



MASTER THESIS

THE IMPACT OF THE MOROCCAN CULTURE ON
THE NETWORK ACTIVITIES OF MOROCCAN MEN
AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE
NETHERLANDS

Personal information

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Preface

Dear Reader,

First of all, I hope that this thesis provides the knowledge you are looking for. Besides losing some hair, I am happy to have delivered this thesis. During the time I have been working on my thesis, I have received a lot of support from certain people. Without these people, writing this thesis would be an impossible task. Therefore, I would like to thank the following people for their knowledge and support during this period. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Caroline Essers. Her feedback and knowledge on the subject helped me a lot. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Annabel Buiters for her feedback, which helped me moving forward with my thesis. My girlfriend has also supported me a lot by offering me a listening ear when things got tough and for motivating me. Her support has encouraged me to complete my thesis successfully. Therefore, I would like to thank her very much for her support. Furthermore, I would like to thank my parents and friends for their feedback and support. Finally, I would like to thank the entrepreneurs for their time and genuine interest to contribute to this research. Without them, writing this thesis would have been even more difficult than it already was. I have learned a lot from their experiences and personal stories. It is great to see that I am still in touch with some of the entrepreneurs who participated in this research.

I hope you enjoy reading.

Abstract

Ethnic entrepreneurship has shown remarkable growth in recent decades. The scope of this study lies within the field of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, as it explores how the Moroccan culture has an impact on the differences in networks and networking activities of Moroccan male and female entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. This study is qualitatively driven including semi-structured interviews of twelve Moroccan entrepreneurs. Qualitative techniques in network research provide an effective way to explore and understand what actually happens within networks. The findings of this study provide some indications that the Moroccan culture has an impact on the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs in different ways. First of all, family members play an important part within the network. They can either stimulate or hinder the development of entrepreneurship. The Moroccan culture also influences the gender division of the network. Finally, we see that because of both the collective values of the Moroccan culture and the social distance between the minority group and the majority group, the networks consist primarily of strong ties.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, gender, ethnicity, networks, Moroccan

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

An introduction of the topic of this study is presented in this chapter. Next, the academic and societal relevance of this study are discussed. Finally, the research question and the outline of this study are provided.

1.1 Introduction of the topic

An entrepreneur's ability to exploit social networks is key to entrepreneurial success, since it provides them with several benefits. One of those benefits is that it helps them to recognize valuable opportunities in the market (Shu, Ren, Zheng, 2018). Furthermore, it provides entrepreneurs access to a wider range of resources like financial capital (Bouk, Vedder & te Poel, 2013), emotional support (Batjargal et al., 2009) and they get access to distribution channels through their social networks (Greve & Salaff, 2003).

Networks are the social context of businesses and can be developed and used according to different needs (Greve & Salaff, 2003). In other words, they are not fixed and since needs could differ among entrepreneurs, networks also can differ. Moreover, networking is an activity that involves the

development of a relationship between two people. In other words, it is a social activity and hence the entrepreneur's background is likely to influence the nature of the networks that (s)he uses to gather resources and advice (Cromie & Birley, 1992).

Gender is also assumed to be a reason for differences in networks between male and female entrepreneurs, because women are disadvantaged compared to men and therefore cannot network effectively (Foss, 2010). The main reason for this assumption is that women are affected by gender structures in entrepreneurship where they are often positioned as subordinated. In other words, society's view of femininity does not seem to fit into the mainstream view of entrepreneurship (Roos, 2019). As a result, women tend to rely heavily on men when seeking for advice, while men rely entirely on members of their own sex for advice (Cromie & Birley, 1992; Ibarra, 1992). Furthermore, weak ties are the source of men's success whereas strong ties are women's drawback (Foss, 2010). However, a literature review by Foss (2010) concluded that there are no major differences between the networks of female and male entrepreneurs and since no or little research has been done into the impact of the intersection of gender and culture, it remains unclear whether these statements are true for women.

Yet, none of these studies looked into the impact of the Moroccan culture on entrepreneurship. Culture could possibly lead to differences in networks between women and male entrepreneurs (Sullivan & Meek, 2012). For instance, Klyver & Foley (2012) state that subgroups belonging to various sub-cultures behave in completely different ways. However, no or little knowledge has been gained and elaborated on concerning the intersection of gender and culture. Therefore, it remains unclear how this affects networks. The networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands are a product of complex transnational linkages between their European identity and the cultural influences of the Muslim world (Boubekeur et al., 2016). The Moroccan culture is highly interesting because the Moroccan community is one of the largest ethnic minority population in the Netherlands (Essers & Benschop, 2007; Essers et al., 2021). According to the CBS (2020), there are more than 409,000 Moroccans living in the Netherlands. Since Moroccans are the largest group of Muslims in the Netherlands, it offers the opportunity to include religion in the research as Islam is part of the Moroccan culture. This is a strong contribution of this research, because religion in general and Islam in particular are largely under-researched themes in entrepreneurship (Azghari, Hooghiemstra & Van de Vijver, 2015). This is due to the fact that Islam and entrepreneur are often seen as theoretical dichotomies (Essers & Benschop, 2009). Finally, Moroccan respondents also represent other non-Western immigrants from the Arabic world, such as Algerians, because of the shared characteristics in language, religion and culture (Majaiti, 2017).

1.2 Academic and societal relevance

Ethnic entrepreneurship has shown remarkable growth in recent decades. The benefits of ethnic entrepreneurship include reducing social exclusion and raising living standards in groups that can often be among the most disadvantaged in society (Sahin, Nijkamp & Stough, 2011). In addition, migrant entrepreneurs contribute to a more diversified supply of products, which often leads to market niches for specific cultural goods. Consequently, migrant entrepreneurs increase competition and indirectly the quality of products. Finally, ethnic entrepreneurship has proven to contribute significantly to the overall economic growth and development of the area concerned (Sahin et al., 2011). Besides the economic impact, ethnic entrepreneurship has also a social impact on the development of a society. In other words, the exploration of ethnic entrepreneurs is very important for both social and economic reasons (Sahin et al., 2011).

The knowledge gained in this study contributes to society in various ways. First of all, it helps policy makers to better understand how to take into account the impact of subcultures on networking practices when implementing entrepreneurship promotion programmes (Klyver & Foley, 2012). In fact, it looks at the impact of the Moroccan culture on networking practices which possibly could lead to differences in networks between male and female entrepreneurs. Policy makers can use this knowledge to align their entrepreneurship promotion programmes with their audience.

Moreover, in addition to policymakers, community leaders can benefit from the knowledge gained in this study. Community leaders play an important role in the institutionalisation process of social norms, rules and values (Klyver & Foley, 2012). With the knowledge they gain in this research, they can improve or reduce the difficulties that minority entrepreneurs face due to the complex interaction with the mainstream business community and their minority group. Moreover, this research provides insight into gender differences. With this knowledge, community leaders can better understand the difficulties faced by both women and men minority entrepreneurs.

Finally, minority entrepreneurs themselves can apply this knowledge in their networking practices. Minority entrepreneurs should consider the social and personal consequences when integrating their subculture and the national culture (Klyver & Foley, 2012). This study provides knowledge about the possible differences in networking between male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs. This allows them to compare each other's networks, which gives them the possibility to see on which aspects of their network they still need to work on.

Klyver and Foley (2012) argue that there is reasonable research done on the impact of a national culture on entrepreneurship as has the importance of social networks to entrepreneurship. According to them, an understanding of the relationship between culture and social networks within entrepreneurship is missing. In their study, they recommend that further research is needed into the impact of culture and how it affects networking practices. Furthermore, very little is known about the dynamics and complexities of ethnicity, gender and entrepreneurship (Hanson & Blake, 2009; Essers

& Benschop, 2007). Hanson & Blake (2009) argue that studies have solely focused on gender and did not look at the intersection of culture and gender and how these affect entrepreneurial networks, so this remains unknown. This study addresses both of these issues in more detail by including the role of gender and culture in networking practices. In other words, it looks at the impact of culture on networking practices of both male and female minority entrepreneurs.

1.3 Objective and research question

The purpose of this research is to gain insight in how the Moroccan culture has an impact on the differences in networks and networking practices of Moroccan women and men entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. In order to achieve the purpose of this research, the following research question is central:

“How does the Moroccan culture explain differences in networks between Moroccan female and male entrepreneurs in the Netherlands?”

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The thesis starts with a review of the literature. The literature review provides theoretical insights on entrepreneurial networking, gender and culture and how they relate to each other. Afterwards, the methodology of this research is being discussed followed by the results, discussion and conclusion. Finally, the limitations are addressed with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical background

This chapter outlines the theory relating to entrepreneurship, networks, gender and Moroccan culture. First, it briefly explains what is understood by entrepreneurship in this study. Then the importance of networks and the characteristics of networks are discussed. Next, the theory regarding gender is explained, focusing on how it relates to networks. Finally, the role of ethnicity in entrepreneurship and networking is explained, in which the characteristics of the Moroccan culture are reviewed.

2.1 Entrepreneurial networking

Before discussing the concept of networking, it is important to understand what is meant by the term entrepreneur. In this study we adopt the following definition of entrepreneur: an entrepreneur is someone who owns, launches, manages and assumes the risks of an economic venture (Greve & Salaff, 2003). In other words, entrepreneurship involves innovation and uncertainty. Leyden et al. (2014) identified these two common characteristics of an entrepreneur, stating that an entrepreneur is an individual who (1) embraces uncertainty and (2) is an innovator. The uncertainty lies in the fact that the entrepreneur decides how to allocate his resources without being able to foresee which of them

will pay off best and that there is a chance of unforeseen circumstances. Innovation lies in the fact that the entrepreneur invents and applies new ideas to reduce costs or provide value in a new way (Leyden et al., 2014).

It is widely accepted that entrepreneurial activity is strongly influenced by social networks (Klyver & Foley, 2012). Social network analysis addresses the relationships between entrepreneurs and others who provide the resources that are important in establishing and running a business (Greve & Salaff, 2003). The people in the network who provide valuable resources are also called 'social capital' and they form the core of the network (Burt, 1992). Social capital is a social infrastructure created by groups or individuals through their personal relationships (Kuada, 2009).

Entrepreneurs need knowledge, capital and skills to start business activities. Some of these required resources are already available to them, but they often need to complement their resources by accessing their social networks (Greve & Salaff, 2003; Kuada, 2009). In fact, different scholars (Leyden et al., 2014; Jack et al., 2004; Sullivan & Meek, 2012) argue that networks improve entrepreneurial effectiveness. Thus, according to them, the entrepreneur's ability to exploit social networks is key to entrepreneurial success.

Furthermore, social networks consist of a variety of formal and informal relationships. Formal relationships are also called weak ties, while informal relationships are called strong ties. Strong ties are characterised by frequent interaction with the person in the network, while weak ties are characterised by less frequent interaction between the entrepreneur and his network (Granovetter, 1973). Strong and weak ties offer different advantages and disadvantages. For example, strong ties provide accurate, reliable, low-cost and appropriate resources. It is characterised by a high-trust relationship (Bouk et al., 2013). However, redundancy and poor capacity for bridging structural holes are seen as a weakness of strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). An important point made in the article by Jack et al (2004) is that strong ties tend to develop between people with similar social attributes. The social attributes shared by the entrepreneurs in this study is culture, language and religion. Therefore, it is expected in this study that the networks of both male and female entrepreneurs will consist mainly of strong ties. However, this will probably lead to redundant information. The entrepreneurs are active in the same social circles, which makes it difficult for them to access new information (Jack et al., 2004; Sullivan & Meek; 2012). Granovetter (1973) also argues that an entrepreneur who only interacts with strong ties has less opportunities to obtain valuable information. Weak ties, on the other hand, allow information to flow into the broader society. They provide access to others leading to the possibility of new and different information (Jack et al., 2004). However, this relationship is characterised by low-trust, which is why contractual agreements are often used (Bouk et al., 2013). All in all, an ideal network consists of both strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973; Greve & Salaff, 2003; Essers et al., 2021).

