



# The Role of Perceived Normative Legitimacy on the Growth Orientation of Women Entrepreneurs in Turkey

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**Abstract.** This study aims to demonstrate the role of entrepreneurs' achievement motivation and the confirmation of women entrepreneurship in society on their growth orientation. The norms related to women entrepreneurship are distinctive from the legitimation of entrepreneurship and are more related to societies' gender-based cultural contexts. Although recent years witnessed some egalitarian changes concerning the stereotypical roles of women and men in Turkey, it is considered a society where traditional gender roles are still dominant. As such, the country represents an appropriate population to research women entrepreneurs. The data were obtained from 224 women entrepreneurs working in various sectors in Turkey. Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. The results indicate a moderating role of perceived normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship between the achievement motivation and growth-orientation of women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). That is, normative legitimacy yields a stronger positive relationship with the growth orientation of women entrepreneurs who possess a high need for achievement, compared to women entrepreneurs with a low need for achievement. These results are crucial in understanding the achievement motivation of women and the environment's normative structure in one of the emerging economies. It would also help improve the awareness of both the motivational profiles of women entrepreneurs, and the social context found in Turkey that women entrepreneurs work in.

**Keywords:** achievement motivation, growth, growth-orientation, legitimacy, normative legitimacy.

## 1. Introduction

Many researchers (e.g. Delmar and Wiklund, 2008; Eijdenberg et al., 2015) have referred to the concept of the individual entrepreneur's role in growth as growth motivation, willingness to grow, growth intention, or growth orientation. The growth orientation of entrepreneurs is a multifaceted and perceptual subject that may be shaped by both individual and environmental variables.

Motivational traits are one of the significant and promising factors in examining entrepreneurial activities and its later/subsequent strategies (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). The need for achievement (nAch) trait was defined by McClelland et al. (1958), which represents individuals who have a desire to

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perform well and achieve excellence in a chosen area. Therefore, it is argued that individuals with high-nAch are more likely to engage in innovative activities and tasks that require skills and effort. There is a considerable body of literature in the area of nAch and entrepreneurship (Collins et al., 2004). Entrepreneurial persistence (Wu et al., 2007), business performance (Tang and Tang, 2007), and business growth (Lee and Tsang, 2001) are empirically obtained variables that were positively associated with nAch.

Although the direct relationship between achievement motivation and growth orientation is expected to be positive in general, several boundary conditions of these relationships are possible/plausible. Along with the personal factors, the institutional environment of entrepreneurship represents another crucial but not a well-studied area in the entrepreneurial growth literature. While the role of the institutional environment was generally considered in promoting entrepreneurship (Manolova et al., 2008) or influencing entrepreneurs' management behaviors (Welter and Smallbone, 2011), it also affects actual entrepreneurs' orientations and strategies (Diaz Garcia et al., 2009; Sambharya and Musteen, 2014).

The institutional environment contains cultural values and norms, as well as legal regulations and rules (Bowen and De Clercq, 2008). Previous research indicated that the institutional environment is a multidimensional construct and that individuals' and organizations' behaviors are not only affected by one aspect but by all of the normative, cultural, and regulatory indicators (Sambharya and Musteen, 2014; Taggar and Kay, 2018). Most of the previous research focuses on countries' actual institutional environment indices at general levels (i.e. by using some of the country-based data sets such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Reports) (e.g. Setti et al., 2019) rather than perceptual-based indicators. In addition, researchers often examined the impact of institutional environment dimensions on the overall level of entrepreneurship rather than focusing on a specific context such as women entrepreneurship. That might be considered unfortunate since the institutional aspects of women entrepreneurship in many countries, particularly developing countries, need special attention for two main reasons. First, the social legitimacy of women entrepreneurship is low compared to that of male entrepreneurs in all countries of the world (Vossenbergh, 2013). Even if governments legally enforce some regulations and rules, which represent the regulatory-institutional environment, to promote women's entrepreneurship, it will take a long time for cultural norms and values (i.e. the normative and cultural institutional environment) to evolve and change. Second, in societies where entrepreneurship is associated with masculine gender roles, women entrepreneurship is not considered legitimate, particularly in the social and cultural contexts. De Vita et al. (2014) have demonstrated that despite the country-specific differences in the legitimacy of women entrepreneurship, the social segregation of men and women and the lack of social legitimacy seem to be some of the common issues that women entrepreneurs face in developing

countries. Accordingly, entrepreneurship is associated with masculine gender roles, whereas feminine gender roles are mostly presumed to relate to child-caring and housework. These associations are more common in developing countries in comparison to developed ones.

