

Bölümde vurgulanan temel noktalardan biri, Weber'in bürokrasiyi cinsiyetli bir yapı olarak kavramsallaştırmamış olmasıdır. Ancak bu tez, Weberyen çerçeveyi reddetmeden, onu feminist bir perspektifle genişletmektedir. Bürokratik ilkeler tarihsel olarak erkek egemen toplumsal bağlamlarda kurumsallaşmış; rasyonellik, otorite, profesyonellik ve uzmanlık gibi kavramlar eril normlarla iç içe geçmiştir. Dolayısıyla yazılı kurallar cinsiyetsiz görünse bile, bu kuralların uygulanma biçimleri toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinden bağımsız değildir. Bu teorik çerçeve, girişimcilik alanına uygulandığında önemli bir boşluğu görünür kılmaktadır. Girişimcilik literatüründe kadın girişimciliği çoğunlukla motivasyonlar, performans farkları, finansmana erişim ve iş-aile dengesi gibi başlıklar altında incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmalar, kadın girişimcilerin karşılaştıkları engelleri büyük ölçüde bireysel, hane içi ve ekonomik koşullara bağlama eğilimindedir. Oysa girişimcilik ekosisteminin kurumsal bileşenleri, özellikle de bürokrasi, kadın girişimcilerin deneyimlerini şekillendiren merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır.

Bu çerçevede bölüm, girişimcilik ve bürokrasi arasındaki ilişkiyi özellikle tanınma ve meşruiyet kavramları üzerinden tartışmaktadır. Kadın girişimciler, işletme kurarken ve yürütürken yalnızca yasal gereklilikleri yerine getirmekle kalmamakta; aynı zamanda ekonomik özne olarak tanınmak ve yetkilerinin varsayılmasını sağlamak zorunda kalmaktadır. Bürokratik karşılaşmalar, bu tanınmanın otomatik olarak verilmediği, aksine etkileşim içinde müzakere edildiği ve çoğu zaman sınandığı alanlar olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Kadın girişimciler için sorun, yalnızca hangi belgelerin istendiği değil; bu belgelerin hangi tonla talep edildiği, hangi hızda işlendiği, hangi açıklamaların yapıldığı ve kimin muhatap alındığıdır.

Bu bağlamda bürokrasi, kadın girişimciler açısından teknik bir uyum sürecinden ziyade, bir "meşruiyet testi" olarak deneyimlenmektedir. Bu noktada birinci bölüm, bürokrasiyi kadın girişimciliği bağlamında merkezi bir analitik alan olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Bürokratik süreçlerin uzunluğu, belirsizliği, sık değişen mevzuat ve takdir yetkisine dayalı uygulamalar, girişimcilik faaliyetini genel olarak zorlaştırsa da kadın girişimciler açısından bu süreçler ek bir yük üretmektedir. Kadınların otoritesinin varsayılmaması, daha fazla açıklama yapmaya zorlanmaları, yönlendirmelerin parçalı ve tutarsız olması ve yüz yüze etkileşimlerde cinsiyetli

beklentilerle karşılaşmaları, bürokratik deneyimi farklılaştırmaktadır. Bu farklılaşma, girişimcilik faaliyetinin hızını, maliyetini ve sürdürülebilirliğini doğrudan etkilemektedir.

Birinci bölümün temel amacı, bu sorun alanını netleştirmek ve çalışmanın araştırma sorularını bu çerçevede formüle etmektir. Çalışma, kadın girişimcilerin Ankara'da kuruluş ve yürütme aşamalarında bürokratik süreçleri nasıl deneyimlediklerini, bu deneyimlerin toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve güç ilişkileriyle nasıl şekillendiğini ve bu karşılaşmaların pratik sonuçlarını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu kapsamda araştırma soruları, kadın girişimcilerin hangi bürokratik süreçlerle karşılaştıkları, bu süreçlerde nasıl muhatap alındıkları, hangi durumlarda ciddiye alındıkları ya da sorgulandıkları, bu karşılaşmaların zaman, maliyet ve belirsizlik açısından ne tür sonuçlar doğurduğu ve kadınların bu koşullar altında nasıl başa çıkma stratejileri geliştirdikleri etrafında şekillenmektedir. Birinci bölüm, aynı zamanda çalışmanın kapsamını ve sınırlılıklarını da netleştirmektedir. Araştırma, Ankara ile sınırlı bir saha çalışmasına dayanmaktadır ve kadın girişimcilerin deneyimlerini nitel bir perspektifle ele almaktadır. Amaç, tüm kadın girişimciler adına genellenebilir sonuçlar üretmekten ziyade, bürokratik karşılaşmaların nasıl işlediğini derinlemesine anlamak ve bu karşılaşmaların yapısal boyutlarını görünür kılmaktır. Bu bağlamda birinci bölüm, tezin geri kalanında geliştirilecek olan kuramsal, tarihsel ve ampirik tartışmalar için sağlam bir zemin oluşturmaktadır. Bürokrasi, bu zeminde yalnızca düzenleyici bir çerçeve olarak değil; kadın girişimcilerin ekonomik öznelliklerinin tanındığı, sınandığı ve çoğu zaman koşullara bağlandığı merkezi bir güç alanı olarak konumlandırılmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümü, çalışmanın kavramsal ve kuramsal temelini oluşturarak bürokrasinin nasıl anlaşılması gerektiğini ve bu çalışmada neden feminist bir bürokrasi yaklaşımının benimsendiğini ayrıntılı biçimde ortaya koymaktadır. Bölüm, Weberyen bürokrasi anlayışını başlangıç noktası olarak ele almakta, ancak bu anlayışın sınırlarını görünür kılarak feminist eleştiriler aracılığıyla genişletmektedir. Amaç, bürokrasiyi yalnızca hukuki ve örgütsel bir yapı olarak değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileriyle şekillenen ve bu ilişkileri yeniden üreten bir süreç olarak kavramsallaştırmaktır.