The concept of trust is linked with the concept of social networks (Kuada, 2009) as trust encourages the maintenance of relationships. In fact, trust in relationships leads to higher levels of loyalty and long-term collaboration between people (Kuada, 2009). A lack of trust could lead to higher transactions costs because of monitoring, for example. The degree of trust within weak ties depends on the social distance between the weak tie and the entrepreneur: the greater the distance, the lower the trust. Bouk et al. (2013, p. 774) define social distance as: "the differences between social groups in a society, for example the greater the differences with regard to gender, language, education, income, culture and/or religion, the greater the social distance". In the study by Bouk et al (2013), it emerged that the Dutch population perceives the social distance with Moroccans as greater than the social distance with any other community. This is mainly due to the differences in language, culture and religion between the Moroccan community and the Dutch community. In fact, Moroccans are one of the groups most rejected by the Dutch (Azghari et al., 2015). They are often negatively stereotyped as not belonging to Dutch society with its Western norms and values (Essers et al., 2021). This could lead not only to more distrust, but also to stronger negative attitudes towards Moroccans (Bouk et al., 2013). Due to the mistrust and negative attitudes towards the Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, it is therefore expected that in this research the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs will mainly consist of strong ties as trust can also be created through shared social characteristics such as ethnicity (Hanson & Blake, 2009). This means that the networks consist mainly of people with whom they can identify. This is in line with the findings of Jack et al (2004) and Majaiti (2017) that strong ties tend to develop between people with similar social attributes. The tendency to network with people who share the same social attributes is called 'homophily' (Hanson & Blake, 2009).

2.2 Gender

Research on the impact of gender on entrepreneurship has increased substantially during the past three decades (Kuada, 2009; Sullivan & Meek, 2012; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008). The growing interest comes from the fact that entrepreneurship is one avenue through which women can break through the glass ceiling encountered within organisations (Sullivan & Meek, 2012). In addition, entrepreneurship is also more often associated with increasing equality across socio-economic and demographic groups in society, leading to a growth in women entrepreneurs (Sullivan & Meek, 2012; Navarro & Jimenez, 2016).

Gender is relevant in network research because it influences the way networks are constructed and used (Hanson & Blake, 2009). Furthermore, networks are always about social interaction between individuals and/or groups and the positioning of an individual relative to each other, so they are also always about gender (Hanson & Blake, 2009). Entrepreneurship is male dominated leading to unequal interactions between men and women, with men having a higher status and greater power in these

interactions, simultaneously creates a cultural belief about gender and network structures (Hanson & Blake, 2009). As a result, women often have to deal with simplified gender stereotypes. An example is the assumption about women as mothers, or the assumption of a customer that an engineering company is run by a man and not a woman. In short, women experience discrimination that is based on shared gendered norms (Hanson & Blake, 2009, Constantinidis et al., 2018). As a result, women experience some barriers that hinder the implementation of entrepreneurial activities (Navarro & Jimenez, 2016).

Several studies support the idea that the networks of men and women differ significantly from each other (Hanson & Blake, 2009; Loscocco et al., 2009; Klyver & Terjesen, 2007). These differences in networks arise from the deep gendering of social life (Loscocco et al., 2009). Ironically, women cannot perform in ways that will gain the trust of others. The differences relate to different aspects of a network. Firstly, women's networks tend to be more homophilous than men's networks (Hanson & Blake, 2009). However, homophilous networks may lead to redundant information since the information comes from the same social circle. In other words, it is important to have a heterogeneous network. Heterogeneity refers to the diversity of the network. Diverse networks are considered to be good for business, since it provides access to more and different kinds of information and reduces the amount of redundant information (Loscocco et al., 2009). Secondly, women's networks contain a higher proportion of kin than men's networks (Hanson & Blake, 2009; Loscocco et al., 2009). Relationships with kin are characterised as strong ties and they can be valuable sources of social support. They also argue that support from relatives can be important for women entrepreneurs because they are active in a field that is still less typical for women than for men. Moreover, both women and men seek professional advice from other men (Cromie & Birley, 1992; Hanson & Blake, 2009; Loscocco et al., 2009). This is due to the fact that men have a higher social status which triggers an idea that they have more valuable resources to offer. However, the number of men and women in the network differs per context. The research of Klyver and Terjesen (2007) shows that women generally have fewer men in their networks. Another difference between women's and men's networks relates to network size (Loscocco et al., 2009). Larger networks offer more information, access to capital and other resources (Loscocco et al., 2009). In general, women have the same or larger networks than men (Loscocco et al., 2009; Klyver & Terjesen, 2007). In short, the literature on networks and gender shows clear differences in the networks of men and women. These differences are often the result of the different status positions inherent in gender relations (Hanson & Blake, 2009). This suggests that unless and until women and men have equal access to opportunities, gender differences in networks will remain (Hanson & Blake, 2009).

Although the focus here is on gender, Hanson & Blake (2009) argue that gender interfaces with other dimensions of social identity, such as ethnicity. The concept of intersectionality is related to this because it recognises the importance of interactions between culture and gender, among others

(Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers & Benschop, 2007). The concept of intersectionality focuses on taking into account the impact of multiple discriminations. These discriminations can be based on gender, class and race, which intersect and reinforce each other (Constantinidis et al., 2018). It is important to study gender in multiple categories to avoid underestimating the complexity of oppression (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Thus, it is not only gender but also culture that influences access to entrepreneurial networks, network composition and network effectiveness for the entrepreneur (Hanson & Blake, 2009). The next section will discuss the role of Moroccan culture in gender and entrepreneurial networks.

2.3 – Moroccan culture

Klyver & Foley (2012) argue that entrepreneurs appear to use their social networks differently depending on the culture in which they are embedded. In this research, culture is defined as '... collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of a particular group or category of people from those of another' (Hofstede, 1980, p.25). An expanded definition of culture is "a system of practices, rituals, beliefs, values, and ways of making meaning of a community" (Sadiqi, 2008, pp 1). In other words, these are accepted social norms that act as a guide to social action (Klyver & Foley, 2012).

It is relevant to look at the influence of Moroccan culture on networking because entrepreneurs may be influenced more by their minority culture than by the mainstream culture of the country (Klyver & Foley, 2012). Indeed, Moroccan culture strongly guides the behaviour of men and women (Sadiqi, 2008). Moreover, interacting with the mainstream country culture can be a difficult choice in some minority cultures because it is not seen as appropriate behaviour (Klyver & Foley, 2012). Therefore, in this study the focus is on gaining a better understanding of Moroccan culture and not Moroccan-Dutch culture. In fact, Azghari et al (2015) argue that most immigrants have a disadvantaged socioeconomic position that lasts at least two or three generations which impacts on their participation in society. In other words, because of the rejection by the dominant group due to the social distance, they identify themselves more with their country of origin. This is also reflected in the figures: 46% of the Moroccan-Dutch identified themselves as being more Moroccan than Dutch (Azghari et al., 2015). This percentage rose to 62% in 2011, while identification with the Netherlands fell from 14% to 7% (Azghari et al., 2015). In short, Moroccans identify themselves more with the country of origin, which also makes the culture of origin more dominant in their daily lives. In other words, Moroccans maintain their traditional culture more strongly (Essers & Benschop, 2007). Therefore, the focus of this study is on better understanding the Moroccan culture. However, in order to better understand how the Moroccan culture further influences the networking practices of Moroccan entrepreneurs, it is important to gain a better understanding of the Moroccan culture itself. Sadiqi (2008) provides a

comprehensive overview of the Moroccan cultural components that help to gain a better understanding of the culture and which are most relevant for examining the impact of the culture on networking behaviour of Moroccan entrepreneurs..

The first cultural component discussed is Morocco's national history. Sadiqi (2008) argues that Moroccan national history is determined by men. This means that the image of women is created from a male point of view with the result that the role of women is ignored or not seen as a priority. In other words, women have a subordinate role in a society where patriarchy is promoted (Sadiqi, 2008). Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Essers & Benschop, 2007). In short, the Moroccan patriarchal system is built on the exclusion of women from public power spaces (Sadiqi, 2008). As a result, Morocco has few female entrepreneurs; of the female population, only 4.7% are entrepreneurs (Constantinidis et al., 2018). However, legal reforms and political changes have significantly increased women's entrepreneurship over the past decade (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Yet women still suffer from traditional attitudes and perceptions of women's subordinate role in society (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Ghiat, 2017).

Besides history, religion is also an important part of the Moroccan culture. The behaviour, duties and obligations of both men and women are mainly based on Islamic laws, such as justice and leniency (Sadiqi, 2008; Graafland, Mazereeuw, & Yahia, 2006). In other words, both men and women Muslim entrepreneurs often still rely on religious norms regarding gender divisions and appropriate gender behaviour, because it provides a more stable and universally recognized set of principles for doing business. Jouili (2019) found a consistent emphasis in her research on the need to separate religion and culture. Culture was seen as the locus for those passively inherited practices with which Muslim societies, such as Moroccan society, are often associated (Jouili, 2019). By distinguishing culture from religion, it is possible to criticise some patriarchal practices (Jouili, 2019). Women do not feel disadvantaged by Islam as a religion as Islam protects the women (Ullah, Mahmud, & Yousuf, 2013), but they do feel disadvantaged by culture (Jouili, 2019). In addition to the components mentioned above, other things play an important role in the Moroccan culture. One of these is the role of the family, which is at the heart of Moroccan society (Sadiqi, 2008; Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers et al., 2021). However, Sadiqi (2008) only looks at the negative influence that family can have on entrepreneurs, while Constantinidis et al. (2018) highlights both the positive and negative influences.

“In this Moroccan context seeking a compromise between old traditional values and the growing emancipation of women at economic and social levels, the family circle can be an obstacle, or on the contrary, a significant support for women’s occupations” (Constantinidis et al., 2018, pp.1788)

Family has a direct influence on women's entrepreneurial activities (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Even though legal reforms have ensured that women no longer need to seek their husband's permission to

engage in economic activity, Moroccan traditions still have a very significant influence on family relations (Constantinidis et al., 2018). These traditions have to do with, among other things, gender roles and expectations towards women. Family members may have a negative attitude towards women entrepreneurs, due to traditional views on gender roles, with the result that women's overall inclusion in the economic sphere remains limited (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Goss et al., 2011). Another negative influence of family is the fact that the relationship between men and women in Moroccan families is based on a patriarchal system (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Sadiqi, 2008). This system is characterised by a gendered distribution of roles and responsibilities and very limited participation of women in family decision-making (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Sadiqi, 2008). In short, the strong patriarchal nature of Moroccan culture can cause women to experience a major barrier to become an entrepreneurs, as they would not conform to the gender roles of wives and mothers (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers & Benschop, 2009).

On the other hand, societies such as Morocco are also characterised by collectivist values. One of these collectivist values in these cultures is family solidarity, resulting in the possibility of family providing a great deal of support for the professional activities of individuals (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers et al., 2021). Family plays such an important role that the financial, social and human capital necessary for the creation and development of entrepreneurial activity is entirely dependent on family resources (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Family support ranges from financial (e.g. providing start-up capital, loan guarantee) professional (participating in decision-making, giving advice) and/or moral (encouraging in difficult times, listening) (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Moreover, the status of women in Moroccan society, in which they are seen as wives and mothers, reinforces dependency on the family (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Finally, due to the social distance as discussed in paragraph 2.1, Moroccan entrepreneurs tend to rely more on family (Essers & Benschop, 2007; Mababu, 2014; Bouk et al., 2013; Azghari et al., 2015; Essers et al., 2021). Thus, the lack of weak ties in the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs is mainly due to the social distance and the importance of collectivist values within the Moroccan culture.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology of this study. First, the choice of a certain research method and from which approach the research is conducted is explained. Next, the data sampling is discussed and the way in which the analysis is carried out. Finally, some issues related to research ethics are discussed.