Taken together, this research aims to investigate the impact of women entrepreneurs' achievement motivation and the role of women entrepreneurship normative legitimacy in Turkey, as one of the developing countries, on their growth orientation. The present research contributes to the literature on women entrepreneurship in several ways. First, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first empirical study that specifically considers the normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship and its impact on the growth orientation of women entrepreneurs in one of the developing countries. Second, this research moves beyond the actual and general level of the normative legitimacy of entrepreneurship and examines the perceptions of women entrepreneurs on the normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship. In doing so, this research contributes to a greater theoretical understanding of normative legitimacy and its full range of impacts. Further, in addition to the direct relationship between normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship and their growth orientation, the moderator effect is also investigated. The existing research has directly connected achievement motivation to several positive outcomes related to entrepreneurial performance (Collins et al., 2004). This research advances the field's knowledge on how the direct impact of achievement motivation varies according to entrepreneurs' perceptions of environmental factors. More specifically, the present study suggests that perceptual normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship has both direct and moderating effects on women entrepreneurs' growth orientation. The findings provide practical implications for policymakers and practitioners who engage in improving women entrepreneurship, particularly in developing countries.

The structure of this paper is as follows. The next section provides a literature review and derives the hypotheses to be tested. Sections 3 and 4 present the methodology of the analysis and the empirical results, respectively. Finally, Section 5 provides a discussion of the results in light of the literature. This section also includes a discussion of some limitations of the research as well as a general conclusion.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses**

Many scholars have suggested that women entrepreneurship needs a greater gender-based focus rather than a holistic approach that investigates the general conditions and arrangements in the overall entrepreneurial environment for both male and female entrepreneurs (Fayolle et al., 2015). It is well-known that the socialization process differs between men and women, and it forms different

gender-based identities. Thus, the values and norms based upon commonly held cultural definitions of males and females shape the gender identities of individuals (Goktan and Gupta, 2015). These identities lead individuals' attitudes, choices, and behaviors during their lifetime. Existing research suggests that most societies portray a dominance of male-oriented norms in entrepreneurship (Hamilton, 2013; Goktan and Gunay, 2011; Goktan and Gupta, 2015). In other words, masculine values focusing on earnings, achievement, recognition, and competition are also important motivators for entrepreneurship.

In addition, the existing research has also shown that even if women became entrepreneurs, they remain underrepresented in high-growth firms, and they do not appear to have an aggressive growth orientation compared to men (Morris et al., 2006). Although there are numerous studies investigating women's entrepreneurship within a gendered lens, there is still a lack of research regarding the entrepreneurial journey that covers the process after becoming an entrepreneur. At this point, the emphasis of women entrepreneurship research has been overwhelmingly related to the actual venture performance and growth of women-owned businesses. In an attempt to achieve a better understanding of the growth of women-owned businesses, a comprehensive investigation of women's growth orientation, causes, and the way this orientation is affected by societal norms and values need to be developed.

## 2.1. Growth-orientation

In small businesses, the growth of firms is strictly based on the owners' growth motivations. Some longitudinal research has reported the positive impact of growth orientation on actual business growth (Bellu and Sherman, 1995; Kolvereid and Bullvag, 1996). Delmar and Wiklund (2008) have also suggested the mutual relationship of growth and growth motivation in their research with a longitudinal design. While growth refers to objective evaluations such as firms' profits, sales, or employment, growth-orientation is a subjective and attitudinal evaluation of growth motivation.