Bölümün ilk kısmında Weber'in klasik bürokrasi tanımı ayrıntılı biçimde ele alınmaktadır. Weber'e göre bürokrasi, modern devletin ve kapitalist ekonominin vazgeçilmez bir örgütlenme biçimidir. Yazılı kurallara dayalılık, görevlerin açık biçimde tanımlanması, hiyerarşik yapı, uzmanlaşma, liyakat ilkesi ve kişisel ilişkilerden arındırılmış karar alma, Weberyen bürokrasinin temel özellikleri arasında yer almaktadır. Bu model, keyfiliğin azaltılmasını, öngörülebilirliğin artırılmasını ve idari kararların rasyonel temellere dayanmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bürokrasi bu anlamda, kişisel iradelerden bağımsız, herkes için eşit işleyen bir düzen olarak sunulmaktadır.

Ancak çalışmanın ilerleyen kısımlarında, Weberyen modelin normatif bir ideal tip olduğunu ve gündelik pratikte bürokrasinin bu ideal tipten sistematik biçimde saptığını vurgulamaktadır. Weber'in analizinin sınırlılığı, bürokrasinin toplumsal bağlamdan ve iktidar ilişkilerinden görece yalıtılmış bir yapı olarak ele alınmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Weberyen çerçeve, bürokrasinin nasıl işlemesi gerektiğini tarif ederken, bu işleyişin hangi toplumsal aktörler için ne tür sonuçlar doğurduğunu yeterince sorgulamamaktadır. Özellikle toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf, yaş ve benzeri eşitsizlik eksenleri, Weber'in bürokrasi analizinde merkezi bir yer tutmamaktadır.

Bu noktada bölüm, feminist örgüt kuramının ve feminist bürokrasi eleştirisinin katkılarını devreye sokmaktadır. Feminist kuram, bürokrasinin cinsiyetsiz ve tarafsız bir yapı olduğu varsayımını sorgular. Joan Acker'ın örgütleri "cinsiyetli süreçler" olarak kavramsallaştıran yaklaşımı, bu çalışmanın teorik omurgasını oluşturmaktadır. Acker'a göre örgütler, yalnızca kadınların ve erkeklerin sayısal temsili açısından değil, iş tanımları, kariyer yolları, performans ölçütleri, iletişim biçimleri ve otorite ilişkileri aracılığıyla da cinsiyetlenmiş yapılardır. Bu çerçevede bürokrasi, erkekliği norm olarak alan ve kadınlığı bu normun dışına iten örtük varsayımlar üzerine kuruludur.

Bölümde özellikle vurgulanan nokta, bürokrasinin cinsiyetli karakterinin çoğu zaman açık ayrımcılık biçiminde değil, gündelik ve sıradan uygulamalar aracılığıyla ortaya çıktığıdır. Feminist literatür, bürokraside kadınların karşılaştığı eşitsizliklerin çoğunlukla "küçük" ve "önemsiz" görünen etkileşimler yoluyla üretildiğini

göstermektedir. Bu etkileşimler; kimin ciddiye alındığı, kime açıklama yapıldığı, kimin bekletildiği, kimin yönlendirildiği ve kimin otoritesinin varsayıldığı gibi mikro düzeydeki pratikler üzerinden şekillenmektedir. Dolayısıyla bürokrasinin cinsiyetli doğası, yalnızca formel kurallarda değil, bu kuralların uygulanma biçimlerinde ortaya çıkmaktadır.

İkinci bölüm, feminist bürokrasi literatüründe önemli bir yer tutan "takdir yetkisi" ve "gündelik etkileşim" kavramlarını ayrıntılı biçimde tartışmaktadır. Lipsky'nin sokak düzeyi bürokrasi yaklaşımı, bu bağlamda kritik bir teorik araç olarak kullanılmaktadır. Lipsky'ye göre kamu görevlileri, yazılı kuralları birebir uygulayan pasif aktörler değil; sınırlı kaynaklar, zaman baskısı ve belirsizlik koşulları altında karar veren ve kuralları yorumlayan aktörlerdir. Bu yorumlama süreci, bürokratik takdir yetkisini ortaya çıkarır. Feminist perspektiften bakıldığında, bu takdir yetkisi toplumsal cinsiyet normlarından bağımsız değildir. Kamu görevlilerinin kime nasıl davrandığı, hangi durumlarda esneklik gösterdiği ve hangi durumlarda katılaştığı, cinsiyetli beklentilerle şekillenebilmektedir.

Bu noktada bölüm, bürokraside hizmet sunanlar ile hizmet alanlar arasındaki ilişkinin analitik önemini vurgulamaktadır. Kadın girişimciler, bürokratik süreçlerde çoğu zaman "hizmet alan" konumunda ele alınmakta ve bu konum, onları değerlendirmeye, sınıflandırmaya ve yönlendirmeye açık hâle getirmektedir. Hizmet sunan bürokrat ile hizmet alan girişimci arasındaki güç asimetrisi, cinsiyetle kesiştiğinde daha da belirginleşmektedir. Kadın girişimcilerin yetkinlikleri, kararlılıkları ve talepleri, bu asimetrik ilişkide çoğu zaman sorgulanmakta ya da koşullara bağlanmaktadır.

İkinci bölümde ayrıca bürokrasinin yalnızca bir düzenleme mekanizması değil, aynı zamanda bir tanınma rejimi olarak işlediği fikri geliştirilmektedir. Tanınma, burada yalnızca hukuki statünün tanınması anlamına gelmemekte; aynı zamanda öznenin meşru, yetkin ve güvenilir bir aktör olarak kabul edilmesini ifade etmektedir. Feminist kuram, tanınmanın eşitsiz dağıtıldığını ve bazı gruplar için otomatik, bazıları için ise koşullu olduğunu göstermektedir. Kadın girişimciler açısından bürokratik karşılaşmalar, bu tanınmanın sürekli olarak yeniden üretildiği ya da askıya alındığı alanlar hâline gelmektedir.

İkinci bölüm, bu kavramsal çerçeveyi çalışmanın ampirik kısmına doğrudan bağlamaktadır. Kadın girişimcilerin yaşadıkları gecikmeler, belirsizlikler, yönlendirme eksiklikleri ve ciddiye alınmama deneyimleri, bireysel şanssızlıklar ya da iletişim problemleri olarak değil; bürokrasinin cinsiyetli işleyişinin somut tezahürleri olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, çalışmanın ilerleyen bölümlerinde kadın girişimcilerin anlatılarının neden "kişisel hikâyeler" olarak değil, yapısal örüntüler olarak okunduğunu da açıklamaktadır.

