Possibilities and obstacles for Palestinian women entrepreneurs in agricultural micro enterprises

Möjligheter och hinder för palestinska kvinnliga mikroföretagsentreprenörer inom jordbrukssektorn

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: women entrepreneurship, push and pull factors, developing women business, networking, societal and traditional context

Background: Women partaking in businesses as entrepreneurs is a field getting increased attention in Palestine. Women’s underutilized economic potential along with entrepreneurial activity as a key driver behind economic progress, make the field of women entrepreneurship in Palestine a matter of importance. The agricultural sector is one of the larger for Palestinian women employment, which is why it might attract aspiring entrepreneurs. With investments from Palestinian authorities as well as NGOs, directed towards developing Palestinian women entrepreneurship, one could argue that the opportunities for women to become entrepreneurs exist. But what is the opinion of the women entrepreneurs themselves regarding existing possibilities and obstacles?

Purpose of the study: To examine the process for women entrepreneurs of establishing and running micro companies in the agricultural sector on the West Bank in order to highlight the possibilities and obstacles that they experience.

Methodological framework: The study had a qualitative approach in which we conducted semi-structured interviewes with eleven women entrepreneurs, active in agriculture.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that women enter entrepreneurship out of necessity as well as reasons more connected to self-fulfillment and grasping at possibly profitable business opportunities. Previous experience in agriculture affected both the willingness to start a business and proved helpful for the entrepreneurial success. Notable challenges were found in marketing, legal matters and the physically tiring work. Most of our respondents did not concentrate on developing the support activities connected to their businesses, directing more of their attention towards primary activities. Our respondents also made use of networks, spanning from private connections to professional contacts.
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Louise Rönnberg and Carl Tingström

31 May 2016
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Already in 1942, Schumpeter argued in his *creative destruction* theory that entrepreneurship is a main driver behind economic progress, where the entrepreneur’s ability to innovate plays a key role. By finding new opportunities, or by doing things more effectively, the entrepreneur changes the current economic context by destroying old ideas and replacing them with better ones (Schumpeter, 1942). The business climate and the conditions for entrepreneurship can widely vary between countries. The World Bank’s ease of doing business ranking, which is based upon eleven different aspects, ranks Palestine as the 129th most business friendly country (World Bank, 2015). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is one of the greater entrepreneurship surveys in the world. The GEM report on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), made by the International Development and Research Center (IDRC), mentions several challenges that Palestine faces in order to become more business friendly. One of the largest barriers for an extended private sector is the mobility restrictions regarding both people and goods, which is a result of the Israeli occupation and the lack of an airport and a national port system (IDRC, 2010).

From an equality perspective, the female labour participation rate in Palestine is 16 percent, which is the fifth lowest rate in the world according to the World Bank Development Indicator (2014). The GEM report (IDRC, 2010) shows that women’s economic activity in Palestine is among the lowest in the world as women’s share of early entrepreneurial activities is 19 percent, which about half of what comparable countries like Yemen, Morocco and Algeria have. The low female participation in the labour force and in economic activities combined with an overall harsh climate for entrepreneurship makes it hard for women to run their own businesses (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2011). Of all the self-employed Palestinians, only around ten percent are women (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [PCBS], 2014). Integrating more women in the labour force and encouraging more women to become entrepreneurs could result in positive effects on the economy. For instance, eleven percent of the growth of the United States’ economy over the last forty years is calculated to be a direct result of increased female participation in the labour market (World Economic Forum, 2014). According to International Labour Organization (ILO, 2016), women constitute a source of underutilized economic potential and even more so in the MENA region, according
to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012). The empowerment of women is, however, not only useful for economic growth, it could also help reducing social inequality. More self-providing women could result in a more gender equal society (OECD, 2012; ILO, 2016).

Of all employed women in the Palestinian labour market, around 21 percent work in the agricultural sector, making this the second largest sector for women employment after the service sector (PCBS, 2014). The agricultural sector also accounts for a substantial informal employment, which makes it important by offering many people a chance to provide for themselves (FAO, 2011). Also, the sector produces a large part of the goods being exported from Palestine, signifying that the sector is of importance for the trade flow. Fruits and vegetables are Palestine’s third biggest export product and other agricultural products, such as tobacco, spices, coffee and tea also account for a large part of the total export (PCBS, 2014). Unfortunately, work in the agricultural sector often has a low, or even non-existent, wage, especially for women (FAO, 2011). Furthermore, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more tangible in the agricultural sector, since the occupation limits access to good farming lands and water resources (FAO, 2011).

1.2 Purpose, problem and research questions

The purpose of this paper is to examine the process for women entrepreneurs of establishing and running micro companies in the agricultural sector on the West Bank in order to highlight the possibilities and obstacles that they experience. A higher share of women among the entrepreneurs of Palestine could both strengthen the private sector and increase gender equality by decreasing women’s dependency on men. Since so many women, both formally and informally, are active in agriculture, there is a need to further investigate this sector. In this paper we analyze the existing structures for self-employed Palestinian women operating agricultural micro enterprises. While most existing studies are of a quantitative nature and conducted for example by IDRC and The World Bank, this study aims to develop the perspective of women entrepreneurs in the Palestinian agricultural sector by using a qualitative approach. Based on our findings, we proposed policy recommendations. To attain the purpose, we conducted this study based upon the following research questions, all in the context of Palestinian women in the agricultural sector:
• Why do women engage in entrepreneurship?
• What are the main skills used by women entrepreneurs in developing and running their businesses?
• How does the traditional and societal context impact women’s entrepreneurship?
• What do women experience to be the main differences between them and men in the process of running a business?
• What do women consider to be their main challenges on an entrepreneurial path?
• What support do women use in their entrepreneurial careers?

1.3 Methodology
In order to address our research questions, we collected the data through a qualitative field study on the West Bank during which we conducted semi-structured interviews with eleven women entrepreneurs of various backgrounds. The data were summarized, transcribed and analyzed. In addition, we complemented our research material with field notes and observations.

1.4 Contribution of the study
Much has been written in the field of women entrepreneurship, although the subject itself is relatively new. A pioneering article written by Eleanor Schwartz (1976) is considered to be the first article of note, but the field has grown widely since then (Greene et al. 2003). The most thorough study conducted in Palestine is probably the one written by Qazzaz et al. (2004); a study that mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods when examining women entrepreneurship. Their study, however, excludes all entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and the authors use a slightly different methodology than ours. To our knowledge, there is no study on women entrepreneurship in the Palestinian agricultural sector. The present study fills this deficiency.
2. Palestinian context

2.1 The Palestinian economy

The Palestinian territory has been under Israeli occupation since the 1967 war, and the Palestinian economy is constantly suffering from the ongoing conflict. Ever since the turn of the century, the economy has been on a negative trend, affected to a large degree by the consequences of the second intifada\(^1\) that began in Jerusalem in September 2000 (The World Factbook, 2016; Stevenson, 2010). Even though it is one of the most open countries in the MENA region, the economy is fragile. Rather than being driven by innovations, investments and private sector productivity, the country depends heavily on the government, donor aid, private consumption and remittances (The World Factbook, 2016; Stevenson, 2010). The educational system is well established and one of the best in MENA, but there is still a lack of skilled labour since the education and training are designed to produce low-skilled workers for the Israeli labour market (Stevenson, 2010). The dependency on Israel is high, both in terms of trade and labour market opportunities. Israel is by far the largest trade partner and in this partnership, Palestine has a large trade deficit. There is also a weak legal framework, resulting in corruption and lack of enforcement measures (Stevenson, 2010). The fact that a part of the country, the Gaza strip, is divided from the other part along with the extensive mobility restrictions resulting from the occupation, hinders the economic development in Palestine. Israeli checkpoints, where some require a permission to pass, constitute some of these mobility restrictions (field notes, 12 March 2016; FAO, 2015).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is the third of the UN Millennium Goals (UN, 2016) and it is also an important part of the strategy of organizations such as The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for Palestine. On the Gender Inequality Index, which is an index commonly used to measure gender inequality, Palestine ranks as the 113\(^{th}\) country out of 188 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014). Women’s presence in the Palestinian economy is, as stated earlier, low. The unemployment rate is particularly high for women under the age of 24, where it stretches to around 52 percent. Unemployment and low wages are also a problem even for women who are accounted for in the labour force (PCBS, 2014). An overview of the labour force situation is presented in Table 2.1:

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\(^{1}\) A concept that has been more commonly translated as ‘uprising’ in English. Normally associated with Palestinian rebellions against Israeli occupation (Sabbagh, 1998).
Table 2.1: An overview of the labour force situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour participation (%)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the labour force</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underemployed*</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment (%)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage employee</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid family member</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Underemployment exists when a person’s employment is inadequate in relation to alternative employment, account being taken of his/her occupational skills.

When it comes to wages in Palestine, women who are formally employed are on average paid 76 percent of what men are paid, but they also work fewer hours. A daily average wage for a woman is 80.9 new Israeli shekel (ILS), which equals around 18 euro (EUR). The equivalent wage for men is 105.8 ILS (24 EUR). An average workweek for women is 36 hours and for men 43.6 hours (PCBS, 2014).

On a governmental level, there are a number of organizations that work with enhancing women’s participation in the labour force by providing training courses in, for example, how to manufacture certain products (field notes, 20 March 2016; field notes, 23 March 2016). A common problem with these initiatives is that they result in an overestabishment of some products. For instance, if The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) teach a number of women how to make soap out of olive oil, many of these women will start making the same product and hence flood the market with it (field notes, 24 March 2016). The government, through various organizations such as PARC, also work with supporting women financially. There are a number of funds to apply for, and these organizations can also help farmers by providing different kinds of equipment (field notes, 20 March 2016; field notes, 23 March 2016).
2.2 Other common problems in agriculture

According to Palestinian tradition, the land is divided among the children when the landowner, who often is the father, passes away. With the rapidly growing population in Palestine, this means that the agricultural workers get smaller and smaller areas of land for each generation that passes, resulting in difficulties in generating any kind of large scale production (field notes, 06 April 2016; field notes, 13 March 2016; field notes, 21 March 2016). Legally, daughters inherit on the same grounds as sons, but traditionally it is common for daughters to abstain from their share (field notes, 06 April 2016; field notes, 13 March 2016; FAO, 2015).