Many individual, social, and economic indicators may have an impact on the growth intentions of entrepreneurs (Wiklund et al., 2009). Karadeniz and Ozcam (2010) have reported that start-up motivation is an important variable that has an impact on growth intention. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs have been found more ambitious and eager for growth compared to necessity-driven entrepreneurs (Morris et al., 2006; Robichaud et al., 2010). Personality characteristics, demographic variables, values and beliefs, or past growth performances were also examined as influential variables in some previous research (Dwyer et al., 2003; Kolvereid and Bullvag, 1996; Moran, 1998; Morrison et al., 2003). There are a few personality traits (such as the need for achievement, emotional stability, risk-taking propensity, or tolerance for ambiguity) that consistently reappear in many

entrepreneurship studies (Brandstätter, 2011; Lee and Tsang, 2001). Although the need for achievement is insufficient to thoroughly explain the growth orientation of entrepreneurs, it was considered as the main predictor in many studies and appeared as a key component in the entrepreneurial context (Carragher et al., 2010).

## 2.2. Need for Achievement

The need for achievement has been considered one of the key personality traits in the research concerning entrepreneurship. It is described as the expectation of doing something better or faster than anybody else or better than a person's earlier accomplishments (McClelland, 1965). Saif and Ghania (2020) have stated that individuals with a high need for achievement maintain high standards and aspire to accomplish difficult tasks.

Entrepreneurial studies generally concentrate on individuals' degree of need for achievement before or at the start-up of new ventures. Holland's (1997) theory of personality and vocational choices has been supported in that individuals will be most attracted to career options that offer a good fit with their personality traits. However, it is also significant to consider the need for achievement after start-up and its impact on individuals' further entrepreneurial motives such as growth orientation. Since individuals with a high need for achievement are competitive in work activities and tend to accomplish challenging and more achievement-related functions, it is more likely they will perform well in entrepreneurial jobs and have more growth focus. Thus,

*H1: Women entrepreneurs with a higher need for achievement will have a higher growth orientation.*

Entrepreneurship research supports that entrepreneurial decisions, such as growth orientation, are not only related to individual-based factors but also vary somewhat across countries (Mueller, 2007). The entrepreneurial variations across countries and regions seem to be the result of institutional and cultural contexts. The collective mental knowledge relates to the way societies organize knowledge and social behavior (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952) into a fairly consistent set of cognitive orientations that reflect "a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede, 1980). The notion that individuals and organizations affect and are affected by their social context is a seminal argument in both classic and contemporary sociology and has been applied to the study of entrepreneurship at different levels of analysis (Thornton et al., 2011). Entrepreneurship is an intensely social activity based on societies' different perceptions related to the legitimation dimension of societal view.

### 2.3. Legitimacy and Normative Legitimacy

The roots of the term ‘legitimation’ lie in considering an act to be in accordance with the law (Tyler, 2006). However, the usage of the term in political science, sociology, and even in the popular press has expanded its meaning to refer to a wide set of norms, values and beliefs that provide a moral approval of specific activities or institutions whether legal sanction is involved or not (Zelditch, 2001). Suchman (1995) substantially extends the legitimacy concept. He defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are socially desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (p. 574). Moreover, legitimacy is not defined solely by what is legal or illegal. Scott (1995) describes the regulative, normative, and cognitive aspects of legitimacy. Whereas regulative legitimacy refers to the formal dimension and reflects rules and laws, cognitive legitimacy represents the degree to which a phenomenon is accepted by a society (Aldrich and Ruef, 2018). The normative legitimacy refers to relationships with larger/greater social expectations and attitudes towards a certain/particular phenomenon. It shapes individuals’ actions and represents the ‘appropriateness’ of behaviors (Baughn et al., 2006). For an action to be socially recognized as legitimate, it requires congruence between that activity and a socially defined standard of behavior.

According to this view, a higher level of entrepreneurial activity within a society can be explained by the general tendency of a social structure favorable to entrepreneurship. Baughn et al. (2006) reported that women, compared to men, are more responsive to positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, and more specifically, to normative support of women entrepreneurship. The norms on women entrepreneurship are closely associated with gender equality and the gender roles’ system embedded in societies (Bögenhold and Klinglmair, 2015).