Sonuç olarak ikinci bölüm, bürokrasiyi statik, tarafsız ve teknik bir yapı olarak ele alan yaklaşımlardan bilinçli bir kopuşu temsil etmektedir. Bürokrasi, bu çalışmada, kuralların metinlerde değil, etkileşimlerde hayat bulduğu; tanınmanın otomatik değil, müzakere edilen bir süreç olduğu; ve toplumsal cinsiyetin bu süreçlerin merkezinde yer aldığı bir alan olarak kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. Bu teorik zemin, tezin geri kalanında geliştirilecek olan tarihsel bağlam, yöntemsel tercih ve saha analizleri için temel bir referans noktası oluşturmaktadır.

Üçüncü bölüm, çalışmanın ikinci kuramsal ayağını oluşturarak girişimcilik kavramını ve özellikle kadın girişimciliğinin literatürde nasıl ele alındığını tartışmaktadır. Bu bölümün temel amacı, girişimciliğin çoğu zaman nötr ve evrensel bir ekonomik faaliyet olarak sunulmasının sorunlu yönlerini görünür kılmak ve kadın girişimcilerin deneyimlerini şekillendiren yapısal koşulları analitik olarak açmaktır. Bu doğrultuda girişimcilik, bireysel başarı, risk alma ve yenilikçilik anlatılarının ötesinde, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileriyle iç içe geçmiş bir alan olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Bölümün başlangıcında girişimciliğin klasik tanımları ve literatürdeki genel konumu tartışılmaktadır. Ana akım girişimcilik literatürü, girişimciyi genellikle bağımsız, rekabetçi, rasyonel, risk almaya istekli ve kendi kendine yeten bir özne olarak tanımlar. Bu özellikler, tarihsel olarak erkeklikle ilişkilendirilmiş niteliklerdir. Girişimciliğin bu şekilde çerçevelenmesi, erkek girişimciyi görünmez bir norm hâline getirirken, kadın girişimcileri istisna ya da "özel bir kategori" olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, bu normatif çerçevenin kadınların girişimcilik deneyimlerini nasıl görünmezleştirdiğini ve problemli biçimde bireyselleştirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Kadın girişimciliği literatürü uzun yıllar boyunca ağırlıklı olarak nicel göstergelere odaklanmıştır. Bu çalışmalarda kadın girişimcilerin sayısı, sektör dağılımı, firma büyüklüğü, gelir düzeyi ve performans göstergeleri erkek girişimcilerle karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu karşılaştırmalar çoğu zaman kadınların "daha küçük", "daha az kârlı" ve "daha yavaş büyüyen" işletmelere sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Ancak bu çalışma, bu tür karşılaştırmaların açıklayıcı olmaktan çok normatif bir işlev gördüğünü savunmaktadır. Erkek girişimci deneyimi ölçüt alındığında, kadınların farklı koşullar altında faaliyet göstermeleri bir "eksiklik" olarak okunmaktadır.

Bölümde özellikle vurgulanan nokta, kadın girişimciliğinin literatürde çoğu zaman bireysel motivasyonlar ve kişisel özellikler üzerinden açıklanmasıdır. Kadınların neden girişimci olduğu, hangi psikolojik özelliklere sahip olduğu, riskten neden kaçındığı ya da neden büyüme hedeflemediği gibi sorular, yapısal eşitsizlikleri perdeleyen bir analitik çerçeve üretmektedir. Feminist girişimcilik literatürü ise bu yaklaşımı eleştirerek kadınların girişimcilik kararlarını ve deneyimlerini şekillendiren bakım yükleri, sektörel ayrışma, finansmana erişim sorunları ve güvenlik kaygıları gibi faktörlere dikkat çekmektedir. Kadın girişimciliğinin yalnızca ekonomik bir faaliyet değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi içinde şekillenen bir pratik olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Kadınlar girişimciliğe çoğu zaman ücretli istihdamda yaşadıkları güvencesizlik, cam tavanlar, esnek olmayan çalışma saatleri ve ayrımcı örgüt kültürleri nedeniyle yönelmektedir. Bu anlamda girişimcilik, kadınlar için her zaman bir "fırsat" değil, kimi zaman zorunlu bir çıkış yolu hâline gelmektedir. Ancak bu zorunluluk, girişimciliğin getirdiği riskleri ve belirsizlikleri ortadan kaldırmamakta; aksine, kadınları yeni bir kırılganlık alanına taşımaktadır.

Bölümde kadın girişimciliği literatüründe öne çıkan temalardan biri, bakım emeği ve girişimcilik arasındaki gerilimdir. Kadınlar, girişimci olduklarında bakım sorumluluklarından muaf hâle gelmemekte; aksine, ücretli emek, girişimcilik faaliyeti ve ücretsiz bakım emeğini aynı anda yürütmek zorunda kalmaktadır. Literatürde girişimciliğin kadınlara esneklik sağladığı sıkça iddia edilse de feminist çalışmalar bu esnekliğin çoğu zaman kurumsal zaman yapılarıyla çeliştiğini göstermektedir. Üçüncü bölüm, bu gerilimin ilerleyen bölümlerde Ankara'daki kadın girişimcilerin anlatılarında somut biçimde ortaya çıkacağı noktada kuramsal bir köprü kurmaktadır.

Kadın girişimciliği literatüründe önemli bir diğer tema, sektörler arası ayrışmadır. Kadın girişimciler, çoğunlukla hizmet sektöründe, küçük ölçekli ve düşük sermaye gerektiren alanlarda yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu sektörler genellikle "kadın işi" olarak kodlanmakta ve ekonomik olarak daha az değerli kabul edilmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm, bu sektörel ayrışmanın yalnızca piyasa dinamikleriyle değil, aynı zamanda bürokratik düzenlemeler, destek mekanizmaları ve yatırım öncelikleriyle de ilişkili olduğunu savunmaktadır. Hangi sektörlerin "desteklenmeye değer" görüldüğü, hangi faaliyetlerin ciddiye alındığı ve hangilerinin marjinalleştirildiği, girişimcilik deneyimini doğrudan etkilemektedir.