The limited access to fresh water, which is needed for irrigation, is another problem in agriculture. In order to extend an existing well or to drill a new one, a permission has to be issued by Israel and these permissions are rarely granted, which results in Palestinian agricultural workers having to ration the amount of water used. When given ratio is exceeded, Palestinians have to pay significant amounts of money in order to get more water (field notes, 12 March 2016; field notes, 13 March 2016). Israeli settlers use most of the existing water resources on the West Bank, according to Swedish United Nations Association (UNA Sweden, 2016). Palestinian agricultural workers also face tough competition from imported goods, mainly from Israel. Palestine’s difficulties in exporting their products along with their inferiority in terms of technology makes it hard to produce goods that are able to compete with the prices of Israeli goods (field notes, 16 March 2016; field notes, 13 March 2016; field notes, 11 March 2016; field notes, 24 March 2016).

2.3 Geography and politics

Palestine is a Middle Eastern country with a surface of 6,000 square kilometers (UNA Sweden, 2016). The territory is divided in two areas; The West Bank, which borders Israel in the west and Jordan in the east, and The Gaza Strip, which is located by the Mediterranean Sea and borders Egypt to the south and Israel in all other directions. The two areas contain a total population of 4.5 million (UNA Sweden, 2016). Palestine is recognized as a country by 138 states (UN, 2012).

The conflict with Israel has its roots in two wars; one that took place in 1948, soon after the foundation of Israel, and one that took place in 1967. Both wars stood between a united front of Arab nations on one side and Israel on the other. Israel won both wars (The World Factbook, 2016). In the aftermath of the first war, many Palestinians left their homes and Israel expanded
its territory. In the 1967 war, Israel once again expanded its borders by annexing East Jerusalem (The World Factbook, 2016). This war also resulted in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, commonly known as the Israeli-Palestine conflict. The heaviest issues in the conflict today are the construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, the restriction of movement for Palestinians and their goods and the access to water and electricity for Palestinians (field notes, 12 March 2015; field notes, 09 March 2016; SIDA, 2016). Many cities belonging to Palestine before the 1948 war now belongs to Israel, and some of the Palestinians that then lived in these cities still consider the lands as their own (field notes, 13 March 2016). While waiting to return to what was once their homeland, many of them live as refugees in camps in either the West Bank or Gaza (United Nations Relief and Work Agency [UNRWA], 2016).

In the Oslo accords, struck in 1993 and 1995, Israel was by Palestine recognized as a state and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was by Israel recognized as the spokesperson for the Palestinians. The accords also resulted in the division of the West Bank into Area A, B and C. Israel has full control over Area C, which consists mainly of rural areas and which covers around 60 percent of the territory. Area B consists of smaller towns and villages and the two countries have shared control over it. Area A consists of all the heavily populated areas of the West Bank, including the major cities. Palestine has full control over this area (United States Institute of Peace [USIP], 2016).
3. Theory and previous literature

3.1 Push and pull factors

The push factors and pull factors are discussed in many different contexts and are considered as motivational factors. Robinson (2001) discuss these in relation to women entrepreneurs in developing countries and how they trigger women to become entrepreneurs. While push factors are associated to negative drivers such as low income, low job satisfaction, lack of job opportunities and strict working hours, pull factors may be related to the desire to help others (Robinson, 2001). Carsrud and Brännback (2011) suggest that existing motivational theories can be divided into drive theories and incentive theories, wherein the push factors can be found in the former and pull factors in the latter. Further, the same study discusses the rise of push factors in combination with an internal stimulus such as hunger or fear. Pull factors are aligned with goals such as personal achievements and not necessarily connected to basic means for survival, which are more defined within push factors.

Schwartz (1976) studied women entrepreneurs in the United States and concludes that the primary motivators for the women in her sample were job satisfaction, economic payoffs, independence and a need to achieve, which are the same motivators that Collins and Moore (1964) found for men entrepreneurs. These are all pull factors, but the motivation for women in Palestine may tend to differ, since Qazzaz et al. (2004) find that Palestinian women are more often driven by push factors, such as low pay and absence of other jobs.

Further, Carsrud and Brännback (2011) discuss different reasons for what the motivators to become an entrepreneur might be, categorizing entrepreneurs into necessity entrepreneurs and opportunity entrepreneurs. Whereas opportunity entrepreneurs act on an opportunity, for example new products, services or new alternatively underserved markets, necessity entrepreneurs focus on survival and can not, in some extreme cases, risk trying to achieve greater goals if this means the immediate threat of starvation (Carsrud and Brännback 2011). The tendency of risk taking is related to the risk aversiveness of the entrepreneur, which tends to be higher for necessity entrepreneurs than for opportunity entrepreneurs (Carsrud and Brännback 2011). Palestinian women are often necessity entrepreneurs, according to Qazzaz et al. (2004). In their study, women over the age of 50 experienced difficulties in finding paid employment, which is why their only opportunity is to launch their own businesses. Divorced and illiterate women also experienced the same problem (Qazzaz et al. 2004).
3.2 Fear of failure

Related to why the risk aversiveness might be so high in some cases of entrepreneurship, is the fear of failure (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Conroy and Elliot, 2004; Arenius and Minniti, 2005). According to Hossain et al. (2009), women are as innovative and capable as men regarding success as an entrepreneur, although the authors lists two disadvantages for women business development in developing countries; the initial lack of confidence in their own abilities and society’s lack of confidence in women’s ability.

Fear of failure is also discussed in the report by IDRC (2010) in which data shows that 42 percent of the total active population of Palestine experiences that fear of failure would prevent them from starting a business. Women and men view their entrepreneurial capabilities differently. Women in the MENA countries perceive that they have less experience, less skills required to start a business and a higher fear of failure. As a result, fewer women intend to start a business in the near future (IDRC, 2010). According to OECD (2012), the following results could be expected if the fear of failure were to be reduced:

“Reducing women’s fear of failure in starting a business could also be achieved by providing women with more information, knowledge and skills to improve their know-how, which would raise their level of self-efficacy and confidence. The issue of fear of failure as a barrier to women starting a business is worthy of further examination.” (OECD, 2012, p. 29).

Qazzaz et al. (2004) argue that the women’s selection of traditional work for their gender not necessarily depends on how well they can perform work in such areas, but rather on the lack of success stories in other areas to which the women can relate and by which they can be encouraged. Wyrwich et al. (2016) account for the same likeliness of more entrepreneurs embarking on a start up process of a business, meaning that if there are entrepreneurial role models, that is peers, in the immediate surrounding that positively influence other individuals to regard the entrepreneurial path as a valid career choice, it will result in reduced fear of failure.
3.3 The division of labour in a household

Becker’s *A theory of the allocation of time* (1965) presents the household as an economic unit, consisting traditionally of a married couple. The household has a need to consume units of market output, which could be the purchase of normal consumption products such as a loaf of bread. These units are purchased with a wage coming from work. The household also has a need to consume units of non-market output, which could be more traditional work done at home, such as cooking, cleaning or repairing the car. These units are purchased with the time spent to perform this task. The household chooses the division of labour according to efficiency, and since men are assumed to have a comparative advantage in market work and women in domestic work, it is more efficient to fall into the traditional roles of the household, where the man goes to work and woman stays home. This division of labour maximizes the household’s ability to purchase both units of market and nonmarket outputs. By allocating the time in this way, the parts of the household specialize in their respective task, which leads to even more increased comparative advantages. The theory can be presented as household with a production possibility frontier, illustrated in Figure 3.1:

![Figure 3.1: Household with a production possibility frontier](image)

Previous research suggests that the roles within the household are a constraint on women’s entrepreneurship (Muntean, 2013; Chitsike, 2000; Qazzaz et al. 2004). Hossain et al. (2009)
concludes in a study conducted in Bangladesh that responsibility towards children is an important factor that withholds women from starting a business. Both Muntean (2013) and Chitsike (2000) argue that since women tend to be more responsible towards family duties, their entrepreneurial activity is limited because of the inability to travel in order to find business opportunities. This results in women selling things that are often made in, or close to, the home. Along with difficulties in accessing financial markets, women-driven enterprises are unlikely to reach any kind of large-scale production (Chitsike, 2000).

3.4 Human capital and labour force participation

Having the proper knowledge about how to start and run a business is necessary before actually committing to it, which is why education is an important factor behind the number of enterprises (Stevenson, 2010). The IDRC report (2010) also establishes a strong link between educational level and the willingness to run a business. However, there is also a strong link between labour force participation and entrepreneurship, as shown by Chowdhury and Audretsch (2014). Their theory shows that when more women are involved in the labour force, more women are likely to seek entrepreneurial activities. Combining education with labour force participation, these authors conclude that entrepreneurial activity rises with education, and does so to a larger degree when labour force participation is high. This three-part relation is presented in Figure 3.2:

Figur 3.2: Relationship between education, labour force participation and entrepreneurial activity.

![Figure 3.2: Relationship between education, labour force participation and entrepreneurial activity.](image)

It may, however, be the case that education does not have as much impact on entrepreneurship in Palestine as in other countries. IDRC (2010) concludes that entrepreneurial activity does not vary with level of education. Instead, the household income level is significantly more
important. Almost 70 percent of the early stage entrepreneurs in Palestine come from the upper third household income level (IDRC, 2010). Qazzaz et al. (2004) also investigate the impact of education on entrepreneurship in Palestine by looking into *willingness* of starting a business and find that women with a vocational or an academic diploma have a high willingness. The willingness then falls along with level of education. As for household income levels, these authors find that women from low-income households have a higher desire to start a business than those from high-income households. The willingness then falls as the household income rises. For the agricultural sector in Palestine, education affects to a large degree whether women work there or not. Two point six percent of women with 13 or more years of education work in this sector, while the equivalent rate for women with 1-6 years of education is 52.4 percent (PCBS, 2014).

Laplume et al. (2015) made an analysis, based on 120,000 observations across 31 countries, of human capital and financial capital and how they may generate different kinds of entrepreneurship, for example the earlier mentioned classifications in necessity and opportunity. The authors concluded: As inequality rises, more actors enter a necessity entrepreneurship regardless of financial or human capital. Under the same circumstances though, only financial capital becomes a strong predictor for the entry to an opportunity entrepreneurship. Under economic inequality, both kinds of entrepreneurship do occur, however, there is a stronger bias towards necessity entrepreneurship. Looking at the Gini coefficient, which is an index commonly used to measure economic inequality in different countries, Palestine received a score of 34.5. The number is around the same as for comparable countries such as Jordan, Egypt and Morocco and ranks Palestine as the 37th country out of the 76 that were measured in 2009 (The World Bank, 2009).