Many societies continue to define women primarily through roles associated with housework, while men are expected to perform the breadwinning role (Baughn et al., 2006). Consistent with this, the perception of entrepreneurial roles – including the starting, maintaining, and growing of a business – being more appropriate for men rather than women, is prevalent in most societies as well as in Turkey. Turkey’s social context reveals a combination of secular and religious values. Despite the reforms under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s leadership, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, the social norms in today’s Turkey involve both modern and traditional values. Hisrich and Ozturk (1999) reported that with these structures, Turkey represents a unique context with regard to women entrepreneurship. Turkey is a country in which the ratio of male to female entrepreneurs is one of the highest or most inequitable within the developing countries as an efficiency-driven economy (Cetindamar et al., 2012; Maden, 2015). Reviewing the literature on women entrepreneurship in Turkey indicated that almost 70% of women entrepreneurs perceived gender inequality, and they

believed that the major reason behind this inequality is the social values associated with traditional gender roles (Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2014; Maden, 2015). Cetindamar et al. (2012) emphasized that the perception of women's most important role in society to be a mother and wife forms a 'resource-constraint environment' for women in entrepreneurship. On the other hand, considering male roles as working and earning money outside the family and associating these roles with material success, recognition, and power, paves the way for the perception of entrepreneurship as a male-dominated area.

At the time that entrepreneurship is considered a male-dominated field, and women entrepreneurship is ascribed with a low-level of normative legitimacy, not only the career choices of women in becoming an entrepreneur, but also their perceptions and attitudes towards (growth) strategies of existing businesses will be affected negatively. In other words, the normative legitimation of women entrepreneurship does not only influence the proportion of women-owned businesses, but it may also have a critical effect on women entrepreneurs' business attitudes that influence further entrepreneurial performances, such as their growth orientation. Therefore, it is proposed that,

*H2: Women entrepreneurs who perceive a higher level of normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship, will have a higher growth orientation.*

Further, it is valuable to recognize the respective role of perceived normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship as moderators. The perceptions of social context or more specifically the social norms on women entrepreneurship affect the extent to which women entrepreneurs' achievement motivation will turn into a growth orientation. In other words, perceptions on the acceptance of women may produce more motivation for women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and enhance the impact of individual traits such as need for achievement of women. Thus,

*H3: Perceived normative legitimacy moderates the relationship between need for achievement and growth-orientation, such that the positive effect of the need for achievement on entrepreneurs' growth orientation will be stronger when women entrepreneurs perceive a higher normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample

In the data collection procedure, women entrepreneurs in Turkey were contacted via email or phone. Their contact information was obtained from The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey – Women Entrepreneurs Council.<sup>2</sup> The council members are women entrepreneurs who are the partners, board members, managers, general managers, or executive directors of real person merchants or legal entities registered in the Trade Registry. However, due to privacy protection, no details (such as the sector, year established, annual revenue, or profit) were provided regarding the participating women's businesses. The purpose of the study and the purely academic aim of this research was explained. The possibility of sharing the results was also offered. Hence, the survey was distributed to 501 randomly selected entrepreneurs via sealed envelopes. Among the 501 distributed questionnaires, 244 were returned, with a response rate of 48.7%. The survey was held in 2018 and 2019.

The data obtained from 20 entrepreneurs were not included in the analysis because of the high rate (40% and above) of missing values for some of the items. As a result, 224 usable responses were obtained from women entrepreneurs working in various sectors in Turkey. The mean age of the participants was 42.6 years, and the average job tenure was 15.2 years.

#### 3.2. Measures

*Need for achievement* was measured with a subscale from the “New Need Assessment Scale” developed by Heckert et al. (1999). It consists of five items and the responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’. A sample item is “It is important for me to have best products and services”. A high score indicates high levels of need for achievement. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Kesici (2008). Cronbach's coefficient is 0.87.

*Normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship* was measured with the “Institutional Profile” scale that was developed by Busenitz et al. (2000). The items were adapted to represent women entrepreneurship by replacing some ‘entrepreneurship’ general terms with ‘women entrepreneurs/entrepreneurship’ or by adding some words (such as ‘for women’). The scale consists of four items and the responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’. A sample item is “Women entrepreneurs are

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2. <https://www.tobb.org.tr/TOBBKadinGirisimcilerKurulu/Sayfalar/AnaSayfa.php>



admired in this country". A high score indicates high levels of perceptions on the normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship.

*Growth-orientation* was measured with eight items adopted from the "Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Intentions" questionnaire developed by Linan et al. (2011). The responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'. A sample item is "I consider keeping a path of positive growth". A high score indicates high levels of growth orientation.