Bu çalışma, kadın girişimciliği literatüründe ağlar ve sosyal sermaye tartışmalarına da yer vermektedir. Erkek girişimcilerin çoğu zaman daha geniş ve etkili iş ağlarına sahip olduğu, bu ağlar aracılığıyla bilgiye, finansmana ve bürokratik kolaylıklara daha hızlı erişebildiği gösterilmektedir. Kadın girişimciler ise genellikle aile içi ya da sınırlı sosyal ağlara dayanmakta ve erkek egemen iş çevrelerine erişimde zorluk yaşamaktadır. Bu durum, kadınların girişimcilik sürecinde daha fazla belirsizlikle karşılaşmasına ve bürokratik süreçlerde daha kırılgan hâle gelmesine neden olmaktadır.

Üçüncü bölümün önemli katkılarından biri, girişimcilik literatüründe bürokrasinin çoğu zaman arka planda bırakıldığını göstermesidir. Girişimcilik araştırmalarında bürokrasi genellikle "engel" ya da "iş yapma kolaylığı" gibi teknik başlıklar altında ele alınmakta, ancak gündelik bürokratik karşılaşmaların öznel ve etkileşimsel boyutları ihmal edilmektedir. Oysa girişimciler için bürokrasi, yalnızca kayıt ve belge süreçlerinden ibaret değildir; aynı zamanda meşruiyetin test edildiği, otoritenin tanındığı ve ekonomik özne olarak kabul edilmenin müzakere edildiği bir alandır. Bu çalışma, kadın girişimcilerin bürokratik deneyimlerini girişimcilik literatürünün merkezine yerleştirerek bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Sonuç olarak üçüncü bölüm, girişimciliği ve kadın girişimciliğini bireysel özellikler ve motivasyonlar üzerinden açıklayan yaklaşımlara eleştirel bir mesafe koymaktadır. Girişimcilik, bu çalışmada, kadınların toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi içinde hareket ettiği, bakım emeği, bürokrasi, piyasa ve aile ilişkileriyle kesişen bir alan olarak

kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. Bu perspektif, kadın girişimcilerin yaşadıkları bürokratik karşılaşmaların neden girişimcilik deneyiminin merkezinde yer aldığını açıklamakta ve çalışmanın ilerleyen bölümlerinde sunulan saha bulguları için güçlü bir analitik zemin oluşturmaktadır.

Dördüncü bölüm, çalışmanın tarihsel ve bağlamsal zeminini oluşturarak, kadın girişimcilerin Ankara'daki bürokratik deneyimlerinin içinde şekillendiği kurumsal yapıyı açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bölümün temel iddiası, bürokrasinin ve girişimciliğin birbirinden bağımsız alanlar olarak değil, tarihsel olarak birlikte evrilen ve birbirini karşılıklı olarak biçimlendiren yapılar olarak ele alınması gerektiğidir. Türkiye'de, kadın girişimcilerin güncel bürokratik karşılaşmaları, yalnızca bireysel deneyimlerin ya da güncel düzenlemelerin sonucu değildir; bu karşılaşmalar, Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e, oradan neoliberal döneme uzanan uzun bir devlet-toplum-ekonomi ilişkileri tarihinin ürünüdür.

Bölüm, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun geç döneminden başlayarak ekonomik düzenleme, ticaret ve zanaat faaliyetlerinin nasıl örgütlendiğini ve bu yapının cinsiyetli karakterini tartışmaktadır. Osmanlı idari yapısında bürokrasi, patrimonyal ilişkilerle iç içe geçmiş bir nitelik taşımakta; ekonomik faaliyetler ise lonca sistemi, esnaf örgütlenmeleri ve devletle kurulan kişisel ilişkiler üzerinden yürütülmekteydi. Bu dönemde kadınların ekonomik faaliyetleri büyük ölçüde ev içi üretim, küçük ölçekli ticaret ve aile işletmeleriyle sınırlı kalmış; kamusal ve resmi ekonomik alanlar erkekler üzerinden tanımlanmıştır. Kadınların üretime katılımı görünmezleştirilmiş ya da aile reisinin uzantısı olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bu tarihsel miras, ekonomik öznenin erkek olarak varsayılmasının erken bir örneğini oluşturmaktadır.

Cumhuriyet'in kuruluşuyla birlikte, bürokrasi modernleşme ve ulus-devlet inşasının temel araçlarından biri hâline gelmiştir. Yeni devlet, rasyonel-hukuki bir bürokrasi kurma amacıyla hareket etmiş; düzenleme, kayıt altına alma ve merkeziyetçilik ön plana çıkmıştır. Girişimcilik ise erken Cumhuriyet döneminde sınırlı bir alan olarak kalmış, devletçilik politikaları çerçevesinde büyük ölçüde kamu eliyle yönlendirilmiştir. Kadınların kamusal alana ve çalışma hayatına katılımı hukuki

olarak teşvik edilse de bu katılım büyük ölçüde kamu sektörü ve "uygun" görülen mesleklerle sınırlandırılmıştır. Girişimcilik, riskli ve belirsiz bir faaliyet olarak erkeklere atfedilmiş; kadınlar için istikrarlı ve güvenli kamu istihdamı daha meşru bir yol olarak sunulmuştur.

Dördüncü bölüm, özellikle 1980 sonrası neoliberal dönüşümle birlikte bürokrasinin ve girişimciliğin Türkiye'de geçirdiği yapısal değişime odaklanmaktadır. Bu dönemde devletin ekonomideki doğrudan rolü azaltılmış, girişimcilik ve özel sektör büyümenin ana motoru olarak yeniden tanımlanmıştır. Ancak bu dönüşüm, bürokrasinin ortadan kalkması anlamına gelmemiştir. Aksine, düzenleyici devlet modeli içinde bürokrasi daha karmaşık, çok katmanlı ve çoğu zaman belirsiz bir hâl almıştır. Lisanslar, izinler, denetimler, teşvikler ve destek programları artmış; girişimcilik faaliyetleri yoğun bir bürokratik çerçeve içine yerleştirilmiştir.