3.1 Research methods

The aim of this study is to gain more insight into the influence of the Moroccan culture and gender on the networking activities of male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. The emphasis is on developing a better theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial networking activities, rather than on testing existing theories. This implies that networking should be seen as a process (Jack et al., 2004). It is about getting into the black box to investigate the real impact of culture and gender on networking (Jack et al., 2004). Research on this topic is still in its infancy, so an explorative approach is needed (Essers & Benschop, 2007). A qualitative research methodology allows for a more detailed and richer analysis (Jack et al., 2004). Although the structure of a network can be measured using quantitative methods, qualitative methods are needed to investigate and understand what actually happens within networks (Jack et al., 2004). Indeed, it is very difficult to understand the structure of a network without understanding the context from which it was formed (Jack et al., 2004). A qualitative method corresponds to the aim of this study which is related to understanding rather than measurement: the emphasis is on the meanings behind actions. The issues addressed in this study do not lend themselves to quantification (Jack et al., 2004). Moreover, the literature argues for qualitative work in order to arrive at richer and more dynamic theories (Jack et al., 2004). The use of qualitative techniques in network research offers an effective way to explore and compare the characteristics and content of networks (Jack et al., 2004). Finally, qualitative research makes it possible to be in direct contact with the respondents through interviews. This gives the researcher the opportunity to explain certain terms that the respondents might not understand.

This study is examined from a post-structuralist view, which is consistent with the qualitative method. In the post-structuralist perspective, the emphasis is on discourses (Symon & Cassell, 2012). These are subjective and linguistically formed ways of experiencing and acting on particular phenomena (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Through historical and social contingent discourses one tries to make sense of the world (Symon & Cassell, 2012). An important method in this perspective is the discourse analysis (Symon & Cassell, 2012) which makes it possible to better understand the stories of the respondents (Essers, 2009). The emphasis is on a critical reading of the stories with attention to what exactly was said and in what way (Essers & Benschop, 2007). The intersectional approach is also central to this study. This helps to identify how gender interacts with culture, especially in the family context (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Furthermore, it highlights the complexities that the Moroccan women entrepreneurs have to deal with (Constantinidis et al., 2018). Again, it emerges that family is a key

dimension to consider, because they interact with the professional contexts of women entrepreneurs and provide an informed understanding of women's entrepreneurship (Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers et al., 2021). As we have seen in section 2.3, family plays an important role and the intersectionality approach helps in understanding more clearly how Moroccan women and men give shape to their entrepreneurship. Finally, the use of qualitative methods is justified because it is relevant to "capture the multiple, intersecting, and complex social relations" (Constantinidis et al., 2018, pp. 1792) which also characterises the intersectionality approach.

3.2 Data sampling & analysis

A literature study is conducted to develop theoretical insights and subsequently interviews are conducted to obtain empirical material in order to elaborate on both insights. For almost all qualitative research it is necessary to consider carefully who and how to choose research participants (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The choice of research participants is driven by the purpose of the research, enabling the researcher to meet the research question (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The choice to research Moroccan entrepreneurs is explained in the introduction. Furthermore, it is important to estimate the required sample size when designing your qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). However, there are no clear guidelines regarding the likely numbers of participants needed. An often-used guideline is to collect data until there is a saturation point; the point at which no new information are observed in the data (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In fact, it is argued that saturation is key to excellent qualitative work, but again, it is still unclear how many respondents are needed to reach the saturation point (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Another recommendation is to interview at least 12 to 15 respondents for qualitative research. In this study, twelve entrepreneurs were interviewed which was deemed sufficient to obtain rich and detailed information to examine the issues addressed. An overview of the respondent's characteristics as age, gender, and type of business can be found in Appendix 1. The respondents in this study are of Moroccan origin and have a business in the Netherlands. Respondents have been approached through an entrepreneurial Moroccan community group on Facebook, personal messages on Instagram and LinkedIn. Especially LinkedIn facilitated the process of getting in touch with Moroccan entrepreneurs. Search terms such as "entrepreneur" and "owner" were used on LinkedIn. Then the filter "connections from" was applied, which gives the possibility to see all entrepreneurs and owners in the network of your connection. Individuals used from my network were Moroccan entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs had mainly Moroccan entrepreneurs and owners in their network. The respondents were all willing to contribute to the research, which I will elaborate more on in chapter 6. Although the sample of Moroccan entrepreneurs does not represent the entire Moroccan entrepreneurial universe, it does provide useful and rigorous data about how culture impacts their networking practices. Furthermore, the qualitative methods provide sufficient depth of data to allow a meaningful analysis (Jack et al., 2004). The goal of the analysis is to find pieces of texts in the

transcripts that say something about the networking activities and networks of the respondents and not to draw broad generalizations.

Furthermore, qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, are suitable for answering "how" questions that are also applicable in this study. The interviews are semi-structured which allows to discuss specific themes and at the same time provide some space for my participants to articulate their values and beliefs (Verduijn & Essers, 2013; Jones, 2017). As a result, it is possible to explore the impact of culture on networking (Jack et al., 2004). Qualitative interviews allow respondents to speak freely about their individual stories and experiences (Constantinidis et al., 2018). In addition, it also gives the researcher the opportunity to ask new questions. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted an average of one hour. The decision to conduct the interviews online was based on both theoretical and practical considerations. Due to time and financial constraints and geographical dispersion boundaries, it was not practical to conduct the interviews face-to-face on-site. It was not possible for the researcher to travel to the respondents by public transport. However, technological changes have improved the experience of online interviewing in qualitative research and have reduced the problems related to face-to-face (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). By using the web camera, the interaction is rather similar to the onsite equivalent for the presence of nonverbal and social cues (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). Moreover, the entrepreneurs were busy, for example, some appointments were rescheduled. The possibility of conducting online interviews ensured that the entrepreneurs could participate in the research. In other words, the interviews occurred in more convenient conditions for the participants resulting in an increase in participation. The interviews consisted of a short introduction, followed by an explanation of the research, introduction of the respondent and finally a series of semi-structured questions. Each interview is fully recorded with permission of the respondent and transcribed verbatim afterward. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, since the respondents run an enterprise in the Netherlands. The full interview transcripts are transcribed in their original language, only selected quotes to support the findings are translated into English. The interview transcripts are included in an extra appendix.

Finally, measurement of social capital can be difficult as there is no agreed definition of how to define or measure a business owner's social capital (Khazami, Nefzi & Jaouadi, 2020; Neergaard, Shaw & Carter, 2005). Measurement of social capital from the network perspective has traditionally been measured with a name-generating methodology (Lin, 2008). The name-generating methodology is a person-focused methodology, intended to create a list of individuals in the entrepreneur's networks (Lin, 2008). This methodology is useful for identifying strong ties in the entrepreneur's networks. However, this name-generating methodology has several limitations. First, the number of names generated is limited, typically ranging from only three to five (Lin, 2008). Moreover, the persons who are named are usually those with stronger relationships to the entrepreneur, so the resources tend to be homogeneous. To compensate for these limitations, the interview questions also covered the five key

dimensions of networks (Klyver & Foley, 2012). These dimensions ensure that a larger number of actors in the networks of the entrepreneurs will be examined. This makes it possible to gain insight into the extent of weak ties in the networks. These five key dimensions are (1) size of network (including the name-generating method), (2) gender distribution, (3) diversity (in age, industry, culture), (4) role of family, and (5) drivers for activation of relationships. As has been discussed, the intersection between gender and culture can cause women and men to network differently. These dimensions may reveal whether this is also the case for male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. The interview questions are based on each dimension in order to get a clear understanding of the networks and networking activities of Moroccan female and male entrepreneurs. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

As mentioned earlier, by conducting semi-structured interviews I was able to discuss the five key dimensions while at the same time allowing the respondents to talk about how Moroccan culture influences them. I read the transcripts and marked the codes according to the five key dimensions of networks. Each dimension had its own colour. The parts of the stories referring to these five key dimensions were discursively analysed to elicit why and how things were said in particular contexts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This made it possible to gain a better understanding of how the Moroccan culture influenced these five key dimensions. The coding process is illustrated in Appendix 3.

3.3 Research ethics

What distinguishes qualitative research is its proximity to what is being studied (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Researchers in qualitative research evaluate what is of significance and engage with this (Symon & Cassell, 2012). However, being close to what is being studied does not make it more ethical (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Ethical research involves "both apprenticeship in and a commitment to establishing the methodological norms associated with investigating phenomena and the theories established around them" (Symon & Cassell, 2012, pp. 8). There are no set of duties by which researches might consider their practices as ethical, but some virtues by which the use of practical reason can arise are provided by Symon and Cassell (2012). The first virtue is deliberative conversation, in which the researchers are required to talk about the ideas clearly and in an open manner (Symon & Cassell, 2012). It is also important to think about the organisation of the interviews. Some examples are (1) allowing silences (2) giving enough space to the respondent to speak and (3) the choice of venues in which the conversations cannot be overheard or interrupted (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In this study, through the semi-structured interviews, enough space is given to the respondents to tell their story. Moreover, as discussed earlier, the interviews took place online, which allows for conscious consideration of space. A second virtue is the sensitivity in handling the participant data (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Information obtained from the respondents is not a mute possession, but the

residue of their lives that will often warrant confidentiality or anonymity (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore, the data is properly secured with a password and stored in a safe place. Moreover, it is important to inform the participants well in advance about the purpose of the research, the level of their expected involvement and duration (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Furthermore, in this study, respondents were asked if they would prefer to contribute to this study anonymously. Each respondent is asked if they are OK with being interviewed via Zoom and whether it is OK that the interview will be recorded. They are also given the option of turning off their webcam or blurring their background. Furthermore they are told that the recording will be deleted after the research is completed. Upon receiving the results, respondents will be notified via e-mail or WhatsApp and offered the opportunity to read the study. It is also important to recognise that the interests of participants could potentially be in tension with the researchers interests (Symon & Cassell, 2012). For example, it could be that respondents use the researcher as an audience because of his university affiliation (Essers & Benschop, 2007). The researcher also belonged to the minority culture of the respondents, which is why it is expected that the respondents will be more open to talk more extensively about the topic out of a sense of identification. Since topics such as discrimination and gender are discussed, it is important that the interviewee is approached in a trustworthy manner (Essers, 2009). Because of the same cultural background of the researcher, there was a rather trustworthy atmosphere and the respondents seemed to be very enthusiastic to participate. Furthermore, the researcher speaks and understands Arabic, which was considered advantageous for analyzing the data. I believe that the cultural understanding is being enhanced when researchers share the same ethnic background.

To ensure the implementation of the above principles, a signed research integrity form is added in an extra Appendix.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

The empirical data indicates that the Moroccan culture primarily concerns the network dimensions of the role of family, the gender division and diversity of the network. This chapter will take a closer look at these network dimensions and how Moroccan culture seems to influence them.

4.1 The role of family

In the theoretical framework it was argued that family plays an important role in the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs. The empirical findings of this study do not deviate from these arguments. However, previous research has argued that women's networks contain a higher proportion of kin than men's networks. For this sample, it seemed that the proportion of kin was the same. Nonetheless, it is more interesting to look at why and in which ways family plays an important role.