When it comes to labour force participation for women, Hattab (2012) argues that a low rate results in a lack of skills, knowledge and experiences needed to start and run a business. According to Hossian et al. (2009), a low participation also makes it hard for women to save for a start-up capital. Langowitz and Minniti (2007) test a few hypotheses when studying entrepreneurial activity among women in 17 different countries with a behavioural economics approach. They find that age, work, status, income level and education have no significant impact on women’s propensity of starting a business. Instead, they find that *networking* has significant impact on women’s choice of starting a business.
3.5 Networking

Langowitz and Minniti (2007) refers mainly to networking as in knowing other women entrepreneurs, but the term also includes connections to other individuals who can be family members, friends, contacts at institutions and authorities, etc. (Witt, 2004). According to Hossain et al. (2009), building a network might be difficult for women, since many of their formal contacts often are limited to family connections. Aldrich et al. (1989) show that men are more likely to have strong networks since they are more used to building and using them than women. This is however contradicted by Greve and Salaff (2003) who state that women entrepreneurs make use of professional and private networks more often than men in order to create business opportunities. According to Weiler and Bernasek (2001), this behaviour could be explained by women more often being excluded from formal organizations as well as informal networks.

A strong network has its main advantage in the possibility to acquire resources cheaper than through a purchase directly on the market and also the possibility to acquire resources not available on the market. An entrepreneur can reach these advantages by developing socially embedded ties with the partners in the network (Granovetter, 1985). Other advantages with a network are a frequent access to new information and an extended support from the network partners (Witt, 2004; Dubini and Aldrich, 1991; Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998). If the entrepreneur, who has the central role in his or her own network, has many direct connections with other partners, the network is said to have a high level of connectedness (Hansen, 1995).

3.6 The institutional approach

Douglass North (2006) writes that organizations within a society are a reflection of the institutional framework. He gives an example of this in an article by saying that: “[…] If the institutional framework rewards piracy, then piratical organizations will come into existence […]” (North, 1994, p. 361). The framework he refers to consists of both formal rules, such as written laws and regulations, and informal rules, such as social, traditional and religious constraints (North, 2006). The latter could be defined as social legitimacy (Wyrwich et al., 2016). They are both a result of the specific society’s history, religious beliefs, cultural context, etc. The organizations that North (2006) refers to are enterprises, communities, associations and so on. Both the formal and informal aspects need to be taken into account when analyzing phenomena in an economy bound by this framework. He further writes that in order for a society to change, the institutional framework needs to be changed (North, 2006).
Wyrwich et al. (2016) use the institutional theory of North (2006) to argue that the formal and informal institutions of a society can shape different entrepreneurial role models. Tillmar and Achtenhagen (2013) also use this approach when looking at women's entrepreneurship mainly in the Nordic countries. They provide some examples of institutional change by mentioning the shift from maternity leave to parental leave and the tax reform, which meant that married couples were no longer taxed together, two changes that occurred in Sweden during the seventies and that helped improving women's entrepreneurship. Muntean (2013) argues that changes in the informal framework are of equal importance. Such changes could be related to the general perception of women's status in the society, which affects their access to markets, their presence among decision-making positions, their ability to strike deals with business partners, etc.

An example of formal constraints mentioned by Qazzaz et al. (2004) is the lack of strategic planning in Palestinian departments in order to manage issues concerning women's presence in the labour force as entrepreneurs. An example of informal constraints from the same study is that Palestinian women entrepreneurs often work in sectors traditionally represented by women, such as sewing, embroidery, hairdressing and food processing. It is also mentioned that women in the study chose their field of business based on what they believed to result in success. Other constraints mentioned by Qazzaz et al. (2004) could be societal problems, which in some extreme cases result in the lack of support, or even pure opposition, from family, friends and neighbours towards women running their own businesses. However, the authors point out that there are significant exceptions among the interviewed women in the study. There are women working in other sectors than the traditional areas mentioned above, and there are women that receive support from their surroundings. Nevertheless, the study, as well as other studies, recognizes the traditional role of a woman's responsibility to do housework and taking care of children as almost inevitable (Qazzaz et al. 2004; OECD 1998; Loscocco and Robinson, 1991).

Another MENA region study, which has focused on societal and traditional constraints for women entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates, discusses the same existing constraints as mentioned above. It also discusses how legislative policy documents and active institutional development, aiming to attract more women to higher education, have lead to increasing numbers of women academics and entrepreneurs (Goby and Erogul, 2011). Even if Qazzaz et
al. (2004) find that more women started their own business in order to provide an income to the household and keep their family out of poverty after the second intifada, not all of the interviewed women considered their business as a long term commitment or subject for development and growth. This mindset, the authors argue, will not lead to empowerment for Palestinian women entrepreneurs. However, if the businesses grow and expand, some of the interviewed women in the study by Qazzaz et al. (2004) experienced that the control of the businesses was transferred to the man in the family and that they continued working in a supportive role.

3.7 Value Chain

Porter (1985) emphasized the importance of defining a particular firm’s *value chain* in order to diagnose the competitive advantage. The definition of the theory is the identified individual activities within the firm, which can be divided into primary or support activities. To the primary activities, that is, the activities that compose the core business, Porter designates inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales and service. Further on, as the support activities, the author lists firm infrastructure, human resource management, technology development and procurement (Porter, 1985).

Giuliani et al. (2005) write that typical constraints for enterprises in developing countries include difficulties in accessing technology, markets, information, credit and external services. Regarding access to market information, Trienekens (2011) states this to be a key condition for producers to be included in successful value chains, but the producers also need the ability to translate the market information into useful intelligence. Regarding access to the markets themselves, Trienekens (2011) further writes that this is dependent on the technological capability of the producer, infrastructure, bargaining power and on market knowledge and orientation.

In a study on Sub-Saharan Africa, Lutz (2012) states that it is difficult for primary producers in the agricultural sector of developing countries to be part of a global value chain and at the same time have a beneficial business. The author also argues that in order to successfully include these producers in a global value chain, there is a need for more strategic resources and capabilities in the farming systems and not only policy debates regarding market mechanisms and market institutions. Gereffi et al. (2005) define three factors that would explain the construction and mechanisms of a global value chain; the capability of actors, the possibility to
translate market information into useful intelligence and the complexity of transactions. According to Lutz (2012), the third factor is becoming increasingly more important in agricultural export chains. If there are no existing opportunities for small actors in the primary production to upgrade their production, which they normally could do if they were part of a global value chain, there is a higher probability that the actor will be better off by downgrading to local and regional markets (Humphrey, 2006; Ponte and Ewert, 2009). Although Rodrik (2007) argues that the small sized business may face a costly market discovery process, it is also discussed by Berrou and Combarrous (2012) that the same kind of business can, through social networks, use this to its advantage by joining forces into a cluster with similar businesses.
4. Methodology

4.1 Choice of methodology

Many reports have been written on the subject of entrepreneurship in the MENA region, for example by IDRC and The World Bank. To our knowledge, most reports and studies do take on a quantitative approach. In our introduction, as an example, we presented in percentage the female participation rate and the rate of self-employment among women. These numbers provide a solid foundation upon which we could base our study, but this thesis did in fact not strive to work with them. We sought to understand what lied beneath these numbers, which is why we chose to take on the subject of women entrepreneurship with a qualitative approach.

According to Leedy et al. (2005), qualitative research collects and examines data in order to describe a complex and multifaceted situation. It also has an inductive reasoning form and is often used to make assumptions about a whole grouping from a smaller sample.

According to Patton (2002), the qualitative inquiry is useful when the design of the study is naturalistic, meaning that it takes place in a real world setting. The purpose of it is to understand the situation of a specific context, basing this understanding upon the experiences of those who find themselves within it. This naturalistic design also implies that the inquiry is discovery-oriented, meaning that the researchers do not manipulate the study setting by placing constraints on what the possible outcomes may be (Patton, 2002). Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) state that the qualitative research interview could be built upon different philosophies, for example phenomenology. For this study, which encompasses the experiences of being a woman entrepreneur in Palestine and therefore is based on the interviewees’ own opinions on the subject, the philosophical foundation could be considered to be of a phenomenological character.

As for the qualitative method, Patton (2002) further writes that there are three different ways to collect data; through interviews, observations or through the study of documentation. Regarding interviews, the main purpose of them is to yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton, 2002). Since we aimed to highlight the conditions of women’s entrepreneurship in the West Bank, interviews were the main tool used. Fejes and Thornberg (2015) add informal conversations, focus groups and surveys to the data collecting methods. Because of the naturalistic setting of this study, it was not only the interviews with our respondents that were of interest. Also, we observed our environment and had appointments and informal conversations with key organizations. Details
and names of these are found in Appendix 2. The materials from these meetings are referred to as field notes.

### 4.2 Stages of a qualitative research interview

The practical steps to thoroughly put together a qualitative research interview, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2014), are: thematization, planning, interview, transcription, analyze, verification and reporting. In other words, Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) refer to an interview framework which, prior to the interview, builds its purpose and research questions upon the chosen subject and is carefully planned before the interviews take place in order to ensure that the desired information is acquired. In our case, these steps consisted of designing an interview template that would help us answering our research questions. This template was then used in all the interviews conducted throughout this study. The interviews were recorded, and in the steps following them, the data was transcribed from colloquial to written language before the analysis took place. The meaning of verification is to determine whether the results are valid, reliable and generalizable and the reporting strives to produce a comprehensible study that achieves scientific criteria that corresponds to the ethical aspects of the study (Kvale and Brinkmann 2014).