Bu neoliberal dönemde kadın girişimciliği, özellikle istihdam politikaları ve kalkınma söylemleri içinde merkezi bir konuma yerleştirilmiştir. Kadınların iş gücüne katılım oranlarının düşüklüğü, girişimcilik yoluyla telafi edilmesi gereken bir "sorun" olarak çerçevelenmiştir. Eğitim programları, mikro kredi uygulamaları, hibe ve teşvik mekanizmaları bu çerçevede yaygınlaştırılmıştır. Ancak dördüncü bölüm, bu politikaların çoğu zaman kadınların gündelik bürokratik deneyimlerini dikkate almadığını ve uygulamada ciddi eşitsizlikler ürettiğini savunmaktadır. Kadın girişimciliği desteklenirken, bürokrasinin nasıl işlediği ve kimin için erişilebilir olduğu sorusu büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmiştir.

Bölümde Türkiye'de bürokrasinin "hibrit" niteliği özellikle vurgulanmaktadır. Resmî kurallar, yönetmelikler ve dijital sistemler bir yandan varlığını sürdürürken, diğer yandan ilişkisel ağlar, kişisel tanışıklıklar ve takdir yetkisi gündelik işleyişte belirleyici olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu durum, bürokrasinin öngörülebilirliğini zayıflatmakta ve girişimciler açısından belirsizliği artırmaktadır. Erkek girişimciler, bu hibrit yapıda daha avantajlı konumlanabilmekte; çünkü tarihsel olarak erkekler kamusal alanlarda, meslek örgütlerinde ve ticari ağlarda daha görünür ve kabul edilmiş aktörlerdir. Kadınlar ise bu ilişkisel kanallara erişimde daha sınırlı imkânlara sahiptir.

Dördüncü bölüm, bürokratik destek ve teşvik mekanizmalarının da cinsiyetli bir biçimde işlediğini göstermektedir. Girişimcilik destekleri çoğu zaman belirli sektörleri, ölçekleri ve yatırım türlerini önceliklendirmektedir. Bu öncelikler, kadınların yoğunlaştığı küçük ölçekli, hizmet ağırlıklı ve bakım emeğiyle uyumlu sektörleri dolaylı olarak dışlamaktadır. Ayrıca destek programlarının gerektirdiği belge yükü, eğitim zorunlulukları ve zaman taahhütleri, bakım sorumlulukları taşıyan kadınlar için ciddi engeller oluşturmaktadır. Böylece kadın girişimciliğini teşvik etmeyi amaçlayan politikalar, uygulamada yalnızca belirli bir kadın grubuna, yani daha eğitimli, daha orta sınıf ve zaman kaynaklarına sahip kadınlara hitap edebilmektedir.

Bölümde ayrıca Türkiye'de bürokratik otoritenin gündelik hayatta nasıl temsil edildiği ve cinsiyetle nasıl kesiştiği tartışılmaktadır. Bürokratik karşılaşmalar, yalnızca belge ve prosedürlerin yerine getirildiği teknik anlar değil, aynı zamanda otoritenin tanındığı, saygının ve ciddiyetin dağıtıldığı etkileşim alanlarıdır. Tarihsel olarak erkeklerin kamusal alandaki varlığı normalleştirilmişken, kadınların bu alanlardaki varlığı çoğu zaman açıklama, meşrulaştırma ve kendini ispat etme gerektirmiştir. Bu tarihsel süreklilik, güncel bürokratik karşılaşmalarda da etkisini sürdürmektedir.

Sonuç olarak dördüncü bölüm, kadın girişimcilerin bürokratik deneyimlerinin tarihsel olarak şekillenmiş bir kurumsal düzenin ürünü olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bürokrasi, Türkiye'de ne tamamen rasyonel ve öngörülebilir bir yapı ne de tamamen keyfî bir ilişkiler ağıdır; aksine, her ikisinin iç içe geçtiği, cinsiyetli ve ilişkisel bir düzendir. Bu düzen içinde girişimcilik, özellikle kadınlar için, yalnızca ekonomik bir faaliyet değil; devletle, kurallarla ve otoriteyle sürekli bir müzakere alanıdır. Bu tarihsel ve kurumsal bağlam, çalışmanın saha bulgularının neden belirli örüntüler etrafında yoğunlaştığını anlamak açısından kritik bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Beşinci bölüm, çalışmanın metodolojik çerçevesini ortaya koymakta ve araştırma sorularının neden ve nasıl nitel bir tasarım üzerinden ele alındığını açıklamaktadır. Bu bölümün temel amacı, kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle karşılaşmalarını yalnızca ortaya çıkan sonuçlar üzerinden değil; bu karşılaşmaların nasıl deneyimlendiğini,

nasıl anlamlandırıldığını ve zaman içinde nasıl birikimli etkiler ürettiğini görünür kılacak bir araştırma stratejisini gerekçelendirmektir. Çalışma, bürokrasiyi yalnızca kuralların uygulandığı teknik bir alan olarak değil; etkileşim, takdir yetkisi, duygu, beden ve zamanın iç içe geçtiği bir karşılaşmalar alanı olarak ele aldığı için, bu boyutları yakalayabilecek bir yönteme ihtiyaç duymaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda araştırma, nitel bir yaklaşım benimsemekte ve yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Nicel yöntemler, kadın girişimcilerin sayısal dağılımları ya da sektörel konumları hakkında bilgi sunabilse de, bu çalışmanın temel sorusu kadın girişimcilerin "kaç kişi" olduğu ya da "hangi sektörde" yoğunlaştıkları değildir. Asıl mesele, kadınların bürokratik süreçleri nasıl yaşadıkları, bu süreçlerde hangi noktalarda zorlandıkları, ne tür etkileşimlere maruz kaldıkları ve bu etkileşimlerin girişimcilik deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğidir. Bu nedenle çalışma, kadınların kendi anlatılarına ve deneyimlerine dayanan bir veri üretimini gerekli görmektedir.