The items were translated into Turkish using a collaborative translation technique to ensure the conceptual equivalence of the items. Two bilingual researchers translated the scale independently, and one researcher in the entrepreneurial field examined which translation better reflected the meaning of the items. No analogous items were identified, and as a result, the comparability of the translations was assumed. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for the normative legitimacy and growth-orientation items are 0.83 and 0.80, respectively.

*Demographics* as control variables consisted of the education level, age, marital status, and job tenure. Age and job tenure were measured in years, while education level and marital status (1=married; 2=unmarried) were measured in categorical responses.

### 3.3. Analytical Procedure

Prior to the hypothesis testing, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method was performed to examine the factor structure and verify the distinctiveness of the study variables. The mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum scores of variables were utilized to describe the data. To test the hypotheses and moderating effect, a hierarchical regression analysis, which attempts to improve the standard regression estimates by adding a second-stage regression to an ordinary model, was used. In the hierarchical regression procedure, the control variables were entered in the first step of the model, followed by the main effect of the need for achievement in step two. In the third step, the interaction term (need for achievement x normative legitimacy) was entered.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Common Method Bias

A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were performed to examine the factor structure and verify the distinctiveness of the study variables. The first 3-

factor model was developed, in which all the variables (need for achievement, normative legitimacy, and growth-orientation) were assumed to be independent. The CFA results revealed that the 3-factor model fits the data adequately ( $\chi^2/df = 1.91$ ; CFI = 0.90; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.06). The inspection of the modification indices revealed that adding error covariance terms between some of the need for achievement items will improve the model fit and change  $\chi^2$  accordingly. After the addition of covariances, the model fits improved ( $\chi^2/df = 1.84$ ; CFI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.06). The remaining items loaded significantly on their underlying factors with loadings ranging from 0.53 to 0.91.

Second, Harman's one-factor test was performed to examine whether common method variance has increased the strength of the correlations (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). To this end, first, all the items were entered together into an exploratory factor analysis. The results of the unrotated factor solution generated three factors. No single factor accounted for the majority of the covariance, and no general factor was apparent, suggesting that common method variance is not a significant threat in this study.

Third, the measurement model was re-estimated by adding an unmeasured latent method factor (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that all factor loadings of the items on their respective theoretical constructs remained significant even after adding the common method factor into the model. Moreover, on comparing the models with and without the common method factor, the addition of this latent method factor has not improved the model in a statistically significant manner. All these findings revealed that common method bias is not a major problem in the current study findings.

## 4.2. Descriptives

The composite variables were obtained by taking the average of the related items. Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, correlations, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of the study variables. The correlations between the variables provide initial support of the hypotheses, such that the need for achievement is positively correlated with women entrepreneurs' growth-orientation. The demographic variables were not significantly correlated with the outcome variable.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, correlations and Cronbach's coefficients

|                         | 1    | 2     | 3     | 4    | 5      | 6      | 7      |
|-------------------------|------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Education            | -    |       |       |      |        |        |        |
| 2. Age                  | 0.44 | -     |       |      |        |        |        |
| 3. Marital status       | 0.26 | 0.52  | -     |      |        |        |        |
| 4. Job tenure           | 0.12 | 0.49* | 0.02  | -    |        |        |        |
| 5. Need for achievement | 0.03 | -0.05 | -0.04 | 0.19 | (0.87) |        |        |
| 6. Normative legitimacy | 0.02 | -0.03 | -0.04 | 0.27 | 0.42** | (0.83) |        |
| 7. Growth orientation   | 0.05 | 0.01  | 0.00  | 0.33 | 0.54** | 0.12*  | (0.80) |
| Mean                    | 3.53 | 42.6  | 1.2   | 15.2 | 3.55   | 3.77   | 3.15   |
| SD                      | 0.49 | 6.06  | 0.9   | 4.08 | 0.59   | 0.68   | 0.51   |
| Min. value              | 2.00 | 29.0  | 1.0   | 6.0  | 2.00   | 1.00   | 1.00   |
| Max. value              | 5.00 | 58.0  | 2.0   | 21.0 | 5.00   | 5.00   | 5.00   |

Notes:  $N=224$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients are in parentheses in the diagonal.