### 4.3 The interviews

Trying out the interview template by conducting a trial interview is something recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann (2014), a recommendation we followed. Our trial interview was made with a woman running a catering business. She was chosen in order for us to try out the template on someone with a similar profile to those participating in the official interviews. Slight adjustments in the interview template were made after the trial interview. Regarding the template, found in Appendix 1, the same one was used for every interview. We followed a semi-structured approach, which means working with open questions (Patton, 2002), where the respondent is given time to develop his or her answers and steer the interview in whichever direction he or she feels (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The structured questions about the respondent’s personal details as well as basic facts about their businesses were covered quickly at the beginning of each interview, and the main focus was laid on the twelve open questions labeled as main questions in the template. The questions were not necessarily posed in the same order as they appeared in the template, because of the semi-structured approach. If the respondent steered the interview in any direction, questions related to this direction were chosen before questions appearing earlier in the template. At the end of each interview, all questions were however covered, but this does not mean that they were always posed. If we
found that the answers to unposed questions were already given by the respondent, the questions were skipped. We also used several probing questions in order to follow up on relevant information which the respondents gave us while developing their answers, something that is recommended by Leech (2002). The probing questions varied depending on the answers of the respondents. All interviews, including the trial interview, were recorded, with the consent of the respondents.

The interviews were conducted with the help of an english-arabic translator. According to Raworth et al. (2012), when using a translator it is of importance for both the interviewer and translator to ask the the questions in first person by using the translator as a channel, for example “how long have you worked in the agricultural sector?”, instead of “how long has she worked in the agricultural sector?”. This is, according to Raworth et al. (2012), the most efficient way of ensuring that the translator actually translates the very words of the respondent instead of paraphrasing. Yet, we did not always follow this recommendation. Because of our questions, the respondents had deep and developed answers to give. They often talked in blocks lasting for more than one minute, which meant that our translator gathered the information by taking notes and then translating. This often led to paraphrasing instead of direct translations, but we both believed this was a better approach than the direct translation, because if the respondents had specific thoughts on any of our questions, we thought it to be better to give them the time to develop on these thoughts rather than to cut their answers into shorter sentences, which could have made them lose these thoughts. To compensate for the paraphrasing, we made sure that our translators, while the respondents answered the questions, were thorough and took notes so that they would not miss any of the content. This means that some of the quotations later used are written in third person. Two different translators were used during the interviews. One of them was used for three interviews and the other one for the rest. We tried to work with the same translator all the time, because she was familiar with our project, but there were days when we had interviews where she was not available. When using our other translator, we made sure beforehand that he familiarized himself with our project and our questions.

According to Raworth et al. (2012), it is recommended to sit down with the respondents in a space and surrounding where they feel comfortable and where the interview will likely not be interrupted. We tried to follow this recommendation, but it was not always possible because of a lack of better places to sit. Some of the interviews were therefore made outside, with noise
from, for example, airplanes, animals, playing children and mosques in the background, and some were made inside. The main problem with the noise was that it affected the transcription. Some words in the transcriptions were lost because it was impossible to hear in the recordings what was being said, but the core meaning was still captured because we did not experience that any keywords were lost due to background noise. Most interviews were also interrupted, sometimes on several occasions. It was difficult to get the respondents to turn off their mobile phones, because they told us that they had to stay available, which is why the interviews were sometimes interrupted by calls. Other interruptions could be from other persons. During most interviews, there were family members and sometimes also friends present or nearby. These persons came and went during the interviews and sometimes appeared on the recordings. When this occurred too regularly during an interview, we took a moment to remind everyone present that it was the respondent’s answers that were of interest for us. Many interviews were also interrupted because the respondents wanted to bring us food and drinks. If an interview was in any way interrupted, we compensated for this by summarizing for the respondents what was said before the interruption before proceeding with further questions. The shortest interview lasted for 53 minutes and our longest lasted for 73 minutes. No interview had to be cut short because of the time. Each interview lasted until we had gone through all questions. Interviews were made on different parts of the West Bank in order to ensure that we received opinions from different geographical locations.

4.4 Sampling

Patton (2002) writes that there is no minimum or maximum number that the sample needs to consist of in qualitative research, the size of the sample is totally dependent on what the researchers wish to achieve. He further writes that while a smaller sample provides more depth to the study, a larger sample provides more breadth, meaning that there is a trade-off between the two. In our case, we needed to take this trade-off into consideration when choosing the sample size. Given the nine weeks at our disposal for conducting, transcribing and analyzing the interviews, we set the sampling size to eleven. A similar study conducted in Turkey by Maden (2015) had a sampling size of ten.

This study focused on women’s entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector, and we defined a woman entrepreneur as a woman that was currently in the startup process of an agricultural business or a woman that was already running a business in the agricultural sector after having been a part of the startup process. For the respondents to be of significance for our study, the
kind of businesses they were running needed to be micro enterprises. According to the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy (2010), an enterprise falls under this definition if it has less than ten employees, an annual turnover of 200,000 United States dollar (USD) or less and a registered capital of 50,000 USD or less. All our respondents fulfilled these criteria. We chose to focus on these enterprises because they constitute the majority of all enterprises in Palestine and are therefore of great importance for the domestic economy (IDRC, 2010).

According to Stevenson (2010) and IDRC (2010), an issue in the MENA-countries is that there exists a large informal sector. Not all businesses are officially registered for tax payments etc. Since we came across many of these informal enterprises, we chose to not distinguish formal ones from informal in our selection of participants. Our respondents were considered entrepreneurs regardless of the legal status of their enterprises, as long as they fulfilled the other criteria described in this chapter. When it came to geography, the study was conducted on the West Bank and not on the Gaza Strip, mainly because of security issues.

In order to find suitable respondents, we made a purposeful sampling, which, according to Patton (2002), is a method useful when the researcher strategically wants to select cases rich on information. The respondents were found with the help of local organizations, such as government departments, fair trade shops and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). When an organization informed us about their projects, we phoned them to make sure that they fitted the criteria for this study. If they did, an interview was scheduled and conducted. Because of the language barrier, it was not always possible to explain to these organizations exactly what we were looking for, which sometimes resulted in us coming to projects which were not in line with what we were looking for. This means that we in total conducted 13 interviews, but only the results from interviews with the eleven respondents who matched our criteria were transcribed and used for the analysis. The respondents were named Entrepreneur 1, Entrepreneur 2 and so on, shortened to E1, E2, etc. Summaries of the profiles of the interviewed women are presented in Table 4.1:
Since our respondents were chosen with the help of local organizations, there was a risk of bias regarding their profiles. The risk stem from these organizations’ assumed willingness to appear good, which is why they might have taken us to successful projects. We also experienced that many of the businesses of the respondents were funded or in some ways given help by the same organizations.

### 4.5 Content analysis

The interviews were transcribed from colloquial to written language, which is one of the stages of the qualitative research interview, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2014). Leedy et al. (2005) recommends that the researcher leaves out the part which holds no greater importance for the results and analysis in order to facilitate the understanding of the material for the
reader. We interpreted this by leaving out parts that were not directly connected to the interviews, such as parts including general smalltalk. The transcribed interviews were then summarized in a content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) argue that this is a widely used qualitative research technique and that it can be divided into three subcategories; conventional, directed or summative. The main difference between directed and conventional analysis is how the researchers organize the data. In directed analysis, the data is sorted into predetermined categories, while in a conventional analysis, the categories flow from the data. In the summative analysis, the researcher looks for keywords or key meanings in order to find out how frequently they appear (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). We chose to use the conventional analysis method, because we believe it to be more closely related to the inductive nature of this study.

Further on, researchers must decide on how to use their written data by choosing either a manifest analysis or a latent analysis (Bengtsson, 2016; Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). In the manifest analysis, researchers stay close to the text and use the words spoken by the respondents, while in the latent analysis, they interpret the words into what was intended to be said (Bengtsson, 2016). Out of these two, we chose to use a manifest analysis. This choice was made because it was more closely related to the phenomenological philosophy of this report.

Taking on our transcribed text with a conventional approach, and by doing a manifest analysis, meant that we sorted the written text into themes and sub themes that came up when we found different respondents talking about similar things. It also meant that we did not interpret any underlying meaning into the text. The sorting started after we both read the texts separately and marked parts of interest for our research questions, which is what Bengtsson (2016) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005) call coding. We then compared what we had marked and started working with these parts, first by shortening them. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and Bengtsson (2016) writes that the best way to shorten a text is by condensing it, which means preserving the core but with fewer words. In the next step, the condensed meaning units were sorted into sub themes, which were in their turn sorted into themes. By following these steps, we sorted the interesting parts of the transcribed interviews into tables divided in four steps. An example of such a procedure is presented in Table 4.2:
Table 4.2: Example of coding and thematization in a content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning unit</th>
<th>Condensed meaning unit</th>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have been hired in a far away area when I was a teacher. For me it was</td>
<td>Salary barely covering the</td>
<td>Alternative work not</td>
<td>Motivator to run an own business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult to go all the way to Jericho and come back. So the salary was</td>
<td>expenses.</td>
<td>profitable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just covering my transportation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When going through the transcribed interviews, there is a risk that another pair of researchers would not mark the same parts as interesting or that the thematization would be of different shape, but for us, this procedure resulted in five different themes and 66 different sub themes, which are presented in the next chapter and served as the basis of our analysis. To facilitate the understanding of the results, they are presented in frequency tables in order to provide a picture of how many of our respondents gave an answer belonging to the specific sub theme. It is important to understand that the sub themes are not exclusive. A respondent who, during a specific part of an interview, gave an answer belonging to the sub theme *experienced support from the family* could later on in the same interview give an answer belonging to the sub theme *experienced discouragement from the family*, resulting in a two sided picture of the respondents experience from the family's view upon her work as an entrepreneur. For example did E3 express that her husband wanted her to stay home and raise the children, while her daughter often helped her in her work and encouraged her. Another possible explanation to this phenomenon was that the answers reflected different experiences during separated points in time. Also, if the sub theme *received higher status in society* had a frequency of four, it does not mean the the rest of the respondents did not receive a higher status in society as a result of their entrepreneurshipships, it just means that they did not explicitly express this effect to us during the interviews.