Araştırma, Ankara'da faaliyet gösteren 16 kadın girişimciyle gerçekleştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Ankara'nın saha olarak seçilmesi bilinçli bir tercihtir. Türkiye'de merkezi bürokrasinin yoğunlaştığı bir şehir olarak Ankara, girişimcilerin devletle temasının daha sık, daha doğrudan ve daha görünür yaşandığı bir bağlam sunmaktadır. Vergi daireleri, belediyeler, bakanlıklar, düzenleyici kurumlar, meslek odaları ve denetim mekanizmalarıyla kurulan ilişkiler, girişimcilik pratiğinin gündelik bir parçasıdır. Bu yönüyle Ankara, bürokrasinin soyut bir düzenleyici yapı olmaktan ziyade, somut ve tekrar eden karşılaşmalar yoluyla nasıl deneyimlendiğini incelemek için elverişli bir saha oluşturmaktadır.

Araştırmaya dâhil edilen kadın girişimciler, farklı yaş gruplarından, eğitim düzeylerinden, sınıfsal arka planlardan ve sektörlerden seçilmiştir. Amaç, temsili bir örneklem oluşturmak değil; bürokratik deneyimlerin hangi ortak örüntüler etrafında tekrarlandığını ve hangi noktalarda farklılaştığını ortaya koymaktır. Bu nedenle örneklem, çeşitliliği artıracak biçimde tasarlanmış; genç ve ileri yaştaki kadınlar, evli, bekar, boşanmış ve çocuklu kadınlar ile hizmet, üretim ve teknik sektörlerde faaliyet gösteren girişimciler çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Ayrıca cinsel yönelim gibi

normatif olmayan konumların bürokratik deneyimi nasıl etkileyebileceğini analiz edebilmek amacıyla heteronormatif çerçevenin dışındaki deneyimlere de yer verilmiştir.

Veri toplama yöntemi olarak yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar tercih edilmiştir. Bu yöntem, kadınların bürokratik deneyimlerinin çoğu zaman resmi dilin ötesinde, duygusal, simgesel ve ilişkisel boyutlar taşıması nedeniyle özellikle feminist araştırmalarda yaygın biçimde kullanılmaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat formatı, önceden belirlenmiş temalar etrafında ilerlerken katılımcıların kendi deneyimlerini kendi öncelikleri doğrultusunda anlatmalarına da imkân tanımıştır. Bu çalışmada kullanılan mülakat rehberi, kadın girişimcilerin işletme kurma ve yürütme süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları bürokratik işlemleri, bu işlemler sırasında yaşanan etkileşimleri, karşılaştıkları güçlükleri, hissettikleri duyguları ve geliştirdikleri başa çıkma stratejilerini kapsayacak biçimde hazırlanmıştır.

Mülakatlar 2025 yılının Eylül ve Ekim aylarında gerçekleştirilmiş; her bir görüşme tek oturumda, yüz yüze ya da çevrim içi olarak yürütülmüş ve katılımcıların onayıyla ses kaydı alınmıştır. Tek oturum tercih edilmesinin nedeni, kadın girişimcilerin yoğun iş yükü ve zaman kısıtlarıdır. Görüşmelerin bölünmesi, anlatıların akışını bozma ve deneyimlerin parçalanması riski taşıdığı için özellikle kaçınılmıştır. Mülakatlar genellikle 40 dakika ile bir saat arasında sürmüş, bu süre hem derinlikli anlatılara imkân tanımış hem de katılımcıların zamanına saygı göstermeyi mümkün kılmıştır.

Araştırma, kesişimsel bir analitik perspektif benimsemektedir. Kadın girişimcilerin deneyimleri, yalnızca “kadın olmak” üzerinden değil; yaş, eğitim düzeyi, sınıfsal konum, medeni durum, annelik, sektör ve cinsel yönelim gibi farklı toplumsal konumların kesişimi üzerinden analiz edilmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, bürokratik eşitsizliklerin tek tip olmadığını; bazı kadınlar için daha yoğun, bazıları için ise daha yönetilebilir biçimler aldığını göstermeyi mümkün kılmaktadır.

Veri analizi, Braun ve Clarke’ın tematik analiz yaklaşımına dayanmaktadır. Tüm mülakatlar kelimesi kelimesine çözümlenmiş; analiz sürecinde tekrar eden anlatılar,

ifadeler ve deneyimler kodlanmış ve bu kodlar zamanla daha geniş temalar altında birleştirilmiştir. Analiz süreci, yalnızca önceden belirlenmiş kavramları doğrulamayı değil, sahadan yükselen örüntüleri yakalamayı amaçlamıştır. Bürokratik karşılaşmalarda tekrar eden gecikmeler, yönlendirmeler, sessizlikler, hitap biçimleri ve ciddiye alınma ya da alınmama anları, analizin merkezinde yer almıştır. Kodlama süreci tümevarımsal olarak yürütülmüş; dijital yazılımlar yerine manuel kodlama tercih edilerek metinle yakın temas kurulması ve anlatıların bağlamının korunması hedeflenmiştir.

Örneklem büyüklüğü, nitel araştırmalarda yaygın olarak kullanılan kuramsal doygunluk ilkesi temelinde belirlenmiştir. On altıncı mülakattan itibaren yeni temaların ortaya çıkmaması ve anlatıların benzer mekanizmalar etrafında tekrar etmeye başlaması, doygunluğa ulaşıldığını göstermiştir. Bu tekrar, çalışmanın sınırlılığı değil; bürokratik eşitsizliklerin kadın girişimciler arasında ne kadar yaygın ve yapısal olduğunun bir göstergesi olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Araştırmanın etik boyutu bu bölümde ayrıntılı biçimde ele alınmaktadır. Çalışma için Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan 20 Ağustos 2025 tarihinde etik onay alınmıştır (Etik Onay No: 0373-ODTÜİAEK-2025). Katılımcıların tümü araştırmanın amacı, kapsamı ve gizlilik ilkeleri hakkında bilgilendirilmiş; mülakatlara gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Tüm veriler anonimleştirilmiş, kişi ve işletme isimleri kullanılmamış ve katılımcıların kimliklerini açığa çıkarabilecek ayrıntılardan özellikle kaçınılmıştır.