From the empirical data, it appears that family plays an important role in whether they stimulate entrepreneurship or not. For example, some entrepreneurs said that their families encouraged them a lot to become an entrepreneur. This was the case with Ismail. His parents were entrepreneurs themselves. They had the first Moroccan fashion shop in the Netherlands. This allowed Ismail to enjoy a certain reputation which had a positive effect on developing and using his network because everyone knew who he was. His brothers are entrepreneurs too, which shows that he really comes from an entrepreneurial family. In the following quote, Ismail illustrates the difference between an entrepreneurial family and an employed family:

"You stimulate each other when you come from an entrepreneurial background. If I have a new initiative, my brothers can give me good advice. And they can also say yes, do it, if you only ... Uh if you have a family or a circle that is employed, then that step is more difficult for you. Oh, take it easy, O uh, don't rush it." (Ismail)

The quote suggests that Ismail is well aware of the difference between an entrepreneurial family and an employed family. According to him, an entrepreneurial family offers the possibility to "*stimulate*" and "*advise*" each other, while an employed family makes the step towards entrepreneurship "*more difficult*". His ability to give relevant examples demonstrates that this issue exists within the Moroccan community. He also expresses a negative sentiment towards being employed, as he said that his family has a contemptuous attitude towards paid employment. Contrary to Ismail, most entrepreneurs in this study experienced a completely different feeling. The general moral of the Moroccan entrepreneurs was that they were not encouraged at all. Both male and female entrepreneurs were rather advised by their parents to get a good job and work in paid employment, as experienced by Rayan: "*No no no, my parents uh said: go and work for a company just to be on the safe side*". This quote seems to reflect the habit of risk avoidance inherent in Moroccan culture. A study by Gray, Foster and Howard (2006) shows that Moroccan entrepreneurs scored very low on risk-taking behaviour. Rayan's reaction shows that he obviously was not encouraged to entrepreneurship, saying "*no*" several times. Both male and

female entrepreneurs in this study indicated that their fathers were in paid employment until they retired, so they passed this on to them. This is a common phenomenon that was repeatedly mentioned during the interviews. Something similar is voiced by Karima, saying:

"When I told my father that I was going to start my own business and my sister, yes, they all had their jobs with employers, they were like, what are you going to do!? Yes, I quit my job, I'm going to start on my own. They were really like, 'Oh dear. Uh, is that wise? Uhm, so n no, I don't think my father really aimed at uh entrepreneurship." (Karima)

This quote demonstrates how Karima's family reacted when she told them that she is going to be an entrepreneur. It emerges that she was not encouraged by her family, as her family reacted surprised and shocked ("what are you going to do!?") when she told them that she wants to become an entrepreneur. They also seemed concerned ("Oh dear") about her choice to quit her job and start a business. These reactions could make her hesitate to start up a business, because her family did not support her. This seems to be reflected in her soft and uncertain voice, emphasizing the struggle. These signs of resistance to entrepreneurial activity are also mentioned by Saida. When asked whether she was encouraged to do business, she said 'no' and laughed. This could mean that she recognised and/or experienced this very well. Moreover, she indicated that it was really an inhibition to start doing business, as her father considered it "normal" to work for a company until he retired:

"No, my father was always in paid employment until he retired. So, um, he thought it was very normal to work for a boss ... but I found it difficult for myself. I still found it challenging because I don't really come from an entrepreneurial family." (Saida).

This quote adds to the narrative that the Moroccan entrepreneurs in this study seem not to be encouraged. Saida said that she found it very "challenging" to take the step towards entrepreneurship because she did not come from an entrepreneurial family. So it seems she already knew she could not rely on any family support, which made her doubt her choice to become an entrepreneur. I noticed a somewhat anxious expression on Saida's face, reflecting her negative experience with this situation.

In this study, only two female entrepreneurs and one male entrepreneur were encouraged to become an entrepreneur. So, for this sample, it seems that most respondents were not stimulated to be entrepreneurs. Both men and women indicate that because their father used to be employed, they were not encouraged to start a business. Rather, they had to choose job security and avoid risks. As a result, entrepreneurs may have to figure out everything themselves. This may explain why some of the entrepreneurs struggled to use and develop their network. This is illustrated by a quote from Rayan:

"I'm from the second generation, so you don't get it automatically because your parents don't give it to you, so you really have to find out for yourself. And, uh, how does that work and how do you pick up on it? So in the beginning it was indeed very difficult to find out." (Rayan)


Rayan's story seems to indicate that entrepreneurs who did not receive support from home experienced more difficulties starting an business. As he was explaining this, I noticed that his tone of voice became insecure, which may indicate that he has really struggled in his entrepreneurial endeavours. He also seems to indicate (implicitly) that the first-generation Moroccans express a negative sentiment towards entrepreneurship, whereas second-generation do not share this feeling. This feeling is in line with the study of Jansen et al. (2003) stating that first-generation immigrants are less likely to be entrepreneurs, whereas second-generation immigrants are.

On the other hand, it seems that when you do receive support, it positively affects the networking activities. For example, Fatma said she is aware of the importance of networking, because this is what she was taught at home:

"No, I actually, uh, figured out right from childhood how to do that and that you need it. That is, uh, from my father always, uh, about uh, did play a clear role at home. He always had a big network in Morocco, so it's not something we have from nowhere, that you need that."

(Fatma)

Fatma expressed an awareness of the role her father played in making her aware of the importance of networking, saying that she already figured out the importance of networking from her "childhood". Fatma's tone of voice expresses gratitude towards her father, emphasizing the important role of family within the network. According to her, this is the reason why she did not experience any troubles with developing and using her networks. As briefly discussed in chapter 2, women with networks composed of family who also have entrepreneurial experience have better access to information that helps with their entrepreneurial activities. The empirical findings of this this study seem to be in line with this. In addition, the empirical data seems to indicate that not only female, but also male entrepreneurs benefit from this, as discussed by Ismail. However, no pattern can be identified as to whether men were encouraged more often than women by their families to become an entrepreneur. On the other hand, apart from one-off situations, the empirical data seems to provide some indications as to why both male and female entrepreneurs were not encouraged. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The theory in chapter 2, on the role of family in Moroccan culture, mainly focused on the fact that women were less likely to be supported in entrepreneurship because of the traditional views on gender roles of wives and mothers. However, in this study, both men and women seemed not to be encouraged to start a business. Mohamed  said that the lack of support for entrepreneurship was due to the Moroccan culture:

"Uhm, as I said of entrepreneurship, that is not really something that is popular in the Moroccan culture. You work for the other in salaried employment, I think that is more

common. And the steps you take towards entrepreneurship, that was no, family had a less important role in uh in that." (Mohamed)

The quote above provides some indications why both men and women were not encouraged to become an entrepreneur. According to Mohamed, within the Moroccan culture it is more "common" to work for a company. This reflects the avoidance of risk as described earlier in the case of Rayan. As such, he suggests that family played a "less important" role in becoming an entrepreneur. Houssam and Ibrahim provided some reasons for this tendency to work for a company:

"But that is also inherent in the (Moroccan) culture. You have to keep in mind that they come from a very unfair country, where it's all about having connections and money ... When I say to my father: I'm going to start my own business, he says: no a waldi (my son), please, uh uh, you've studied at university, go work for a big company. Then you get a reaction like that, which makes you think: it's also a bit of fear. Because a generation ago, our ancestors, our parents, they come from very unfair societies." (Houssam)

"What I do know is the previous generation had no ambitions to do business. They were not able to do business, they did not understand it." (Ibrahim)

Again, both narratives seem to indicate that first-generation Moroccans do not have an entrepreneurial background. Houssam's narrative is very rational and powerful, as he exposes the "unfair society" in Morocco. This has created a fear of entrepreneurship among first generation Moroccans, as you will not get anywhere without money and contacts. This fear also reflects the avoidance of risk, which is passed on to the second-generation. However, Houssam's attitude seems to indicate that he does not experience this fear, as he suggests that he does not experience this inequality in society. Ibrahim further explains that first generation Moroccans simply lacked the "ambition" and knowledge to become entrepreneurs. While he was telling his story, I noticed a feeling of sympathy towards first-generation Moroccans. The lack of ambition and knowledge seems to be a result of the Dutch immigration policy. This policy was introduced after the Second World War in order to solve labour shortages in the Netherlands. Therefore, the immigration policy was specifically aimed at recruiting employees, not recruiting entrepreneurs (Jansen et al., 2003). Nevertheless, both narratives provide some explanations as to why first-generation Moroccans didn't have an entrepreneurial background. As a result, both male and female entrepreneurs in this study were not encouraged by their families to start a business.

Yet, some respondents also indicated that they recognise the traditional gender roles of wives and mothers within the Moroccan community. For example, Fatima specifically stated that women in particular were less likely to be supported in becoming an entrepreneur. Aisha's story seems to reflect these traditional genders, as she said that it is the women who stand in the kitchen when there are guests, not the men. This illustrates the ascription of the traditional gender and caring roles to Muslim

women and a working role to men (Essers et al., 2021). When asked how she feels about these traditional gender roles making women less fit to be entrepreneurs, she reacts embarrassed and she disagrees: "Uh, well I wouldn't say that, to be honest". In the following quote, Aisha shows another way in which she was confronted with these traditional gender roles:

"And it used to be like that at our home. My parents were like; no, from school to home, from internship to home. Uh, evening internship; no. But now I'm talking about twenty, twenty-five years ago. And um, I honestly thought that we passed that period, but that's not the case. It still happens and I actually think that's very sad." (Aisha)

The very fact that, according to her, these traditional gender roles still exist, touches her deeply ("sad"). As she is referring back to 25 years ago with the expectation that "we had passed that period" reveals her disappointment. As a result of these traditional gender roles, she always had to return home immediately. Although the women in this study have all become entrepreneurs, and therefore do not conform to these traditional gender roles, it may explain why women could be less supported in becoming entrepreneurs. It is noteworthy that Ismail commented that he had the impression that there were more male Moroccan entrepreneurs, which relates to these traditional gender roles where women are seen as wives and mothers. However, we must be careful about making such statements. Especially since four out of twelve respondents, including two male and two female entrepreneurs, indicated that they do not recognise these traditional gender roles. According to Jaouad, these traditional gender roles are not feasible anymore:

"We live in the Netherlands and we don't live in Morocco or Turkey or any other Islamic country. The rules are different there. Then it would be very easy for a woman to keep that tradition. And here in the Netherlands it is impossible to have a housewife. We live in a modern world, here everything is about money and if you don't have an income, then it's just very difficult man." (Jaouad)

Jaouad's story reveals that he does not see these traditional gender roles in his environment. He seemed to be annoyed with this question and his tone of voice was also dismissive, which is visible in his comparison between the Netherlands and the Islamic countries. He strongly neglects the existence of the patriarchal character of the Moroccan migrant communities within the Netherlands. He assumes that because of the regulations in the Netherlands, it is impossible to preserve these traditional gender roles. In addition, he thinks it is impossible to have a housewife in this modern world, where everything is about money. However, his feelings about these traditional role patterns may be based on his business environment, as he interacts primarily with women. Although the majority of the interviewees recognise the traditional gender roles within the Moroccan community, they (women in this study) do not conform to these traditional gender roles. Therefore, based on the empirical data,

there seems no evidence that these traditional gender roles influence the networking activities of the women entrepreneurs in this study.