### 4.3. Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, a series of regression analyses were performed. The variables were entered in three hierarchical steps. Table 2 demonstrates the regression results. No significant effect of the control variables (i.e. education, age, marital status, and job tenure) on growth orientation has been found (Step 1). In the Step 2 regression, the direct effect of the need for achievement was found positive and significant in the prediction of growth orientation ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thereby supporting H1. Also, normative legitimacy was found positive and statistically significant in the prediction of growth orientation ( $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thereby supporting H2. The need for achievement and normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship accounted for 35% of the variance in growth orientation.

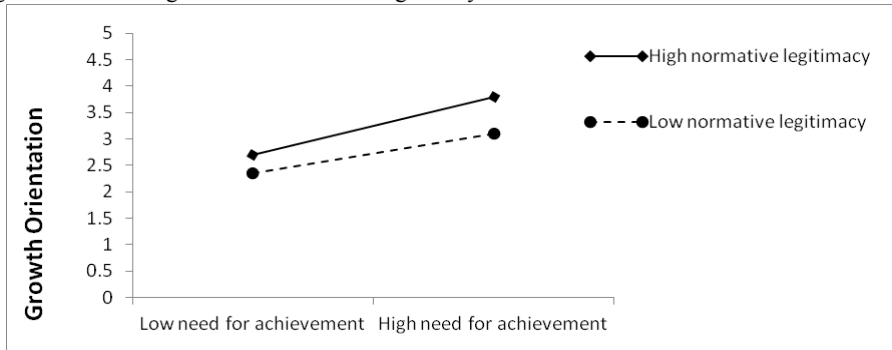
The third step of the regression model was also significant. The need for achievement, normative legitimacy, and the interaction term explained a significant incremental variance in growth orientation ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The interaction term between need for achievement and normative legitimacy was found significant ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) for women entrepreneurs' growth orientation. This finding provides support for Hypothesis 3.

Table 2. Hierarchical regressions in prediction of growth orientation

| <i>Independent Variables</i>                | <i>Step 1</i> | <i>Step 2</i> | <i>Step 3</i> |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Education                                   | 0.06          | 0.06          | 0.05          |
| Age   | 0.12          | 0.10          | 0.10          |
| Marital status                              | 0.02          | 0.02          | 0.02          |
| Job tenure                                  | 0.15          | 0.18          | 0.18          |
| Need for achievement                        |               | 0.87**        | 0.88**        |
| Normative legitimacy                        |               | 0.27**        | 0.24**        |
| <i>Interaction</i>                          |               |               |               |
| Need for achievement x Normative legitimacy |               |               | 0.15*         |
| R <sup>2</sup>                              | 0.02          | 0.35          | 0.38          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                     | 0.02          | 0.34          | 0.37          |
| F-value                                     | 1.11          | 19.47         | 18.91         |
| $\Delta R^2$                                |               | 0.33          | 0.03          |

Notes: N=224. \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01.

Figure 1. Moderating Role of Normative Legitimacy



Based on Cohen et al.'s (2003) recommendations, the significant moderation effect was plotted in Figure 1 with simple slopes and one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator. A simple slope for the association between the need for achievement and growth orientation was also tested for low, moderate, and high levels of normative legitimacy perceptions. The simple slope revealed a positive association for moderate and high normative legitimacy.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between need for achievement, perceived normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship and the growth-orientation of women entrepreneurs in Turkey. The results suggest three

main findings. The first finding is the direct positive impact of a woman entrepreneur's need for achievement on her growth-orientation. When women entrepreneurs have a high need for achievement as a trait, they become more oriented on their business growth. It is reasonable to assume that the need for achievement will drive them towards higher levels of growth, success and performance. While a high achievement motivation has often been perceived as one of the important characteristics influencing potential entrepreneurial activities (such as entrepreneurial orientation) (Sabiou et al., 2018), the present study reveals that it is also important for established business owners' growth orientation. In addition, this study reveals the role of need for achievement on the attitudinal perspective of growth rather than the actual growth or performance of businesses.