Sonuç olarak bu bölüm, tezin temel iddiasını destekleyen yöntemsel zemini ortaya koymaktadır. Kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle ilişkisini anlamak, yalnızca prosedürlerin varlığını listelemekle değil; bu prosedürlerin kadınlar tarafından nasıl deneyimlendiğini, bu deneyimlerin hangi etkileşimler ve duygular aracılığıyla şekillendiğini ve zaman içinde nasıl birikimli sonuçlar ürettiğini analiz etmekle mümkündür. Bu metodolojik yaklaşım, tezin ilerleyen bölümlerinde sunulan bulguların neden bireysel anlatılar üzerinden, ancak yapısal bir çerçeve içinde ele alındığını da açıklamaktadır.

Altıncı bölüm, çalışmanın ampirik çekirdeğini oluşturmaktadır ve kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle karşılaşmalarını iki temel aşama üzerinden ele almaktadır: işletmenin kuruluş aşaması ve işletmenin yürütülmesi aşaması. Kuruluş aşaması, kadın girişimcilerin ilk kez "ekonomik özne" olarak devlet karşısına çıktıkları, meşruiyet ve yetkilerinin tanındığı ya da sorgulandığı bir eşiktir. Yürütme aşaması ise denetimler, bildirimler, rutin kontroller ve dijital sistemler aracılığıyla bu ilişkinin süreklilik kazandığı, çoğu zaman da yoğunlaştığı bir süreçtir. Tez, bu iki aşamayı birbirinden kopuk değil; aksine birbirini besleyen ve biçimlendiren süreçler olarak ele almaktadır. Saha verileri, kuruluş aşamasında yaşanan tanınma sorunlarının ve belirsizliklerin, işletmenin ilerleyen dönemlerinde de etkisini sürdürdüğünü göstermektedir.

Kuruluş aşamasında saha bulguları, prosedürlerin teknik içeriğinden çok etkileşim biçimlerinin belirleyici olduğunu göstermektedir. Bilgiye erişim çoğu zaman parçalıdır; yönlendirmeler eksik veya çelişkili biçimde sunulabilmekte ve kadınlar aynı işlemi tamamlamak için tekrar tekrar kurumlara gitmek zorunda kalabilmektedir. Bu durum yalnızca zaman kaybı değil, belirsizlik, stres ve yıpranma da üretmektedir. Bazı katılımcılar, bu süreci cinsiyetle ilişkilendirerek ciddiye alınma sorununa işaret etmektedir; özellikle genç kadınlar otoritelerinin daha sık sorgulandığını ifade etmektedir. Kuruluş aşamasına ilişkin ikinci temel bulgu, erkek muhasebecilerin ve erkek aracılarının bilinçli bir strateji olarak devreye sokulmasıdır. Bu örneklemde yer alan 16 kadının tamamının erkek muhasebecilerle çalışmış olması, sahada kendiliğinden ortaya çıkan bir örüntüye işaret etmektedir. Kadın girişimciler, muhasebecileri yalnızca teknik bilgi sağlayan profesyoneller olarak değil, bürokratik alanla aralarında "tampon" işlevi gören aracılar olarak tanımlamakta; bu aracılık, süreci hızlandırmak ve belirsizliği düşürmek amacıyla tercih edilmektedir. Üçüncü temel bulgu, mülkiyet ve otoritenin varsayılan olarak erkeklere atfedilmesidir; şirket yasal olarak kadın adına kayıtlı olsa bile, muhataplığın yanındaki erkek figüre kayması veya "eşiniz mi imzalayacak" gibi sorular, kadınların yetkilerini sürekli yeniden kanıtlamak zorunda kalmasına yol açabilmektedir. Kuruluş aşamasında finansmana erişim de bürokratik karşılaşmalarla iç içe geçmektedir; kadınların önemli bir bölümü işletmeyi birikim, aile desteği ya da küçük borçlarla kurarken banka kredileri ve yatırım mekanizmaları teminat ve

kesintisiz gelir kriterleri nedeniyle erişilemez hâle gelebilmektedir. Kamu destekleri ve girişimcilik programları ise düşük tutar, uzun ve zahmetli başvuru süreçleri, sektör dışı bırakmalar ve zaman uyumsuzlukları nedeniyle çoğu kadın için fırsattan ziyade filtre olarak deneyimlenmektedir. Zaman boyutu bu aşamada ayrıca belirgindir: mesai saatlerine bağlı işlemler ve tekrar eden yüz yüze ziyaretler, bakım sorumlulukları taşıyan kadınlar için uyumsuzluk ve ek maliyet üretmektedir.

Kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle ilişkisi, işletmenin kuruluşuyla sona ermemekte; aksine yürütme aşamasında süreklilik kazanan, daha görünmez ama daha yıpratıcı biçimler almaktadır. Denetimler, kontroller ve dijital bildirim yükümlülükleri kâğıt üzerinde standart görünse de saha anlatıları bu süreçlerin takdir yetkisi ve etkileşim tarzı üzerinden farklılaşabildiğini göstermektedir. Bazı kadın girişimciler, denetimlerde daha sorgulayıcı ya da öğretici bir tonla karşılaşabildiklerini ve "acemi" veya "yardıma muhtaç" biçimlerinde konumlandırıldıklarını ifade etmektedir. Etkileşimlerin kişiselleşmesi, kadınların bedenlerini, ses tonlarını ve duygularını stratejik biçimde yönetmeye zorlayan bir performans alanı yaratabilmektedir. Dijitalleşme yüz yüze temasın bir kısmını azaltabilse de sistem sorunlarında erişilebilir insan desteğinin olmaması hâlinde sorun çözme yükünü girişimcinin üzerine kaydırarak belirsizliği yeniden üretebilmektedir. Bu koşullar altında kadınların başlıca stratejileri, erkek aracı ve muhasebeci bağımlılığını sürdürme, gayriresmî ağlara yaslanma, büyümeyi sınırlama ve etkileşimsel/duygusal özdenetimi artırma biçiminde ortaya çıkmaktadır. Özellikle bilinçli biçimde küçük kalma, gelişme arzusunun eksikliğinden ziyade bürokratik baskıyı yönetilebilir kılmaya dönük rasyonel bir uyum stratejisi olarak görünmektedir.