4.6 Method criticism

Results from a qualitative study can seldom be used to generalize for an entire population. Since the sample is small and the scoping is narrow, there is no statistical certainty behind the results, which is why it is hard to draw conclusions for others than the ones appearing in the study (Patton, 2002). This is also the case in our study, since it consisted of only eleven respondents.
There may also be an issue of establishing reliability of our study. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) writes that reliability is necessary to ensure that the results from a study can be reproduced by other researchers at another time, which sometimes is doubtful in qualitative studies. When it comes to interview-based empiricism, the unreliability may come from the fact that the interviewees may give different answers from time to time (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). In order to decrease this risk, we have strived to be transparent in our methodology so that other researchers have insight in our procedure. Further on, validity in a study is the degree to which a study really measures what it intends to measure. A study has a high validity if the results are concluded from a solid methodology, given its premises (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). Since qualitative studies tend to have a widespread methodology in which the results could be interpreted in many different ways, there may be questions about the validity of these studies (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). In our case, it is not likely that another pair of researchers would give the same exact interpretation of the collected material, but we are confident that the interpretations would be at least similar.

4.7 Ethical issues

Regarding ethics, we followed the principles of Vetenskapsrådet (2011). All our respondents were informed of the purpose of the interviews, including how they would be performed and what they would be used for. The respondents participated voluntarily and had both the choice and the possibility to leave the interviews at any time. We also made clear that neither names nor photos of them would be published. The use of their profiles and the answers given by them were used solely for the researching purpose of this thesis. Also, we followed recommendations by Leedy et al. (2005) to not expose our respondents to any unnecessary physical or psychological harm. We also committed to producing a work that is honest and do not have any intention of intentionally misleading others about the findings this study produced, which is also recommended by Leedy et al. (2005).
5. Results

5.1 Socially related issues

5.1.1 Possibilities

Table 5.1: Socially related possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socially related possibilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced support from family*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced support from friends</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference in the treatment of men and women*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded network thanks to business</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did marketing through social network</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received higher status in society</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became a role model</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew other women entrepreneurs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference between men and women entrepreneurs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility freedom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The marked numbers might contradict each other due to some respondents' experiences from different points in time.

Note: There were eleven respondents.

When we asked about what the respondents thought their families' opinion about them being entrepreneurs was, nine respondents out of eleven claimed to have their families' support and help, as seen in Table 5.1. The help consisted of psychological, physical or both kinds of support. Examples of different kinds of support were that a family were happy for the respondent's entrepreneurial progress or came to help when lifting and installing heavy equipment designated for business purposes. When we asked what they thought the opinion of their friends on the subject was, eight out of eleven respondents answered that they had the same kind of support or help from their friends as from their families. E3, when answering this question, added that those of her friends that also were engaged as partners or employees in the business, contributed by being involved in a quality control process within the business. Meaning, they jointly evaluated the ingredients of the finished product in order to determine if the final products met a satisfactory requirement of taste.

Being allowed to leave the village for training courses or matters related to their businesses, was another kind of support that two respondents specifically experienced from their own
families. These respondents suggested that this kind of support also was given to other women by their respective families. When we asked the respondents if their social life had changed in any way since they commenced their entrepreneurship, six of them brought forth how their social networks had both expanded and changed by including institutions in the network. In the answer from E8, she stated: “Before working she did not have these social relationships and she did not have any relationships with institutions and she did not go outside the village” (E8, 01 April 2016).

Four respondents had, through their entrepreneurship, also come in contact with other women entrepreneurs. This contact was established through working with other women in the same field of work or through being a member of a professional network, with which they worked in order to succeed with their business. Further, four respondents experienced themselves becoming role models for other women and admired for being connected to successful businesses, which had had a direct effect on other women starting their businesses. Apart from this, having succeeded with their businesses made five respondents experience an elevated social status and being treated with more respect. The respondents pointed out that this support came from family, friends and the local community. For E3, it had had a positive impact on the career of her daughter and son. Also, E4 noted that after starting her business, whenever she had visitors, they gave her their approval by confirming that she was a good woman.

The pre-existing relationships from before starting their businesses were something that five respondents specifically pointed out as useful for them in their business. These relationships were used as marketing and distribution channels, as the respondents’ families, friends and local communities were both spreading the word about the products and buying them. E7 was also working fulltime as a headmaster of a school and could sell her products to approximately 30 colleagues at her work.

When we asked our respondents if they thought there were any differences in how society treats a woman entrepreneur and a man entrepreneur, six of them answered that they did not experience any difference in the treatment. E8 developed her answer on this question by saying: “There will not be a noticeable difference between them in how society treats them” (E8, 01 April 2016). On the other hand, when we asked if they thought there were any differences between men and women entrepreneurs, three respondents answered that they did not believe there to be any difference. For example, E11’s response to this question was: “There
is no main differences, there is no differences between men entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs [...]” (E11, 13 April 2016).

5.1.2 Obstacles

Table 5.2: Socially related obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socially related obstacles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differences in the treatment of men and women*</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouragement from family*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouragement from local community</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished network because of work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced difficulties having time managing both household and work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not consider women and men to have equal abilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The numbers were derived from a content analysis. The marked numbers might contradict each other due to some respondents' experiences from different points in time.

Note: There were eleven respondents.

Four of the respondents experienced forms of discouragement from being entrepreneurs, either because their families wanted them to follow the traditional path for women of their society or did not believe in successful outcomes for their businesses. E9 explained that the traditional stereotype for a woman is to stay at home to cook, wash the dishes and receive guests while E3 added that her husband wanted her to resign and raise their children. Further, three respondents had either experienced, or believed there to be, resistance from their local communities. This resistance had been expressed towards E2 as if she was a crazy woman since her business idea was something that none in her village had tried before. E6 described resistance from the society in more general terms: “No matter how much women try to develop their situation and to develop their lives, men might tend to separate women from the society [...] or women who revolt against them, they will separate them from society” (E6, 29 March 2016). According to E2, members had decided to leave their women association because of how other people talked about those women. There was also one respondent, E7, who believed there to be differences in the abilities of women and men, meaning that there is a biological difference in the distribution of abilities between genders. She thought that women are more suited for some kind of work while men are more suited for other work since the latter have higher ambition and are therefore better at working in projects involving higher financial stakes.

The most common sub theme of socially related obstacles, were either the respondents' personal experiences, or their general opinions on how the society treats women entrepreneurs differently because of their gender. Seven respondents accounted for this, as
seen in Table 5.2. They stated that the differences derive from their society being generally more appreciating towards men in work situations, even when men and women perform the same work, but also for how men traditionally are bestowed with a higher social rank by the society. Through her business, E2 wanted to prove that women also can manage and share men’s work. E9 claimed that a lot of women would like to participate in agricultural work as well as work in other sectors, but that they are hindered because of how society and the families of women perceive them. E9 and E6 both considered women to have more responsibilities than just the work since women traditionally care for the household and the upbringing of children. This matter was experienced in first hand by E6, whose main challenge was: “Being able to get all her house work done and to satisfy her childrens' needs. And to also work outside the house” (E6, 29 March 2016). Also following the question if men entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs are treated the same way by the society, E10 stated: “No, the society doesn’t treat them the same, they justify men and they stand by men more than women because they consider that ‘Okey, a woman can sit in a house and she doesn’t need to work’, and they don’t treat them equally” (E10, 13 April 2016).

5.2 Human capital related issues

5.2.1 Possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human capital related possibilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical skills in the field of work</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity improving training</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired skills from IT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being patient</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good in communication</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being independent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical strength</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were eleven respondents.

Eight respondents specifically stated their earlier experience in their field of work, alternatively growing up in a farming family, as the source of the practical skills they depended upon in their business. One of these women, E2, also learned from hiring an expert for a single event and learning from watching or listening to this expert. Additionally, when facing a problem that she initially lacked to knowledge to solve, E2 often used the Internet in order to find a solution. The Internet was also a source of information for three other respondents when searching for a
solution to a business-related problem. Some specific characteristics that were essential for succeeding, according to some respondents, were determination, patience, physical strength, independency and to be communicative. To have physical strength or independency were named by one respondent respectively while determination was brought up by four respondents as an important characteristic for the success of their businesses.

Apart from the inherited practical skills and characteristics that the respondents found useful, five of them had undergone training courses useful for their businesses, mostly related to agriculture. Although E1, since she started her business, had also taken courses in administration and marketing.

5.2.2 Obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human capital related obstacles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically tiring work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked skills in marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked knowledge about the field of work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked knowledge in budgeting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked knowledge in legal matters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked knowledge about trade</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: There were eleven respondents.*

The respondents’ answers were diverse when discussing human capital related obstacles. Some of these obstacles had been overcome through experience by running the business, while some respondents still felt that they lacked knowledge in some of these areas. For example, E3’s statement showed that: “She would like to have experience in how to make workshop with people in order to promote the products widely” (E3, 27 March 2016). One of the business administrative issues for E1 was that she did not know that she should officially register her company at first, but some time after starting the business, her friends advised her on the matter and she subsequently decided to register her company. E10 initially felt that she lacked the proper knowledge about trade, but solved this by being capacitated by her women association. Apart from the business administrative issues, there was another obstacle that two respondents had faced in their businesses, which was the lack of knowledge in their field of work. E2 answered: “I wish I had all the information about agriculture. I wish I didn’t need
agriculture engineers, that I had all the information about planting, about water network” (E2, 27 March 2016).

### 5.3 Business related issues

#### 5.3.1 Possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business related possibilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect distribution</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of machines</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5: Business related possibilities

*Note: There were eleven respondents.*

Under the possibilities for the business related issues, there were three sub themes found in the respondents answers, namely indirect distribution, direct distribution customers and use of machines in work. Four respondents were found using an intermediary in order to get their products to consumers. E2 had gone from selling her products to the local market to producing organic and was therefore able to sell to an organization that solely cooperated with farmers cultivating organic crops. E2’s new intermediary handled all transportation, distribution and marketing, which relieved her business from the logistical expenses and was a contributing factor to why her profit had increased considerably. Two other respondents stated that their distribution was made directly between their businesses and the consumers, which for one of them also meant that she decided the quantity of her production based on how many orders she got. Although, this business was not dependent on having land to cultivate the crops and the customer base did not surpass the outlines of the respondent’s village. The use of machines in the production was mentioned by three respondents. One of them had designed her own machine together with her husband when her need for a larger production quantity was not met by the capacity at the time. She did not have the financial means to invest in a foreign made machine, which was the alternative. E1, since she had her own machine built, had also become service provider for competitors in the region who preferred paying for having their products processed in E1’s machine instead of investing in machinery themselves.
5.3.2 Obstacles

Table 5.6: Business related obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business related obstacles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced difficulties in marketing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition from imported goods</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically tiring work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in securing the workplace</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked at home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked driving license</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced troubles with exporting goods</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced troubles with suppliers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked machines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace too small</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived far away from work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with vermin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were eleven respondents.