In addition to whether or not family stimulates entrepreneurship, they seem to play a more important role than other people in the network of both female and male Moroccan entrepreneurs. The empirical data provides some indications that family plays an important role because of the Moroccan culture. The following quotes illustrate this well:

“Yes, yes. think so. That's the first thing you turn to. So first thing you turn to is your family. That's something I think is also a cultural thing.” (Ismail)

“Yes, I actually think both. From my Moroccan background as well as from my religious background, I think it is very important to keep good family ties, so to speak. Yes, that is very important.” (Aisha)

Both quotes reflect the dominant narrative that is found during the interviews. Ismail and Aisha indicated that because of their Moroccan background, family plays an important role in their network. Aisha even mentioned that it is not only from her Moroccan background, but also from her religious background. This is also argued by Essers et al. (2021) saying that family plays a central role not only based on cultural values but which is also emphasized in Islam. In that sense, they spoke convincingly, saying that it is “*very important*” to keep good family ties. What I noticed is that they both had a light-hearted and comfortable way of speaking when they were talking about their family. This reflects the sense of belonging they have to their families. In other words, family seems to be a strong tie for most of the entrepreneurs in this study. As discussed in the theoretical framework, strong ties are characterised by a high degree of trust. This also emerged during the interviews. For example, Rayan indicated that he never had to doubt the intention of his family, reflecting a high degree of trust. A similar feeling is voiced by Ismail:

“They do play an important role in which you often discuss, exchange thoughts and so on. And you can be more open with them, because there is a certain level of trust. With the people from other parts of your network, you can't say, 'yes, I'm having a bit of a difficult time' and so on, but you keep that to yourself. The emotional and certain problems you do experience, yes, you'd rather keep that to yourself. You don't put it on the record.” (Ismail)

Ismail shows the important role of family where he experiences “*a certain level of trust*”. Ismail's tone of voice implies a relief that he can turn to his family to discuss personal issues, since he could be more “*open*” with them. According to him, it is better not to share your problems with other people in the network. His quote reflects the dominant narrative that family plays in the networks of the male Moroccan entrepreneurs in this study. In other words, the empirical data suggest that family has primarily an emotional role in the networks of male entrepreneurs. Family seems to play a less

important role on professional level. This is because family members were not well informed and did not understand what they were doing. A second reason mentioned is that they can't always keep things professional with family members, because emotions play a role there, which eventually may lead to conflicts. The following quote illustrates that Houssam's family has an emotional role and not a professional one within his network

"Yeah, you know, somewhere there is a kind of comfort and a bit of a homecoming feeling. Uh, and eating together and everything. But the moment I really start talking about work with uh, with family then you lose them very quickly. Uh, so I very quickly taught myself that I just don't share things like that with them uh.. Uh, I finally, look, if you really want to talk about something that's not going well, then you do want someone to understand you". (Houssam)

The quote provide some indications why family plays a less important role on a professional level. For example, a lack of understanding the context is a barrier to talking about work, because the family does not understand what you do exactly. The emotional role of the family is reflected in saying that there is a “*kind of comfort*” when he is with his family. The tone of voice seems a little annoyed, especially in the last sentence where Houssam says that it is important that someone needs to understands him. Houssam also said that he has tried to discuss business with his family in the past, but that he received little understanding from them. This may stir up his frustration.

The empirical data regarding the role of family in female’s networks seems to indicate that women use family both professionally and emotionally. This may be due to the fact that family can be very supportive on a professional level, as they are active in a field which is typical for men. This is in line with the theory from chapter 2 whereby it is argued that support from family members can be important for women entrepreneurs because they are active in a field that is still less typical for women. Finally, as will be explained further on, the Moroccan culture complicates contact with the opposite gender, which reduces their opportunities for professional contact with men. This could also explain why family plays a professional role within the networks of female entrepreneurs.

4.2 Gender composition of the networks

The empirical data seems to indicate that the Moroccan culture has an impact on the division of men and women in the network of Moroccan entrepreneurs. In this study, the network of male entrepreneurs consists largely of men, while the network of female entrepreneurs consists largely of women. The proportions do vary, with the network of a male entrepreneur consisting between 60-95% of men. In a few cases, the network consists of an equal ratio of men and women. In this study, both male and female entrepreneurs indicate that contact with the opposite gender is often experienced as more formal and difficult. There is less room for jokes, for example, because they may be misinterpreted. The following quote illustrates this:

“But you notice that keeping in touch or making contact is uh is a bit more of a barrier. It has to be serious business. That is really a culture thing ... You also notice the use of language. You are going to communicate more formally, because yes, I want to ask you a business question and by using language you can let the Moroccan woman know Oh, wait a minute, this is a purely business request he is making now or a question, whereas with a man I am much freer to make a joke”(Ismail)

Ismail’s experience is the dominant narrative that is found during the interviews. Making contact with the opposite gender is experienced as a “*barrier*”. This barrier is constituted by the Qur'an in which no contact is allowed with the opposite gender that are not related by blood or marriage (McIntosh & Islam, 2010). I noticed that Ismail could talk to me in a light-hearted way about this issue, probably because I am also a man. The examples from his experience indicate that he encountered such situations in which contact with a woman was more complicated and allowed for less jokes, since he had to communicate “*formally*” to make sure that he keeps it professional. The quote gives some indications that the Moroccan culture complicates this contact as he says that it is really a “*culture thing*”. Moreover, as highlighted in the study by Essers and Benschop (2007), women try to protect their honour by wearing a headscarf and closely monitoring their conversations. In general, the women in this study did wear a headscarf during the interviews and closely monitoring their conversations refers to ensuring the professional contact between them and men.

Some respondents recognise the discomfort in the contact between men and women in themselves or in someone else. This could possibly explain why women had more women in their network and men more men. Only Fatima and Fatma indicated that the gender division in their network was 50/50. Coincidentally, these two women also did not experience any discomfort when they made contact with men. Remarkably, Fatima had more men than women in her network in the beginning. She says:

“Well, of course I worked in a man's world for a very long time, so I'm actually used to work with men. But I also grew up in a house with only men. I've actually always been a "man girl". But I have to tell you that in the last few years a lot of women have joined my network, who live their lives in the same way ... They are done with the optical world and the gender roles and so on.” (Fatima)

In her narrative, some indications are given regarding why she initially had more men in her network than women. First, she worked in a “*man's world*” for a very long time, so she primarily interacted with men. This is also related to the “*gender roles*” she refers to; due to traditional gender roles, her network consisted of less women. Fatima herself says that she is a “*revolutionary*” Moroccan female entrepreneur, emphasizing her awareness of her unusual situation. Secondly, she grew up with men, which may result in her being able to interact better with men. When asked if she recognized the discomfort in contact with the opposite gender, she convincingly responded “*yes, of course!*”.

However, she herself does not experience this discomfort. For instance, Fatima says that she must have some emotional bond with men with whom she connects, otherwise she doesn't want to connect. This illustrates that she does not experience the discomfort in contact with men, where it tends to be formal and professional. However, the empirical data seems to indicate that Fatima's experience is rather exceptional. The next section further elaborates on the roles men and women play in the networks of male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs.

The empirical data indicates that men mainly play a professional role within the networks of female entrepreneurs, whereas women play an emotional one. This seems to be a consequence of the Moroccan culture which complicates the interaction between men and women, where contact must be formal and professional. The following quote illustrates this well:

"But generally speaking, uh, men, only yes, you speak to them a little less, you speak to them, uh, purely at the moment. Only when you really, really need someone or need something, I notice. Uhm, that's uh, that's what I notice. And look, with women you are also more informal, I notice myself. And I have less of that with men." (Saida)

Saida's story is the dominant narrative that is found during the interviews in the case of female entrepreneurs. Her story seems to indicate that men are only approached when she "*really need someone or something*". Moreover, she seems to indicate that contact with men is primarily formal. Both of these things indicate a professional relationship. In addition, as argued in chapter 2, women generally tend to rely on men when seeking advice because men occupy a higher status. While this is not culturally bound, it does suggest another reason why women tend to have professional relationships with men. In the case of Fatima and Fatma, where the gender division is fifty-fifty and they did not experience any discomfort in contact with men, we see that men play both an emotional and a professional role in the network.

If we look at the networks of men, it seems that women could have a professional and/or an emotional role. Based on the empirical data, there is no particular pattern to be found in the roles of women in the network. In the networks where women mainly play a professional role, I also notice the discomfort in contact with the opposite gender:

"I keep it professional. So I will never make jokes with women for example, which is something I do very often with men. So, I keep it with women, from an Islamic point of view, very professional." (Ibrahim)

From Ibrahim's story, it emerges that from an "*Islamic point of view*" he keeps it very professional with women. This is related to the professional contact with women within the Moroccan culture. Again, there is less room for a joke, whereas with men there is. Ibrahim's tone of voice was very rational, which may indicate that he is conscious about this and fully committed to it. The fact that he

keeps it purely professional with women may lead to a lack of opportunity to build emotional relationships in the network. Remarkably, he seems to compensate for this lack by also building up emotional relationships with men: *"The boundary (between professional and emotional) is very thin, because everyone who is professional becomes my friend at some point."* However, Mohamed seems to indicate that he relies on women for emotional support and on men for professional advice. Mohamed also states that he does not feel uncomfortable having contact with the opposite gender. However, he indicates that he has more frequent contact with men compared to women. This seems to be related to his sector, namely IT. As a result, he explains that he is networking more often on a professional level than on an emotional level. Furthermore, the empirical seems to indicate that men generally play a professional role in the networks of male entrepreneurs. This corresponds to the literature that argues that men rely on members of their own sex for advice (Cromie & Birley, 1992; Ibarra, 1992). In addition, the empirical data seems to indicate that some male entrepreneurs also build an emotional relationship with men in their network, since the Moroccan culture limits this possibility to do so with women.

The following quote clearly indicates that an emotional bond is possible with men, while this is not possible with women:

"The men are easier to get on with ... Look, what I do is I invite everybody over to my house once. I don't do that with women ... Uh, come have coffee with me, I don't do that with women. So I can start a friendship with men, but not with women" (Ibrahim)

Something similar is voiced by Rayan:

"But yes, that certainly plays a role, I could, for example, invite a man to my home for a cup of coffee sooner than uh The Moroccan lady" (Rayan)

Both Ibrahim and Rayan indicate that men can be invited to their homes while women cannot. Because of this, as Ibrahim indicates, it is possible to develop a friendship with men and not with the women. This indicates that with men a relationship can be built both on a professional and emotional level, while with women it is more often maintained on a professional level. Ibrahim explained his story convincingly, making it seem that he had no problems with the situation. Rayan, on the other hand, seemed to have more difficulty in explaining why women were not welcome at his place, eventually assuming that I understood what he was trying to say. However, this seems only be the case for male entrepreneurs who experience discomfort in contact with the opposite gender.

4.3 The influence of the Moroccan culture on network diversity

Finally, the interviews provide some indications that the Moroccan culture also influences the diversity of the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs. The diversity in terms of age and professional fields varied per person, and the Moroccan culture seemed to have no influence on this. However, the

Moroccan culture seemed to influence the diversity with regard to the different cultures and/or religions in the networks. These were generally limited to the Islamic community and/or the Moroccan culture. Some reasons for this were given during the interviews, which will be elaborated on in the next paragraphs.