Second, it was found that normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship has a direct positive impact on women entrepreneurs' growth orientation. In Turkey, as having a collectivist values culture according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Eroglu and Picak, 2011), social norms dominantly shape individuals' intentions and behaviors. Therefore, the perception of positive social norms toward women entrepreneurship may motivate women much more to strive for growth of their ventures, compared to women from individualistic cultures. Furthermore, in societies where entrepreneurship is perceived as a masculine field and associated with masculine gender roles, like in Turkey, such perception represents an important obstacle for women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, subjective perceptions on positive evaluations of women entrepreneurship encourage women to have a more positive approach towards their willingness to grow.

Third, normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship was found to be a moderator between need for achievement and growth-orientation. That is, the social confirmation of women entrepreneurship, which refers to the normative legitimacy, yields a stronger positive relationship between growth orientation and need for achievement of women. Since women, compared to men, are more responsive to normative support of women entrepreneurship (Baughn et al., 2006), the social acceptance of women entrepreneurship may produce more motivation on business growth and enhance the impact of individual traits such as need for achievement of Turkish women. Perceiving women entrepreneurship as a socially accepted component can therefore make a significant difference by helping to remove individuals' perceptions of barriers and difficulties and exert a significant positive effect on the achievement motivation-growth orientation relationship. By showing how perceptions of social norms may reinforce the impact of need for achievement on women entrepreneurs' growth motivations, these results further corroborate the importance of social context in women entrepreneurship.

It is noteworthy to mention that the normative legitimacy considered in this study is not an actual and/or general one, rather it represents the perceptions by

individuals of the normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship. As Tankard and Paluck (2016) highlighted, individuals can not directly know actual rates of behavior or opinion in their society. They cannot interact with everyone and cannot collect all accessible information about what others do or think. They may just have perceptions on social norms that are formed by their own and unique experiences. These subjective perceptions shape their opinions and behaviours, even if they are inaccurate. Therefore, the examination of these perceptions contributes to a greater theoretical understanding of normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship and its full range of impacts.

The findings of this research should be of interest not only to researchers, but also to policy makers, entrepreneurs and other society members. The present study helps to better understand challenges or opportunities that women entrepreneurs face. This study's findings are in line with those of many researchers who have suggested that economical, governmental and cultural incentives for women entrepreneurship should be in balance (Bögenhold, 2019; Linan et al., 2011). Therefore, policies that only provide an economically favorable environment would not be enough both in encouraging women entrepreneurship and developing women-owned businesses. Although the social changes take long times, the change of perceptions on norms is easier than the attitudinal changes. Providing more information and examples/role models on women entrepreneurship and its underlying factors, and deploying the help of opinion leaders in the diffusion of gender equality into all domains of society, would help to change gendered-based stereotypes and perceptions of entrepreneurship as a masculine field.

As in all studies, this study has some limitations. The first limitation concerns the single source data collection issue. As the data obtained are from one source, there might be a common method bias problem. To reduce this potential method bias, confirmatory factor analysis and Harman's test were performed. Although the results indicated that common method bias is not a serious problem in this study, future studies may obtain data from different sources (e.g. from peer evaluations), which helps to validate self-reported data. Second, the lack of significance for the regression model's control variables was slightly surprising, in spite of the findings by De Carolis et al. (2009) who reported that entrepreneurs' education, age and marital status were not influential factors on venture activities. Future research may delve deeper into the (expected) roles of various control variables. Moreover, it can be suggested that for a better understanding, a more comprehensive research model with different individual-level and social-level variables may be examined.

Third, a longitudinal design of the present study's model would help researchers to observe changes in normative legitimacy and other individual-level variables. Future longitudinal studies may then also explore the effects of changes in perceptions of normative legitimacy of entrepreneurship at the intra-individual level. A fourth limitation pertains to the sample characteristics. The data were

obtained from women entrepreneurs in Turkey as an emerging economy. It is noteworthy to consider that a more diverse sample from different economical cultural backgrounds might increase the generalizability of the findings. Last but not least, the moderating effects of the perceived normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship can be analyzed in relation to other behavioral and/or intention-based outcome variables (e.g. internationalization, intention to quit or sell businesses).

In sum, this paper emphasizes that achievement motivation and perceptions on normative legitimacy of women entrepreneurship are important variables in explaining the growth orientation of women entrepreneurs in a society where traditional gender roles are still dominant.

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