Three respondents mentioned specifically marketing to be a continuous issue that they experienced as problematic. Two of those respondents mentioned that they had a problem with how to provide information for their customers, for example did E6 experience a problem with customers assuming that the price of her products were higher than it actually was. E1’s statement also included her not knowing: “How to get customers and keep them” (E1, 14 March 2016). E5 mentioned that in order to expand her business, she would need to do some kind of investment in technology. For the moment, her work was physically very tiring, which hindered her from producing a larger quantity of products. She also had had difficulties with suppliers who provided underperforming seeds, which in the end had not been giving any crops. This had been in the initial time period of her business, and she had sowed the seeds four times before she, with help from her husband, changed the supplier. Two respondents wished to have a driving license. One of them had started taking driving lessons and had passed her theoretical test but had not had the time to finish taking the license. The other respondent wanted to be able to move wherever and whenever she wanted, as for now, she first had to call around in her local community and ask if anyone was available to take her, every time she had somewhere to go. Other problems that some of the respondents faced were trade-related, such as difficulties exporting their own goods as well as competition from imported goods. Apart from complicated policies and legal issues connected to the Palestinian trade and the ongoing conflict with Israel, E9 additionally experienced that her production quantity was too small to export, meaning that selling abroad would not be beneficial for her business. Regarding the competition from
imported goods, E9 also claimed that Israeli goods entering the Palestinian market in combination with Israeli trade policies, made it difficult for her and her peers to set prices. E1 mentioned the Israeli settlers in the vicinity of her farmlands as a problem for her business, saying: “Israeli settlers always attack their lands and when the grapes are ready, they pick them and smash them” (E1, 14 March 2016). Difficulties in securing the workplace were not only troublesome for E1, but also for E10. Before E10 could move into a house located directly by the fields where she worked, she had some distance to her workplace. This was, according to her, a source for concern since she was afraid that someone would either take or destroy her crops.

5.4 Structurally related issues

5.4.1 Possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structurally related possibilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience from professional network</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granted help from institution</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granted money from institution</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got help from private companies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were eleven respondents.

Through different institutions, the respondents accounted for having the opportunity to get funding through either loans or scholarships. In general, they also found the institutions to be supportive and a part of the respondents’ expanded networks. By being a member of an association or getting support from an institution, the respondents’ networks had come to include legislative members of associations or other business women. Also, by being a member of a local association, E9 stated that when for example PARC wanted to get in touch with her or other women entrepreneurs, they were not contacted directly but through their local associations. PARC facilitated the contact, for example by setting up a women club in the village where E6 lived. Another possibility that arose for E1 was that by becoming officially registered in the Chamber of Commerce, she had been invited to present her products in exhibitions. Six respondents described how they got help from different institutions, as seen in Table 5.7. Whether these institutions were located locally or not, they had been providing for example needed materials, which was the case between E9 and PARC, cuttings of plants or machinery. E2 also pointed out that the agricultural institutions were a source of trust, for example in
monetary exchanges between the entrepreneur and the institution. E2, E3 and E4 also experienced a positive impact on their business by getting help from private companies. E3’s business had been funded by a telecommunication company that granted scholarships specifically for women entrepreneurs. The scholarship was not in money, but in the needed material for the business. Since E3’s business proved to be successful, the company kept funding her business. E11 described the nature of her project as a project already started by the organization she was involved in, but given to her as a grant and something she had been given the responsibility to independently manage.

5.4.2 Obstacles

Table 5.8: Structurally related obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structurally related obstacles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legally related issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked help from institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in financing for expansion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience from professional network</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: There were eleven respondents.*

Even though most respondents experienced positive outcomes of their professional networks, one of the statements deviated. E2 stated that the members of her women association discouraged her and avoided to help her. Four women, as seen in Table 5.8, experienced some sort of obstacle related to legal issues. E5 deliberately refrained from officially registering her business in order to avoid tax burden. E2 had to go through a court process in order to get a paper stating that she could rent the land she worked on for a long time instead of renewing the rent permission every time there was a new committee in the municipality. E6 was worried that her plants would not grow as a result of water shortage. She had to buy extra water from the municipality and stated that Israel was responsible for the shortage. E9 experienced that the export restrictions hindered her work and mentioned that if Israeli policies on Palestinian goods were changed, she could produce larger quantities. E1 thought that the Palestinian government should work harder to deal with the Israeli influence over the Palestinian goods market. Both E3 and E4 generally wanted more help and support from governmental institutions.
5.5 Internal factors

5.5.1 Motivators

Table 5.9: Motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivators</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide income for the family</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self fulfillment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low financial risk</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw a business opportunity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide own food</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the field of work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect land from settlers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative work not profitable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the good of society</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create employment for family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were eleven respondents.

Six respondents chose to run their businesses because they wanted to fulfill themselves. The reasons they gave were, among others, that they wanted to find a role in life or that they wanted to be creative. Four women stated that they got into their businesses because they saw a business opportunity. E6 stated: “Also she was aiming to produce and to eat something natural without any chemicals. Not like what we buy from the market, which is all mixed with chemicals.” (E6, 29 March 2016). Other business opportunities mentioned were that there was no similar project or that there was a good and profitable market. Four respondents stated that their businesses existed to satisfy their familial needs, either to decrease the expenses, to have food production as a safety or because the family did not want to eat other products than homemade. The most common motivator, as seen in Table 5.9, was to provide an income for the family, which was stated by eight respondents either because their families needed it or because it could support their household incomes. Specifically for E11, it meant that she wanted to help her family financially and to provide for her house and her children. Four women said that their own interest in the field of work expanded into a business. Two other respondents felt that they needed to start working the land in order to protect it from Israeli settlers. E7 had a daughter who could not find a job after her university studies and she therefore wanted to create a job opportunity for the daughter. E2 found that her earlier work as a teacher provided an income that could barely cover her expenses. During the interview with E3, it was stated that: “Usually in general, the salary is too low here in this area. It is their main objective to reduce unemployment here in this area” (E3, 27 March 2016), meaning that she started her
business for the good of society. Financially, five respondents took a low financial risk when starting their businesses, either because they were funded by someone else, or because they started them in a small scale.

5.5.2 Demotivators

Table 5.10: Demotivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demotivators</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced fear of failure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High financial risk</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough income</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: There were eleven respondents.*

Two respondents took a high financial risk in their businesses. One of them invested around 3,000 ILS in her company and the other one around 7,000 ILS. They used their own money and it covered expenses in the beginning of their entrepreneurial campaigns. Four women stated that they were afraid that their businesses would fail, as seen in Table 5.10. E9 stated: “The fear of failure comes from the fear that they won’t sell all their products because like we said before a lot of the products of other plants were wasted because they couldn’t sell them.” (E9, 05 April 2016). Two respondents were concerned that their businesses did not generate enough income, for example did E11 state: “[...]When she was working at home, the zatar, it was much less amount of zatar produced, but she could sell and have a much better income from it. Because now the income, or the profits, are divided between three parties.” (E11, 13 April 2016).
6. Discussion

6.1 Why do women engage in entrepreneurship?

The results of this study suggest that both push and pull factors, as defined by Robinson (2001), exist as motivators behind the respondents' choices to engage in entrepreneurship, but that pull factors are more common. Even though as many as eight out of eleven respondents stated *provide income for the family* to be one of the key drivers behind them getting engaged in their businesses, it was not necessarily the case that the families depended on an extra income in order to survive, which is why we can not say that the respondents were pushed into entrepreneurship because of this. The same reasoning goes for the answer *provide own food*, which four respondents gave. This sub theme reflects the fact that these respondents and their families preferred home made food rather than food bought from outside, which means they were not pushed into entrepreneurship as a mean of survival, but that it was rather a matter of preferences. There are, nevertheless, cases were push factors are the main drivers, since two respondents said that their entrepreneurship was a result of the need to protect their lands from settlers. These women may, along with the definition by Carsrud and Brännback (2011), also be called necessity entrepreneurs. That is also the case for the women who gave the answers *create employment for family* and *alternative work not profitable*, which both appeared with a frequency of one. But since many reasons were stated, these women also gave answers more in line with themes that Carsrud and Brännback (2011) use to describe opportunity entrepreneurs, which means they are likely not necessity, nor opportunity, entrepreneurs, but rather a combination of the two.

Distinguishing the opportunity entrepreneurs from the necessity entrepreneurs is easier than vice versa, since pull factors are more common in our findings. Six women stated *self fulfillment* as a reason, and other pull factors also appeared with high frequencies, with the exception of *for the good of society* that had only a frequency of one. However, the earlier mentioned problem in distinguishing one from another exists also here, because a respondent stating a pull factor could also state a push factor, but since pull factors appeared with higher frequencies, we can still see a pattern in the answers of our respondents. The tendency among them was that necessity entrepreneurs were usually also opportunity entrepreneurs, while opportunity entrepreneurs were usually not necessity entrepreneurs. The propensity of risk taking, or the risk averseness, as it is described by Carsrud and Brännback (2011), also underlines that most of the women in our sample tended to be opportunity entrepreneurs. Two of the respondents took a high financial risk by using their own money in the business, while five took a low risk.
by finding fundings from outside. The findings suggest that Palestine is a society with a higher economic equality since there is a bias towards opportunity entrepreneurship, which is in line with the conclusion of Laplume (2015).

Our findings contradict the findings by Qazzaz et al. (2004) that concludes that Palestinian women are commonly driven by push factors. The contradiction may be explained by the difference in our sample sizes. It may also be explained by the risk that our choice to co-operate with local organizations led to a bias in the sample, due to the organizations’ assumed willingness to appear good and therefore excluding some informal enterprises arisen from a need to provide some sort of income. We found only one common theme when we compared the results to the findings of Schwartz (1976), if we assume that Schwartz's need to achieve equals our self fulfillment. Apart from that, our respondents stated different motivators than the respondents of Schwartz. This difference is probably a reflection of both the different business climates and the different cultural climates between the two countries, along with the long time span between the studies.