Firstly, the empirical data of this study indicates that the respondents were guided by their religion and based their networking on the Islamic rules. In fact, Ismail had sold his well-run business for millions because it was involved in haram business, saying:

“You have to imagine: I had a successful business. I even built another location. But I am unhappy. Why? Because of the pressure on my shoulders of doing things that are not allowed, even you feel like you are a decent person ... Again, it's not about your opinion or mine, but in our religion there are strict rules and you are doing things wrong and at some point I wanted to sell it. Well, almost all the people who knew me called me crazy, but I did it alhamdulillah and I am happy.” (Ismail)

The feeling expressed by Ismail really indicates that the Islamic rules are important, saying; *“it's not about your opinion or mine, but in our religion there are strict rules”*. Even when he was running a business worth of millions, he was still *“unhappy”*. I noticed that his tone of voice became lower and shaky. In this way he expressed that selling his business was not easy and/or that he felt very unhappy at that time. When he had sold the company, he felt good and happy. He also explains that two months after selling his business, COVID-19 struck. He referred to the praise of Allah s.w.t. for having sold his business. Again, this seems to indicate that religion plays an important role among the Moroccan entrepreneurs. As a result, some entrepreneurs were consciously networking with people who also had an Islamic background. They indicated that it was easier to do business with entrepreneurs who also had the same standards and values. The following quotes reflect this:

"Absolutely., I'm in talks with a party to, uh, we also have some catering outlets, and I'm in talks with a party who wants to offer me a catering outlet and I'd like to take over that outlet very much. I did say I'll only take it over if I can make some changes in the menu, uh, you know, alcohol will be removed, pork will be removed Uhm, and that doesn't work out, because it's a franchise concept, Uh, and the franchisor doesn't want to go along with that. So I uh, it's a tough negotiation." (Houssam)

"I started to cut down on my network because I just, I was of the opinion at the time that you were not uh not allowed to be present when alcohol was being consumed for example. Uh I was also of the opinion that you were not allowed to be at a birthday party and those were all things that I no longer agree with. Uh, but they did cause me to thin out my network because I thought, uh, better no network than alcohol. (Ibrahim)

Both stories highlight the experience of networking with people outside the Islamic community. Houssam, for example, says that he does not want to serve alcohol and pork and that this results in a "tough negotiation". His 'Islamic way' of approaching business feels better to him, and he does not want to become part of the Dutch way of doing business. This experience could possibly explain why the Moroccan entrepreneurs seem to mainly network with people who also have an Islamic background. I noticed that he was energetic and confident when he was telling his story, which seems to indicate that his Islamic values provide the guiding principles for doing business. Furthermore, Ibrahim indicates that he started to "cut down" his network because he wanted people in his network with similar (Islamic) values. He explains that his network therefore mainly consists of Muslims. However, Ibrahim speaks about it with a regrettable tone, as he mentions that he has "grown up" in his Islam. Both stories reflect the dominant narrative that is found during the interviews. Furthermore, the two quotes seem to indicate that networking with people on the basis of Islamic principles could result in networks consisting less of weak ties.

The empirical data shows that both male and female entrepreneurs use their religion as a guiding principle for doing business. Moreover, the empirical data suggests that both the networks of male and female entrepreneurs consist mainly of people from the same Muslim and/or Moroccan communities. Only one male entrepreneur and two female entrepreneurs indicated that this was not the case in their networks. The interviewees whose networks are culturally diverse often indicate that this is related to the sector in which they work. However, the guiding principles of Islam seems not to be the only reason why the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs tend to be culturally less diverse.

Another reason often mentioned by the interviewees is that they networked close to home. In other words, they mainly used their direct network, also known as the strong ties. In addition, the interviewees indicated that these people within their direct network also have a Moroccan background. The reason is that the entrepreneurs consider the Moroccan community more accessible and more equal. They can recognise themselves in the Moroccan community. This is consistent with the theory of Jack et al (2004) which states that strong ties tend to develop between people with similar social attributes. To the question whether the Moroccan background has played a part in developing his network towards the Moroccan community, Ismail answers:

"Yes, yes, they (the Moroccan community) are also more approachable because you share the same norms and values, you use the same way of making contact, namely: "salam alaikoum" and so on. It is somewhat more equal, or at least it feels like that." (Ismail)

This quote is the dominant narrative that was found during the interviews. Ismail indicated that he experienced some difficulty networking outside the Moroccan community. According to him, the Moroccan community was much more "approachable", because you have the same "norms and values" and the same way of making contact "salam alaikoum". The concept of belonging is related to

Ismail's story, where belonging implies that individuals feel socially accepted because of their similar looks, cultures and religion (Essers et al., 2021). This can lead to a sense of ease in society which is reflected in his "more approachable" statement. I noticed that he was talking in a comfortable and grateful manner about his community, which expresses his "equal" feeling within the Moroccan community. In short, it seems that the Moroccan background contributed to the development of the network towards the Moroccan community.

So, the empirical data provides some indications that for some interviewees, people from outside the Moroccan community were not very approachable. This experience refers back to the social distance between the minority group and the majority group as discussed in chapter 2. It emerged that the Dutch population experiences a large social distance with the Moroccan community (Bouk et al., 2013). As a result, Moroccans experience the Dutch population as less accessible. The social distance between the majority group (Dutch) and the minority group was nicely explained by Rayan, who indicated that the social distance between him and the majority group was felt to be greater, and therefore less approachable:

"I think everyone is drawn to their own people anyway. So it's much easier to network with someone who has the same background, the same name. Uhm, and unfortunately as a Moroccan, I think you always have to take that extra step to, uh, network in other circles. Where with us it is more jovial and brotherly, with them it can be very business-like". (Rayan)

In Rayan's story, it seems to emerge again that networking with the Moroccan community is perceived to be easier due to the "same background. According to him, the Moroccan culture is more "brotherly" whereas the Dutch culture is more "business-like". I detected a feeling of pride towards his community as he made the comparison between the two cultures. As he was telling his story, I also noticed some disappointment, saying "unfortunately" as a Moroccan, you have to put in extra effort to network in other "circles", which refers to weak ties. This seems to indicate that the Moroccan entrepreneurs must do more to belong to the entrepreneurial community,

In addition, in chapter 2 it emerged that the degree of trust within weak ties depends on the social distance between the weak tie and the entrepreneur. The greater the distance experienced, the lower the trust. Ismail's story about closing a deal with a Dutchman is a good example of a low-trust situation and hence a great social distance:

"And then he said, well, I was worried about doing business with you. I say, oh tell me why!? He said yes, Moroccan entrepreneurs, you hear things and uh yes, I was worried. I say, explain to me what concerns you had. I paid for everything. Who should worry? To which the man said, a real Dutchman, he just said: Yes, but you don't have to worry about me. I say: "no., I was the one who was worried!" (Ismail)

Ismail's experience provides some indications of a great social distance as the Dutchman did not trust Ismail, saying that he was "*worried*" about doing business with him. Ismail already had a feeling that he was not being trusted, as he had to pay for everything in advance. When the Dutchman started talking about this, Ismail made it clear that it was him who was worried. His tone of voice became fierce when he shared his experience with me, showing incomprehension of the situation. His quote illustrates that he is not always able to comply with the dominant discourses where personality traits as "white men" are reflected as legitimate entrepreneurs (Essers et al., 2021). The empirical data indicates that both women and men experience the social distance between them and the majority culture in a similar way: in this study, the majority of respondents indicated that they experienced discrimination and distrust. These negative attitudes and their consequences will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The empirical data indicates that the social distance from the majority group was perceived as great. This seems also to be reflected in the fact that, in this study, most respondents had experienced discrimination, and/or distrust. Aisha describes her experience with women who wear a headscarf:

"Yes, you know, uh, I've had I've uh, I'm, I've had I've uhm, yes look, I don't wear a headscarf. And that's really that's that plays a very big role. Because if I would wear a headscarf, then it would be very different for me. Then it wouldn't be so easy for me, because I've seen enough Moroccan girls or Muslim women who wear a headscarf who don't have it as easy as I do, even in my field of work." (Aisha)

Aisha's expressed feeling shows that she was struggling to put her feelings into words. This may be because she actually finds it uncomfortable that she does not wear a headscarf, or because she would like to wear a headscarf but knows that otherwise she will face discrimination, as she says that "*it wouldn't be so easy for me*". This is a difficult subject, which made it hard for her to talk about it. I also noticed this later on in the interview when she mentioned that she had been confronted with discrimination in the workplace. Aisha was confronted with unpleasant, sarcastic remarks about her Moroccan background. I felt Aisha's anger in her tone of voice as she expressed her feelings about the incident. I asked her whether telling this experience triggered something, to which she laughed and said that she did indeed get angry for a moment. This shows that this experience had a great impact on her. Furthermore, Fatima, the "revolutionary" female entrepreneur, reacted strongly and extensively to the question whether she had ever experienced discrimination. She says that she had the ambition to become a teacher at school, but during her internship, she noticed that she was treated differently because of her headscarf. This experience had a great impact on her, which led her to decide to enter politics. The following quote from the interview with Fatima indicates that it affected her so much that she eventually used abusive language.

*"Yes, of course I have had to deal with discrimination, man! I am a Moroccan woman with a headscarf. I have to deal with continuous discrimination and exclusion and uh uh uh unconscious bias of people that they want to put me in a box ... Or that I am the immigrant according to the statistics. Hell no! I was born and raised here. It is my city. Just * you all!"*
(Fatima)

The feeling expressed by Fatima reveals her attitude towards being discriminated against. She seems to be proud to be born and raised in the Netherlands, as she claims that this is her "city". Furthermore, her tone of voice expresses frustration and anger, which shows her feelings of resistance. By resisting these practices, she claims agency and challenges 'taken for granted' East/West dichotomies in which wearing a headscarf is considered to be incompatible with the Dutch self-image as an emancipated society (Essers & Benschop, 2007). However these negative attitudes might affect the networking activities of Moroccan entrepreneurs. Rayan obviously states that because of these negative attitudes towards the Moroccan community, he felt an urge to prove himself twice:

"Maybe it's less in your generation, but we have always been taught that you have to prove yourself twice. So that already creates a certain barrier within yourself. Uhm, well uh, we Moroccans aren't always that easy, so we have our pride and honour, for example, and then at a certain point you say, well wait a minute if I have to put in extra effort to please you, then never mind" **(Rayan)**

His story adds to the narrative that the Dutch population experiences a large social distance with the Moroccan community. Consequently, the Moroccan community have to "prove themselves twice". It seems that because of the "pride and honour", which is prominent in the Moroccan culture, they don't want to prove themselves twice. They rather remain loyal to their origins. So it seems that pride and honour within the Moroccan culture prevents them from networking with Dutch entrepreneurs. On the other hand, it may also be that they want to show the Dutch that they can also be successful despite their disadvantaged position (Essers et al., 2021). His story could possibly explain why the networks of the Moroccan entrepreneurs in this study were generally limited to the Islamic community and/or the Moroccan culture (strong ties), leading to a lack of weak ties. This is in line with what was discussed in chapter 2 by Jack et al (2004), Bouk et al (2013), and Majaity (2017). Namely, that it is expected that, due to distrust and negative attitudes towards the Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs will mainly consist of strong ties. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 2, family also represents a strong tie within the network. The fact that most of the entrepreneurs in this study have to deal with these negative attitudes could also be a reason why family generally plays a greater role within the network, as discussed in paragraph 4.1.

The lack of people outside their own culture and/or religion means that they have fewer weak ties in their networks. The importance of weak ties was discussed in chapter 2, where it was argued that weak

ties are important to reach business growth (Bouk et al., 2013). However, due to the social distance and the negative attitudes towards the entrepreneurs, it is difficult to network with people outside their own community (weak ties). Ismail's experience illustrates this well:

"First of all, to get that financing was already very difficult.. Look, you know what my background is, so I know how to write a business plan, but at a certain point it's not about that anymore. The point is that they see a Moroccan entrepreneur in front of them. They don't see an entrepreneur. You notice that, uh, so the questions you get are very special questions like oh, but how does that work in your culture and so on? While you think: hello, I am just as Dutch as you are. It's just business. I just want to make money, that's all, but they think that everything is thought up from a cultural perspective." (Ismail)

Ismail's story indicates that because of discriminating practices, which are reflected in those "very special" questions, it is more difficult to get funding. He reveals his awareness of Islamophobia and racism against him as he says that they see a "Moroccan" entrepreneur in front of them. These negative attitudes might be based on the fact that the Dutch media often relate of Moroccan criminals that would be involved in white-washing activities (Verduijn & Essers, 2013). His expressed feelings reveal incomprehension as he says that he is as "Dutch" as they are. This reveals his self-perception of his identity as practically Dutch. This resonates with concepts of 'mimicry' and 'mask' (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014). He recognizes that the social exclusion of Moroccans limits his entrepreneurship, but at the same time proclaims himself as 'Dutch'. However, these experiences may result in a lack of weak ties, which eventually may hinder business growth. In chapter 2 we discussed that especially women, due to a lack of trust and legitimacy, have difficulties in obtaining financing. However, Ismail's story seems to indicate that also male entrepreneurs could experience difficulties in obtaining financing due to discrimination. Furthermore, it has been argued that weak ties are the source of men's success and the high degree of strong ties is the disadvantage of women. Ismail's experience indicates that weak ties are not the source of men's success, since he struggles to acquire additional funds. As a result, he may not be able to expand his business.