Tezin en önemli kavramsal katkılarından biri, bu deneyimleri işlem maliyeti kavramı üzerinden yeniden düşünmesidir. Bulgular, kadın girişimcilerin yalnızca cinsiyet gözetmeksizin herkesin maruz kaldığı prosedürel işlem maliyetleriyle değil, aynı zamanda tanınma ve etkileşim boyutundan kaynaklanan ek maliyetlerle karşı karşıya kaldığını göstermektedir. Bu durum tezde çifte işlem maliyeti olarak kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. Cinsiyetin, cinsel yönelim gibi diğer marjinal konumlarla kesiştiği durumlarda maliyetlerin daha da artabildiği; bu nedenle maliyetlerin çoklu bir yapı kazanabildiği tartışılmaktadır. Bu maliyetler anlık sorunlar olarak

kalmamakta; zaman içinde birikimli etkiler üreterek kadınların büyüme kararlarını, desteklere başvurma isteklilikleri ve girişimcilikte kalma sürelerini etkileyebilmektedir.

Tez, bu bulgular ışığında kadın girişimciliğine ilişkin politika söylemlerine eleştirel bir katkı sunmaktadır. Kadın girişimciliğini teşvik etmeye yönelik eğitim, destek ve finansman araçları, bürokrasinin gündelik işleyişi dönüşmeden sınırlı etki yaratmaktadır. Bu nedenle politika önerileri, kadınların bireysel uyum kapasitesini artırmaktan çok, bürokratik düzenin gündelik işleyişini dönüştürmeye odaklanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda tez, öncelikle açık, tutarlı ve sektör-duyarlı bilgi üretimi ve rehberlik mekanizmalarının geliştirilmesini vurgular: mevzuat değişikliklerinin anlaşılır biçimde duyurulması, kurumlar arası yönlendirmelerin standartlaştırılması ve girişimcilerin başvurabileceği sorumlu birim/kişi bilgisinin erişilebilir kılınması gerekmektedir. İkinci olarak dijitalleşmenin "muhatap yokluğu" üretmemesi için dijital platformların erişilebilir insan desteğiyle tamamlanması; sistem hatalarında sorunun girişimciye yüklenmesini engelleyecek hızlı çözüm kanallarının kurulması önerilmektedir. Üçüncü olarak denetimlerin yalnızca teknik uygunluk üzerinden değil, davranış standardı ve hesap verebilirlik üzerinden de izlenmesi; denetim dilinin ve takdir yetkisi kullanımının keyfileşmesini sınırlayacak şeffaf kriterler, geri bildirim ve itiraz mekanizmaları ile kurumsal izleme araçlarının güçlendirilmesi önem taşımaktadır. Dördüncü olarak bakım sorumluluklarıyla uyumlu bürokratik zaman düzenlemeleri, kadınlar açısından işlem maliyetlerini azaltacaktır. Beşinci olarak destek ve teşvik programlarının tasarımında düşük tutar-yüksek prosedür dengesini tersine çevirecek sadeleştirme, sektör kodları ve ölçek kriterlerindeki dışlayıcı etkilerin gözden geçirilmesi, başvuru süreçlerinde rehberlik sağlanması ve bakım-zaman kısıtlarını hesaba katan esnek modeller önerilmektedir. Son olarak kadınların erkek aracılara bağımlılığını azaltacak kurumsal danışma ve rehberlik birimleri, tanınmanın erkek kodlu aracılar üzerinden kurulması döngüsünü zayıflatabilir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, kadın girişimcilerin bürokrasiyle ilişkisini yalnızca kurallar ve prosedürler düzeyinde değil, tanınma, meşruiyet ve süreklilik düzeyinde analiz ederek literatüre özgün bir katkı sunmaktadır. Bulgular, bürokrasinin kâğıt üzerinde

standart ve cinsiyetsiz görünmesine rağmen gündelik uygulamada etkileşim, takdir yetkisi ve örtük normlar üzerinden işlediğini; bu nedenle kadın girişimciler için girişimciliğin yalnızca ekonomik bir faaliyet değil, aynı zamanda kurumsal olarak tanınmanın müzakere edildiği bir deneyim olduğunu göstermektedir. Tezin "tanınma rejimi" yaklaşımı ve "çifte/çoklu işlem maliyeti" kavramsallaştırması, kadın girişimcilerin karşılaştığı belirsizlik, gecikme ve görünmez emek yükünün yalnızca bireysel hikâyeler olarak değil, yapısal mekanizmalar olarak okunmasını mümkün kılmakta; kuruluş ve yürütme aşamalarındaki karşılaşmaların birikimli etkilerini girişimcilik sürekliliğiyle ilişkilendirerek girişimcilik literatüründe bürokrasi boyutunu merkezileştirmektedir. Bununla birlikte çalışmanın sınırlılıkları da vardır: Araştırma Ankara ile sınırlı bir nitel saha çalışmasına dayanmakta, belirli bir dönemde 16 kadın girişimciyle yapılan mülakatlara dayalı olduğu için istatistiksel genelleme iddiası taşımamakta; amaç, süreçleri ve mekanizmaları derinlemesine çözümlemektir. Veriler kadın girişimcilerin anlatıları üzerinden üretildiğinden etkileşimsel ve duygusal boyutlar güçlü biçimde görünürleşirken, kurum içi aktörlerin sistematik perspektifinin ayrı bir veri seti olarak çalışmaya dahil edilmemiş olması yorumların kapsamını sınırlandırmaktadır. Buna rağmen anlatılarda tekrar eden örüntüler, bürokratik eşitsizliklerin bireysel istisnalardan ziyade yapısal bir işleyişe işaret ettiğini ortaya koymakta; bu da çalışmanın literatüre katkısının, kadın girişimciliğini bürokratik karşılaşmaların cinsiyetlenmiş düzeni içinde yeniden düşünmeye imkân veren bu analitik çerçeveyi sunmasında yattığını göstermektedir.

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