Looking at the demotivators, which are reasons that could possibly scare entrepreneurs from their path, we found that four respondents stated fear of failure as a factor. This means that the results from our sample were somewhat in line with the 42 percent that IDRC (2010) finds for Palestine. Of the two reasons that, according to Hossain et al. (2009), could induce the fear of failure, we find the second one to be most applicable to our sample. The women in our sample, with some exceptions, tended to be determined and confident, meaning that they likely had no or little lack of confidence in their own abilities. We consider it to be more likely that they were afraid of failure because of external factors, such as society’s lack of confidence in women’s abilities. We believe this because two women stated that the concern of failure derived from fear of not being able to sell their products, which is external influence. Additionally, one woman stated that the fear arose when the society tried to put her down, which is also external influence.

The profiles of our respondents varied in terms of education from leaving school after sixth grade to taking a bachelors degree. Seven of the respondents had previously been involved in the labour force before starting their businesses. However, there is no pattern to be found between education and work experience in our results on which we can apply the theory of Chowdhury and Audretsch (2014). Neither is there a pattern with which we can compare our
findings with the research from IDRC (2010) that states that Palestinian women from the upper third household income level are more likely to start businesses. Furthermore, the women that had no previous work experience did not state any other lack of skills than the respondents that had previous work experience, which they would have done if Hattab’s (2012) research were applicable in our case. Being unable to distinguish any patterns, it is rather likely that the conclusion of Langowitz and Minniti (2007), which stated that age, work, status, income level or education have no significant impact on women’s propensity of starting a business, is in line with the answers of our respondents. We might had been able to distinguish patterns regarding these categories if the sample size had been larger and more diversive.

6.2 What are the main skills used by women entrepreneurs?
Since the respondents’ educational background did not show any conclusive evidence that the combination of education and labour force participation creates an increased entrepreneurial activity, which was the theory by Chowdhury and Audretsch (2014), this gives reason to question whether education was at all a contributing factor for the respondents’ entrepreneurship. The results showed that only two respondents had had their businesses for a longer period of time, namely over ten years, and their educational background differed. Although, it is plausible that if we would have interviewed other women suitable for our study with a higher level of education, we might have had results on which we could apply the theory of Chowdhury and Audretsch (2014). As for now, our results are too inconclusive to use that theory. However, since many of the respondents answered that marketing was one of the main challenges for them, it is reasonable to conclude that certain education or training courses in that matter could increase the propensity of women becoming entrepreneurs. This is also recommended in a broader meaning by OECD (2012), where it is discussed how the fear of failure could be decreased by capacitating women. Other knowledge than solely educational is taken into account in the discussion by Hattab (2012), which includes more factors in the human capital than education, namely such things as experiences, which was something that was common among the respondents with eight of them having previous experience from similar or identical work as they now performed in their businesses. This leads us to believe that in the certain cases of our respondents, it was previous experience and not necessarily academical credits, which mattered most as useful skills.

When it comes to what level of education that corresponds to what level of entrepreneurship Palestinian women enter into, our results did not concur with the findings of Qazzaz et al.
These authors suggest that, for example, divorced and illiterate women often enter into a necessity entrepreneurship, while our respondents showed that women with different educational backgrounds became entrepreneurs because of both push factors and pull factors. E10 had out of necessity become an entrepreneur in order to be able to provide income and food for herself since she had separated from her husband.

If training courses and different means of capacity improvements were provided for Palestinian women, there is still the issue of them being able to go to the place where this kind of capacitation takes place. Muntean (2013) and Chitsike (2000) argue that the responsibility towards household work and children can impose limitations on women’s businesses by saying that women will not be able to travel as much, which results in them missing out on developing their entrepreneurship. If so, it is plausible that even if the necessary training courses and educational possibilities exist for women to take part in, they might be unable to attend. This was, by specifically three respondents, solved to some extent by having access to the Internet, which they used to find educational video clips and instructions for some operative issues they faced in their businesses. Other supportive mechanisms that could provide the respondents with information were their private and professional networks, maintaining Witt’s (2004) discussion on how the different network partners can be of help to an actor within the network.

Since our results have not been in accordance with theories of how higher education can cultivate more entrepreneurs, there is reason to believe that more quantitative research on the subject of Palestinian women entrepreneurship should be made in order to get statistical significance. Nevertheless, we do believe that legislative policies and active institutional development are key factors in changing the formal rules, which were also the findings of Goby and Erogul (2011). This could also have an impact on the existing traditional and social constraints.

6.3 How does the traditional and societal context impact women’s entrepreneurship?

The informal rules of the institutional framework by North (2006) were reoccurring among the respondents more often than the formal ones, which we believe could be due to the nature of our study and the questions posed to the respondents. The social legitimacy (Wyrwich et al., 2016), which (North, 2006) call informal rules, was noticed among the respondents, for example did E6 experience that it was difficult to manage both the household and her work while E9 agreed that women in general have to put in more effort in order to manage the both
of them. This could for example be to cook or clean, which was what Becker (1965) defined as units of non-market output. Given that his theory is applicable in some of the cases of our respondents, namely that women have a comparative advantage in domestic work and men in market work, we believe that if a woman would like to start her own business, consequently she might affect the household output negatively and this may not be considered to be in accordance with the social legitimacy. There were also respondents that did not mention any trouble in managing both household work and their businesses, which could mean that there were no informal rules holding them back.

Relating back to Muntean (2013) and Chitsike (2000), there is also the aspect of being a caretaker of children, which Hossain et al. (2009) state regarding the expectations on women, as something that could withhold women from starting businesses. E9 accounted for something that three other respondents also specifically addressed, which was that their families wished for the respondents to resign, stay in and manage the home. Additionally, the results showed that two respondents specifically experienced more mobility freedom for themselves and for other women they knew, that is to be allowed to go outside their villages, for example to meetings with institutions. One of these respondents directly connected this mobility freedom to come from her husband giving his approval. On the other hand, there were nine respondents who experienced their family to be supportive and encouraging them to start and run the business and additionally respondents who as well were encouraged to go to other regions or even cross the border to Jordan to promote their businesses. The limitations that the family could form for the women’s business activities could be a result of difference in treatment of men and women, which seven of the respondents experienced. Their experience was that society tended to elevate men’s social status more than for women. Furthermore, Hossain et al. (2009) discuss whether it is more difficult or not for women to build professional networks since many of their formal contacts are often limited to family connections. We find this to be a restriction for the two respondents who had to get their families’ or society’s approval for leaving their house or village to engage with new contacts not connected to the family. A woman pursuing an entrepreneurial career may contradict the social legitimacy by not living up to society’s expectations to care for her family. This could, in extreme cases, lead to the woman being excluded from the societal context and a lower social status.

Six of the respondents specifically mentioned an expanded network as an effect of starting and running their businesses. These network developments lead to the respondents getting
connected to professional contacts not originally related to their family connections. The expanded network directly proved to have a positive financial effect on the respondents’ businesses in some cases. Also, there were similar effects originating from the pre-existing networks, since some of the respondents accounted for marketing and selling their products through family members and friends. This is supported by Greve (2003), who argued that women entrepreneurs make use of both professional and private networks more often than men in order to create business opportunities. Other changes that came with the expanded networks and participation in official associations, were the connectivity between the respondents and other women entrepreneurs. Like Wyrwich et al. (2016) propose regarding peers becoming entrepreneurial role models, four of the respondents specifically accounted for being a role model among their peers as a result of succeeding with their businesses. Two of them even stated that they directly had been a source of inspiration for other women who had either started businesses or developed their business strategies due to the respondents’ success. Something that is not specifically stated among the respondents is whether their connection to official associations resulted in them also finding entrepreneurial role models among the members. However, we find it plausible that if the respondents had become role models for other women in their association, it is likely that it was a two-way effect.

An explanation to why some Palestinian women can contradict the social legitimacy, move outside their homes and participate in the labour force, as for example entrepreneurs, could be related to one of the dominating subthemes in the motivators that appeared among the respondents’ answers, which was the desire to provide income for the family. If women, partly or completely out of necessity, have to provide financially to their household, there could be a question of not having any other choice for society or the families to let them work outside the home.

We find it plausible that our respondents chose to start businesses in agriculture located near their homes since agriculture is a sector traditionally represented by women, which means they may have thought it to be more likely to find successful business opportunities there. Staying close to the homes also allowed them to take on the traditional role of tending to the family. This reasoning is also supported by Qazzaz et al. (2004), Loscocco and Robinson (1991) and OECD (1998). Also, eight of our respondents had previous experience from working in agriculture and the majority had grown up in a farming family. What we consider to be a possible outcome for Palestinian women if they are not hindered, but instead encouraged, to
create their own businesses in agriculture, is that not as many women would fall into the informal sector where they risk being underpaid or not paid at all, which was the income-related push factor that often occurred among Palestinian women according to Qazzaz et al. (2004). We believe that both formal and informal institutions need to make women visible as business leaders and encourage entrepreneurship among women. We further believe this to be necessary in order to include independent women entrepreneurs, who may or may not work close to home, in the society's definition of social legitimacy.

6.4 What do women experience to be the main differences between them and men in the process of running a business?

We also asked the respondents about men entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs, that is, if they thought there to be a difference between the two. Hossain et al. (2009) argues that there are two disadvantages for women striving to develop their businesses, one them signifying that fear of failure in women can be triggered by their lack of confidence in their own abilities. Our results showed that one of the respondents experienced differences between women entrepreneurs and men entrepreneurs. One respondent, E7, believed there are main differences between men and women entrepreneurs since they inherit different abilities and ambitions connected to their gender. This was the reason why E7 considered women entrepreneurs to be suited for smaller projects while men entrepreneurs were better suited in projects that had higher financial stakes. This means that she did not express specifically a lack of confidence in her own abilities, which is suggested by Hossain et al. (2009) to withhold women from entering entrepreneurship. Instead, she thought these abilities were not to be found in women at all.