The difficulties of networking with weak ties can evoke a feeling that the Moroccan community should help each other and therefore work more together. This feeling is often associated with the Moroccan culture, in which collectivity, solidarity and empathy are important. In this study, some respondents indicated that they wanted to support the Moroccan community more. For example, during the interviews they often mentioned that this is why they were happy to participate in this study. The following quote show how cultural values such as collectivity and solidarity seem to affect the entrepreneurs:

“Yeah yeah yeah sure! Uh, if someone with the same background asks me: can you help? I would definitely be more inclined to help. I come from, as a second generation I have experienced it myself so you try to smooth the way for the next generations.” (Rayan)

Rayan’s story is the dominant narrative that is found. It reflects the solidarity within the community, as he says that he would be more likely to help someone with the same Moroccan background. He had to deal with the challenges himself and therefore he would like to make things easier for the next generations. Therefore, these cultural values may also cause networks regarding cultural diversity to be limited.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and conclusion

This chapter highlights the main findings and how they contribute to the further development of the existing theory on entrepreneurship, gender and ethnicity. Next, the social contributions of this study are addressed.

5.1 Discussion

This study examined how the Moroccan culture has an impact on the differences in networks and networking practices of Moroccan women and men entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. First of all, this study reveals that family plays a prominent role in the networks of both male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs, which is consistent to other literature (Essers et al., 2013; Constantinidis et al., 2018; Essers et al., 2021). This could be because the entrepreneurs in this study own a small business in the Netherlands. The study by Essers, Pio, and Bensliman (2021) argues that entrepreneurs in small businesses typically rely on the involvement and support of their families. In this context, entrepreneurship in small businesses is more of a collective activity than an individual one. Moreover, this study adds to this, that because of the collective values of the Moroccan culture and the perceived social distance between the Moroccan community and the Dutch community, family seems to play a more important role. Furthermore, the literature argues that especially women, due to the prevailing traditional gender roles, are less supported by the family to become an entrepreneur. However, the empirical data seems to indicate that both men and women were generally less supported in becoming an entrepreneur. The overall narrative of the interviewed entrepreneurs about this topic is that their father used to be employed until retirement, and hence passed this habit on to them. The empirical data seems to indicate that this is because of a lack of knowledge and ambition or negative experiences. The contribution of this research therefore relates to the fact that it provides some

indications that, in general, the Moroccan culture does not stimulate entrepreneurship. Furthermore, this study suggests that there are some differences in the role that family plays in the networks of male and female entrepreneurs. Family seems to play an emotional role in the case of men, whereas in the case of women, family can provide both emotional and professional support. This study seems to indicate that the Moroccan culture influences this division. As emerged from the empirical data, contact with the opposite gender is often perceived as difficult. Hence, men tend to rely on their families for emotional support as this is not possible with women in the network due to the culture. Contrarily, women also have a professional relation with family, as this is more complicated with men because of the culture. In both cases, this results in a strong dependence on strong ties. This finding seems to provide new knowledge about Moroccan culture and its influence on the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs. Another consequence of the complicated contact with the opposite gender within the Moroccan culture might explain why, the networks of men consists mainly of men and the networks of women consist mainly of women. Earlier research does not show any consistency in this aspect, but in this study there are some indications that the Moroccan culture has an influence on the gender distribution. Regarding the roles men and women play in the network, it seems to be consistent with what has already been written in the literature; namely that women rely on men for professional support, whereas men rely on members of their own sex for advice. The main reason given in the literature is that men have generally, still, a higher status in this particular community. and therefore have more valuable resources to offer (Cromie & Birley, 1992; Hanson & Blake, 2009; Loscocco et al., 2009; Essers, Doorewaard & Benschop, 2013). This research elaborates on this by also providing some indications that the Moroccan culture has an influence on this division of roles. Finally, it seems that both male and female entrepreneurs network with people who share the same social attributes. This corresponds with the findings of the study by Jack et al (2004). The tendency to interact with others who are like them in one or more ways such as race is called homophily (Hanson & Blake, 2009). However, Hanson and Blake (2009) argued that women's networks are more homophilous than men's networks. In this study, it seems that both male and female Moroccan entrepreneurs tend to develop homophilous networks, as they tend to rely more on the ethnic community and their family. The reason for this has to do with the social distance between the minority and majority group, where entrepreneurs have to deal with discrimination and distrust. These findings are consistent with the research of Bouk et al (2013). However, this study adds to this that dependence on family and the ethnic community is also attributed to the Moroccan culture in which collectivity and solidarity are central.

The above findings contribute to a better understanding of how the Moroccan culture influences the networking activities of the Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. The findings of this study partly correspond to the findings of previous studies and therefore contribute to the body of knowledge regarding migrant entrepreneurship. Some findings, such as that both male and female Moroccan

entrepreneurs in this study develop homophilous networks, do not correspond to previous research, resulting in new knowledge. . Furthermore, this research pays attention to the role of religion, as part of the Moroccan culture. As emerged in the introduction, religion in general and Islam in particular are largely under-researched subjects in entrepreneurship. This study provides some indications that Islamic principles may also have an influence on the network activities of the entrepreneurs, and hence this finding contributes to this largely under-researched theme. Furthermore, the introduction of this study also indicated that research is needed regarding the relationship between culture and social networks within entrepreneurship (Klyver & Foley, 2012). This research has filled this gap, showing how the Moroccan culture seems to influence the network activities of Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. Finally, this research increases the knowledge regarding dynamics and complexities of ethnicity, gender and entrepreneurship.

Regarding the social contributions of this study, this research provides useful knowledge in several ways. Firstly, the respondents themselves indicated that research into the Moroccan community is important for further integration into society. In that sense, this study may contribute to reducing the social distance between the minority and majority group. Furthermore, this research offers insight into how the Moroccan culture influences network activities. Policy makers will be more able to understand the challenges faced by the ethnic minority group. As a result, policy makers can use this knowledge to better align their entrepreneurship promotion programmes. Moreover, community leaders can also benefit from the knowledge gained in this study. By better understanding the challenges related to networking with the majority culture, they can improve or reduce this complexity. This could increase participation in the society and hence successful integration of the minority group.. Finally, this study provides a reflection for the minority entrepreneurs enabling them to gain knowledge on where they still need to develop their networks.

5.2 Conclusion

This master thesis has explored how the Moroccan culture influences the networking activities of female and male Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. It has developed empirical insights and thereby contributed to refined theoretical insights concerning how this specific minority group in Dutch society use and develop their networks. Moreover, this study has advanced our understanding of the influence of Moroccan culture.. This study provides some indications that the Moroccan culture has a strong influence on the role of family, network diversity and the gender division. For example, it appears that family plays an important role in the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs in different ways. First of all, it seems to play an important role in the fact that it can either stimulate or hinder entrepreneurship. When an entrepreneur does not get support from home to start a business, or when the family has little experience, the entrepreneur has to learn everything by him/herself. This could lead to difficulties in developing and using their networks. Moreover, family seems to play a

predominantly emotional role in the case of men, whereas in the case of women we see both a professional and emotional relationship with their family. Furthermore, there are some indications that the Moroccan culture influences the gender division in the networks. The empirical data suggests that contact with the opposite gender is perceived as more complex, which may be an explanation why the network of men consists mainly of men, and the network of women consists mainly of women. Moreover, this sensitivity seems to result in women mainly having professional relationships with men, whereas men also have professional relationships with men. Finally, this study provides some indications that the networks of Moroccan entrepreneurs are not culturally and/or religiously diverse. This study has shown that because of the collective values of the Moroccan culture and the perceived social distance between the Moroccan community and the Dutch community, the networks seem to consist mainly of strong ties.

Chapter 6 – Limitations, future research and reflexivity

This chapter discusses the limitations of this study. Next, the recommendations for future research are mentioned. Finally, this chapter concludes with the role of the researcher in this study and his experiences.

6.1 Reflexivity

In order to properly understand what happens in research, reflexivity is important (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008). Symon and Cassell (pp. 2, 2012) define reflexivity as:

“an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes”

In other words, it involves an awareness that the researcher and the object of study affect each other mutually and continually in the research process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This is also in line with the social constructivist approach, in which knowledge is constructed through interaction (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Because of my similar background with the respondents, it is important to address this.

The motivation for undertaking this research is because I hope that current and potential entrepreneurs can benefit from the insights provided by this thesis. Moreover, I am personally linked to this subject because of my background. Furthermore, I grew up in a family where my father worked until he retired. In addition, I feel that my parents do not fully participate in social society either. Moreover, I do not know many Moroccan entrepreneurs in my environment. Therefore, I wanted to know how Moroccan entrepreneurs network and what the influence of their culture is on this process. This interest eventually formed the topic of this thesis. My background enabled me to interpret the findings from an Moroccan perspective, which I believe is an advantage to the outcome of this study.

Moreover, they reacted very warmly when I asked whether they would like to participate in my study: "So good that you want to research this", "What a good thing that you're doing this", "What an interesting topic, what is your main question?", "As you know, entrepreneurs are very efficient with their time, I am no different. But these are things I would like to help with" and "I will help you with all my love, I feel honoured that you have approached me". They recognise me as 'one of them'. This is clearly reflected in the way they greet me in Arabic (Salaam alaikoum). These reactions show the genuine interest and intention to participate in the research. This is good for ensuring the validity of qualitative research because it increases the honesty of the respondents (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, it shows that the research is already of social value. Finally, I am still in touch with the respondents via Instagram and WhatsApp. If I need something, I am always welcome to send them a message. This shows that it is very common that in qualitative interviewing, interviewers continue their relationship with respondents (Essers, 2009). I am very pleased to receive these reactions. First of all, it makes me proud that this community is always open to help everyone. It also gives me a great sense of responsibility to make them proud and to achieve a good result. In addition, it motivates me to delve more deeply into this subject so that I can provide them with even more knowledge and facilitate integration into society.

6.2 Limitations

Like any research, this research also has some shortcomings. First, due to the lack of a clear theoretical model to examine networks, it is difficult to determine whether you are examining all the dimensions of a network. Since this subject is very context specific, there are always other things that affect networking and it is hard to include all dimensions in the research. For example, this research does not look in depth at the level of experience of the entrepreneur, the level of education, whether he/she is a full-time or part-time entrepreneur, and the stage of entrepreneurship (Loscocco et al., 2009). These issues could also possibly explain differences in networking.

Another limitation has to do with interviewing the respondents. The interviews were conducted entirely online via Zoom. For online interviews, it is important to have access to high-speed Internet and to be familiar with online communication (Janghorban et al., 2014). Although the latter did not affect the interviews, some interviews suffered from Internet interruptions or hiccups in the Internet connection. In addition, respondents could not always be clearly heard because of background noise. Consequently, not everything the interviewee said was accurately recorded. This resulted in a loss of accurate and valuable information to use for the research. In addition, online interviews create barriers in perceiving all of the participant's body language (Janghorban et al., 2014). Finally, when analysing the interviews, the researcher noticed that some questions were not included or lacked follow-up questions.