Also mentioned by some of the respondents as differences were specific characteristics, such as women being more patient than men and therefore better equipped to handle difficult business situations. Other than that, the results from the interviews showed that none of the respondents considered there to be any main differences between women entrepreneurs and men entrepreneurs. What they experienced to be different, was how society treated either the respondents as women entrepreneurs or women in general. This was the second disadvantage mentioned by Hossain et al. (2009) and as mentioned before, both of them could cause a higher level of fear of failure and prevent women from entering entrepreneurship. Why this disadvantage exists could be explained by the traditional role normally taken on by women. In accordance with the discussions made by Muntean (2013) and Chitsike (2000), we consider
that there could both be an unfamiliarity with women working outside and far away from their home for the society as well as for the women themselves. If neither of the parties are used of the idea of a woman stepping outside her traditional role, this could explain why a higher level of fear of failure is induced with some women but also those cases mentioned by the respondents where they experienced society to discourage or in some cases oppose women business development.

Whether Aldrich et al. (1989) or Greve and Salaff (2003) are correct in their conjectures concerning women entrepreneurs’ abilities to build strong and professional networks, our results did not support or reject their ideas, since the respondents proved to have networks consisting of both private and professional contacts. Also, since we did not interview any men entrepreneurs in this study, it is difficult to say if women entrepreneurs make use of professional and private networks more often than men when doing business.

6.5 What do women consider to be the main challenges on their entrepreneurial path?

Judging from our sample, it was more common to devote oneself to what Porter (1985) called primary activities than to what he called support activities. This may come from the fact that the investigated enterprises were of too small a scale to have any advanced support activities. In many cases, there were not any employees, which is why there was no need for human resource management. The enterprises were also too small to have any sort of developed firm infrastructure. Instead, our respondents focused more on production and sales, which is a possible explanation to why they found challenges mainly in this kind of activities.

Challenges for the respondents were found in a widespread set of themes, probably due to different characters of both the respondents and their businesses. There was no challenge that the majority of the respondents were concerned with, but there were still some that appeared more frequently than others. One of them, mentioned by four respondents, was the physically tiring work. There was a lack of use of technological advancements in the investigated businesses. In the cases where machines were used, they were usually basic ones. Because of this deficiency, the respondents had to perform physically tiring work in order to reach any sort of production, which sometimes resulted in backpains and pain in the hands as well as difficulties in sleeping. Except for the obvious impact on their health, it is likely that they will also retire earlier and thereby lose their income. Both the health issues and the income issue could be resolved by facilitating the access to technology.
Another common theme was difficulties in marketing. Many women depended on their networks in order to market their products. No respondent relied on any sort of large-scale marketing, which is likely due to small-scale production. Whether the production was larger or smaller, there is room for improvement regarding branding and selling of the products. One woman stated, for example, that she had a hard time showing the customers the benefits of her products, resulting in the consumers assuming her products to be overpriced. Another respondent stated it was difficult to know where to market her products, which segment to target and how to manage customer retention. These issues may be related to the problems in accessing market information, which is mentioned by Trienekens (2011) and Gereffi et al (2005). A possible solution to facilitate access to market information is by creating a structure for market intelligence through which information can be shared. Another solution could be to gather more knowledge about how to do marketing, and this knowledge could be granted through more institutional training courses. Training courses could also help with enhancing knowledge about budgeting and legal matters, which some respondents considered to be a problem. As for today, most respondents depend on selling directly to consumers, perhaps because of their lack of market knowledge, their limited technological capability and the general infrastructure of the country, which are possible explanations given by Trienekens (2011). This focus on local markets instead of commercial stores may also be a result of the difficulties in upgrading the production, which is suggested by Humphrey (2006) and Ponte and Ewert (2009). In the case of E9, the respondent mentioned several difficulties concerning the export of her products, partly because of the export restrictions, but also because the quantity produced in her firm was too small to export without having to carry large transportation costs. This means that she was excluded from a global value chain. The solution could be to work together through social networks in associations, as suggested by Berrou and Combarrous (2012), in order to integrate her and other actors that face the same issue.

Regarding legal matters, the mentioned problems covered difficulties in acquiring court papers, tax burdens, export restrictions and limited access to fresh water. The water and export issues, as well as the competition from imported Israeli goods, which two women perceived to be a problem, are direct results of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and therefore something that is likely to be resolved after the conflict has been resolved. Regarding court papers and tax burdens, these problems were mentioned by only one woman respectively, but there may still be room for improvement in the enhancing of women’s knowledge about legal matters. As for
the tax burden, a possible solution may be a tax relief for enterprises with a low level of annual turnover. In addition to these issues, the women in our sample faced challenges on a social and traditional level. These challenges were lifted previously in this chapter.

6.6 What support do women use in their entrepreneurial careers?

Our findings showed that all respondents made use of a network, either by the definition of Langowitz and Minniti (2007) or Witt (2004). Even though almost all our respondents used the support of a private network, for instance by marketing through it, most of them also used the support from a professional network, such as an institution or an association. This means that there is little accordance between our results and the findings of Hossain et al. (2009) regarding women’s difficulties in building networks. Qazzaz et al. (2004) mentioned a lack of strategic planning in Palestinian departments concerning women entrepreneurship. We can not confirm, nor reject, this statement, since we did not look into the strategic planning of the departments, but what we did find was that the formal network that some of the women used in many cases was either directly or indirectly related to some sort of nationwide institution. The support could take the shape of the provision of training courses in order to increase the respondents’ knowledge about business, or it could take the shape of a direct funding. Training courses and funding could also come from outside, for instance from foreign countries’ human aid, from NGOs or from private companies. Goby and Erogul (2011) and Qazzaz et al. (2004) also mentioned that support from family, friends and close surroundings is something that can not be taken for granted and that there even could be, in extreme cases, pure opposition from them. Our findings suggest that most of the respondents stated that their close surroundings supported their lifestyles as businesswomen.

Our respondents’ use of networks, both formal and informal ones, is in line with what Greve and Salaff (2003) suggest. Weiler and Bernasek (2001) suggest that women can be excluded from both sorts of network, and there are statements among our respondents that support this theory. However, all respondents, with one exception, did not state any sort of exclusion from networks. The networks themselves spanned from family and local contacts to national contacts. On the local level, we found that all of our respondents were connected to some sort of women association in their close surroundings. We found that the unity were strong within these associations, suggesting that our respondents had developed socially embedded ties, which is described by Witt (2004). On the national level, connections were made with institutions that worked with the respondents either directly or through the associations.
However, this was often where the networks ended, with the exception of some women who used commercial stores as a distribution channel. Those who did not use commercial stores often sold directly to their customers, who were usually people in their nearest surroundings. This low level of direct connections with other parties suggests that women in our sample had a low level of connectedness in their networks. In order to promote their businesses, the respondents would need to expand their networks to include more commercial stores. Having all respondents focusing their sales to stores instead of directly to consumers in their near surroundings would likely increase their sales and hence their amount of production.
7. Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion

Our findings suggest that pull factors were slightly more common than push factors as drivers for our respondents. Age, work experience, income level and education level had no significant impact on the propensity of starting a business, based on our sample. Instead, previous experience in agriculture affected both the willingness to start a business and proved helpful for the entrepreneurial success. Notable challenges were found in marketing, legal matters and the physically tiring work. We also found that the respondents in their businesses devoted themselves more to primary activities than to support activities and that they had difficulties in accessing global value chains. To facilitate the business life, women made use of both formal and informal networks as well as of the support from family and close surroundings. Women were also likely to expand their networks and become role models as a result of their entrepreneurship. Finally, the interviewed women did not perceive there to be any differences between men and women, but there were significant differences in the treatment of them.

7.2 Policy recommendations

Since women’s fear of failure derives mainly from society’s lack of confidence in their abilities, promoting women success stories is a possible way to enhance this confidence. This may be related to the continuous support of women associations where possible entrepreneurs can come in contact with role models who can aid and inspire. Promoting success stories might also enhance greater gender equality by reducing the differences in treatment of men and women entrepreneurs by showing that women also can run successful businesses. By encouraging the existence of women associations and the entrepreneurs’ use of these, it is also likely that the access to global value chains will be facilitated. Helping women to sell their products through commercial stores instead of directly to customers will likely increase their production and hence their products by providing access to a larger market. Providing women with technological equipment would likely also help increasing the production and have the positive effect of better health among women entrepreneurs. Continuing the support through training courses in order to widen the understanding of marketing and legal matters is also essential to promote the businesses of self-employed women. Making sure there is an existing infrastructure for market intelligence sharing is also important for an entrepreneur who wants to make use of marketing skills in order to acquire information.
7.3 Further research

We suggest further investigations to be made on the trade possibilities for Palestine. Also, the study could be broadened to include larger enterprises which are represented by both men and women entrepreneurs. Further, qualitative and quantitative studies in other sectors than the agricultural could also be a subject of interest. A broader geographical setting is also likely to give important results.
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Appendix

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Personal details

1. Name and age?
2. Married? Single?
3. Children?
4. Number of members in household?

Characteristics of the enterprise

1. For how long have you been running this enterprise?
2. Could you estimate the annual turnover of this enterprise?
3. Is the enterprise officially registered?

Human capital

1. What is your level of education?
2. What have you been working with earlier?
3. Are you part of/member of any organization?

Financial capital

1. How much money did you use to start this business?

General questions

1. Why did you choose to start this business?
2. Could you describe to us your start-up process?
3. How did you raise the money you needed to start your business?
4. Upon starting your business, did you feel you had the necessary skills and knowledge to do it?
5. What were your primary doubts during your early entrepreneurial campaign?
6. Who helped you during your start-up?
7. What are your family’s thoughts about your work?
8. What are your friends’ thoughts about your work?
9. Could you describe the structure of your company?
10. Who are your customers?
11. How are goods delivered from and to your enterprise?
12. In general, what do you consider to be your main challenges in your work?
13. In general, what do you think are the main differences between women and men entrepreneurs?
Appendix 2

Other sources of information

Al-Bireh Municipality (21 March 2016)
Association of Women Action (06 April 2016)
Diakonia (16 March 2016)
Economic and Social Development Center of Palestine (ESDC) (13 March 2016)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) (11 March 2016)
Kvinna till kvinna (16 March 2016)
Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) (21 March 2016)
Palestinian Department of Expatriate Affairs (09 March 2016)
Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (23 March 2016)
Palestinian Ministry of Labour (18 March 2016)
Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs (20 March 2016)
Union of Corporate for Saving and Credit (UCASC) (20 March 2016)
Union of Agriculture Work Committees (24 March 2016)
Village Council of Cober Village (12 March 2016)
We Effect (05 April 2016)