In addition, another shortcoming of this study relates to the possible respondents available to conduct this research. In the beginning, it was very difficult to find respondents and the researcher did not have the opportunity to choose from the respondents. In addition, scheduling interviews in the month of Ramadan was not possible because they gave priority to practicing their religion besides their business. Furthermore, they are Arabic-speaking people and conducting a Dutch-language interview might cause them to not understand everything. Moreover, they often respond in Arabic, and not everything in Arabic can be translated into Dutch, which makes the message less complete. Furthermore, the results of this study could be affected by social desirability response bias. The respondents may give a biased response, because they think it is socially accepted, instead of being completely honest (Astamirov, 2020). In this study, complex and heavy issues such as religion, discrimination and gender are discussed during the interviews. As a result, respondents may be tempted to downplay issues or give more socially accepted answers, leading to a distorted view of reality and limited research outcomes. The fact that the researcher belongs to the same minority ethnic group as the interviewees may cause them to feel restricted in providing information (Essers, 2009). Finally, because of the similar background of the researcher, the bias of the researcher may have played a role in the conduct of this study. Although having the same ethnic background might increase cultural understanding, it may lead to a lack of follow-up questions during the interview. This is because the researcher could take things for granted. As Essers (2009) argues, dislocation makes it possible to distinguish certain issues which insiders might take for granted.

6.3 Future research

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Moroccan culture influences the networking practices of female and male Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. However, as discussed in section 6.2, this research does not include all dimensions, such as the degree of experience of the entrepreneur, the level of education, whether she/he is a full-time or part-time entrepreneur, and the stage of entrepreneurship, that may affect the networking activities. During the interviews, it was mentioned a few times that because of the experience of the entrepreneur he/she is less concerned with networking. Some respondents also said that they were more involved in networking in the beginning phase of their entrepreneurship than they are now. As indicated in Chapter 3, networking is a process in which the network grows along with the business. In short, it is definitely of relevance to make a distinction between the stage of entrepreneurship and the experience of the entrepreneur when examining the networking activities of entrepreneurs. Loscocco et al. (2009) also address these issues and argue that an entrepreneur who has been active for some time is likely to have a larger and more diverse network. Although respondents were asked to provide some information about their experience, age and education in the introduction of the interviews, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine exactly how this might influence the networking activities in the case of Moroccan entrepreneurs. A study with a clear distinction between starting entrepreneurs and experienced entrepreneurs and the different

stages of entrepreneurship is necessary to gain more insight into how this may impact the networking activities.

Finally, behind the strong claims that Islam is a guide to action, there can be various forms of attachment to Islam. In other words, there are different ways of being a Muslim in the Netherlands or in the Western world more generally. For example, the study of Verkuyten and Stevens (2012) argues that there is an increase in individualist interpretations of what it means to be a Muslim. This might have several implications for the networking behaviour of Muslim entrepreneurs. Future research should examine this subject by means of a person-centered or clustering approaches (Verkuyten & Stevens, 2012). Finally, The respondents in this study are mainly second generation Moroccans. Their parents, the first generation, came to the Netherlands as guest workers. The first generation was uneducated and had little or no opportunity to be entrepreneurial. They were used to being employed and passed this on to their children. For this reason, the respondents in this study mainly indicated that they were not encouraged from home to become an entrepreneur. However, the second generation is well-educated and therefore has more opportunity for entrepreneurship. This suggests that they would be more likely to encourage their children to do business. This assumption is based on what was said by some respondents during the interviews. Further research into the background of the parents, including their level of education, is needed to gain more insight into the role of family across the generations with regard to stimulating entrepreneurship.

Chapter 7 – References

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Appendix 1 – Respondent’s characteristics

Respondent	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Educational background	Business
Respondent 1	Aisha	Female	33	College degree	Healthcare
Respondent 2	Ismail	Male	46	University degree	Event sector and consultancy
Respondent 3	Hajar	Female	38	University degree	Coaching
Respondent 4	Karima	Female	41	University degree	Housing / real estate
Respondent 5	Saida	Female	34	College degree	Housing / real estate
Respondent 6	Houssam	Male	37	University degree	Owner of different enterprises
Respondent 7	Ibrahim	Male	39	University degree	IT
Respondent 8	Fatma	Female	46	College degree	Consultancy

Respondent 9	Rayan	Male	32	College degree	Housing (construction company)
Respondent 10	Mohamed	Male	31	University degree	IT
Respondent 11	Jaouad	Male	32	College degree	Craftmanship
Respondent 12	Fatima	Female	49	College degree	Consultancy

Appendix 2 – Interview guidelines

Voorafgaand het interview

1. Stemt u ermee in dat dit interview voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden wordt opgenomen? Door het op te nemen, kan ik het interview op papier verder uitwerken. De opnames zullen daarna verwijderd worden.
2. Wenst u anoniem te blijven in mijn onderzoek?
3. Mogen alle gegevens worden verwerkt als een korte introductie over uzelf als ondernemer (denk aan leeftijd, opleiding, ervaring etc.)?

Introductie

Ik ben Omar, en ik studeer bedrijfskunde aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om uit te zoeken of er verschillen zijn in de netwerken van vrouwelijke en mannelijke Marokkaanse ondernemers in Nederland, waarbij ik focus op de Marokkaanse cultuur. In dit onderzoek kijk ik naar de volgende 5 aspecten:

1. Omvang van het netwerk

2. Het gebruiken van het netwerk
3. Verdeling van het geslacht binnen het netwerk
4. Diversiteit binnen het netwerk
5. Rol van de familie
6. Andere vragen in verband met de Marokkaanse cultuur.

Dit is ook de volgorde van het interview. Uw antwoorden zullen worden geanalyseerd, zodat dit kan bijdragen aan het beantwoorden van mijn onderzoeksvraag, die luidt: Hoe verklaart de Marokkaanse cultuur verschillen in netwerken tussen Marokkaanse vrouwelijke en mannelijke ondernemers in Nederland?

Introductie

Leeftijd

Opleiding

Ervaring

Ondernemerschap

1. Netwerk grootte
 - a) Uit hoeveel personen bestaat uw netwerk? U kunt een ruime schatting geven
 - Waar is deze schatting op gebaseerd?
 - b) Noem de belangrijkste personen op in uw netwerk
 - Als u moeite hier mee heeft, denk bijvoorbeeld dan aan: “Met wie bespreek ik regelmatig mijn problemen?”
 - Waarom vormen juist deze personen de kern?
 - c) Via welke kanalen houdt u uw netwerk bij / vergroot u uw netwerk? Woont u bijvoorbeeld netwerkevents bij, via LinkedIn etc.
 - d) Heeft u moeite gehad met het ontwikkelen / vergroten van uw netwerk?
 - Hoe ervaart u dit proces?

- e) Heeft uw Marokkaanse achtergrond een rol gespeeld in het ontwikkelen én gebruiken van uw netwerk?

2. Het gebruiken van het netwerk

- a) Bent u bewust van het belang van netwerken? Dus: vindt u het belangrijk om aandacht te besteden aan het uitbreiden van je connecties, contact houden met uw connecties etc.
- b) Op welke manier maakt u gebruik van uw netwerk(en)? / In welke situaties heeft u gebruik gemaakt van uw sociale netwerk?
- c) Wat was de achtergrond van deze situatie?
- d) Herkent u een patroon in de relaties die u heeft met uw netwerk?
- e) Wat is in uw ogen de bijdrage geweest van uw sociale netwerk aan uw bedrijf?
- f) Speelt de Marokkaanse cultuur een grotere rol dan de Nederlandse cultuur in uw netwerk / werk?
- g) Heeft u bewuste keuzes gemaakt in welke personen u wel om hulp heeft gevraagd en welke niet?
- h) Waarop waren dergelijke keuzes gebaseerd?
- i) In hoeverre ervaart u een 'morele plicht' ; dus het gevoel om elkaar te helpen (zonder er persé altijd iets uit te moeten halen)
- j) Verandert u regelmatig van personen binnen uw netwerk? Dit kan omdat uw bedrijf gegroeid is, of omdat u andere personen nodig heeft om verder te kunnen.
 - Of belemmert de 'morele plicht' dit proces?
- k) Heeft u nog andere aanvullingen waarbij uw Marokkaanse achtergrond hier een invloed op heeft gespeeld?

3. Gender verdeling binnen het netwerk

- a) Hoe is de verhouding tussen mannen en vrouwen in uw netwerk?
- b) Hoe ervaart u deze verdeling?
- c) Zou u dit graag willen verbeteren / veranderen?
- d) Welke rol spelen mannen voornamelijk in uw netwerk? En hoe zit dat met vrouwen?
- e) Heeft de Marokkaanse cultuur / achtergrond hier invloed op? (Op de verdeling en contact).

4. Diversiteit in het netwerk

- a) Hoe ervaart u de diversiteit binnen uw netwerk met betrekking tot verschillende leeftijden?

- b) Hoe ervaart u de diversiteit binnen uw netwerk m.b.t. de verschillende industrieën / beroepen?
 - c) Waren er connecties met specifieke vakgebieden of personen die u heeft gemist in uw netwerk?
 - d) Hoe ervaart u de diversiteit binnen uw netwerk m.b.t. verschillende culturen?
 - e) In hoeverre kennen de personen in uw netwerk elkaar? Ofwel: kennen de personen binnen uw netwerk ook andere personen die deel uit maken van uw netwerk? (Density of network/ overtollige info)
 - f) Heeft u het idee dat uw Marokkaanse achtergrond hier een rol in speelt?
5. Rol van familie binnen het netwerk
- a) In hoeverre bestaat uw netwerk uit familieleden?
 - b) Wat voor relatie ervaart u met familieleden binnen uw netwerk?
 - c) Speelt familie binnen uw netwerk een grotere rol dan andere personen binnen uw netwerk? Welke voordelen / nadelen ervaart u hieraan?
 - d) Zijn de familieleden binnen uw netwerk ook ondernemers? In hoeverre heeft dit invloed gehad op u?
 - e) Heeft u het idee dat familie in het algemeen een belangrijkere rol door de Marokkaanse cultuur?
6. Overige vragen m.b.t. Marokkaanse cultuur.
- a) Heeft u wel eens te maken gehad met wantrouwen en/of discriminatie?
 - b) Hoe ervaart u de combinatie gender + achtergrond?
 - c) In onderzoek is naar voren gekomen dat de Marokkaanse geschiedenis een onderdanige rol aan vrouwen had voorgeschreven (dus niet geschikt om te ondernemen etc.) Hoe denkt u hierover? .
 - d) Speelt uw geloof een dominante rol in uw werk? Is het een leidraad?
 - e) Hoe denkt u over het 'Boze oog' dat heerst in de Marokkaanse cultuur?
 - Heeft u hier ervaring mee gehad (dus dat u uw ideeën niet wilde delen met uw netwerk vanwege Boze oog)? Of ziet u dit vaak voorbij komen?
 - f) In hoeverre streeft u naar halal relaties binnen uw netwerk?
 - g) Werd u vanuit thuis en uw omgeving gestimuleerd om ondernemer te worden?

Appendix 3 – Coding

As discussed in chapter 3, coding was done according to the five network dimensions. The first dimension discussed during the interviews is network size. Everything that had to do with the network size of a respondent was given a yellow label. For example: "Yes, you know what it is, of course it also helped that I was such a well-known public figure."

Questions were also asked regarding the use of the network. This dimension was given a green label: "Uh yes, of course. Yes, when you start to work on something, you naturally start to look very specifically at who could help me with this?"

Another dimension relates to the gender distribution within the network. Answers related to this division were marked with a blue label: "Uh. Ninety-five per cent male, five per cent female"

Next, they asked about the diversity within the network. This dimension was given a purple label: "I do notice a lot around my own age, that category so to speak".

The final dimension of the network is the role of family. All data that related to family were given a red label: "Uh. Yes, yes. In the sense those are the people I trust the most."

When an answer indicates that the Moroccan culture has an influence on a certain dimension, this is labelled grey. Thus, in the following example, you can see that family (red) plays an important role because of Moroccan culture (grey): "From my Moroccan background as well as from my religious background, I think it is just very important to keep good family ties."

