

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE JEWELRY INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON ETHNIC/MINORITY ENTREPRENEURS IN TÜRKİYE*

Meri TAKSİ DEVECİYAN¹, Fatma Şebnem ARIKBOĞA²

Abstract

The study aims to reveal how minority entrepreneurs benefit from social networks and the role of social networks in the jewelry sector, which is considered one of the sectors where the use of social networks can be easily detected, where ethnic and minority entrepreneurs are clustered in Istanbul province, in Türkiye. In this context, phenomenology design was used as a qualitative research method, and the research data was collected through individual face-to-face in-depth interviews with a pre-prepared semi-structured questionnaire with 24 minority entrepreneurs registered with the Istanbul Chamber of Jewelers (İKO) and the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce Jewelry Committee (İTO). Descriptive and coding-based qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program was used to visualize the data. As a result of the study, minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector benefit heavily from their social networks (especially their co-ethnic group) to access resources. Within the framework of the unique structure of the jewelry sector and the internal dynamics of minorities, the impact of the concept of "master" on the social networks of entrepreneurs in addition to family friends, who are among their strong and close networks, was also observed. The study is expected to contribute to the field by offering suggestions, as it is the only study that addresses the concept of "master" in the sectors of the creative industries and brings the concept to the literature.

Key Words: Ethnic Entrepreneurship, Minority Entrepreneurship, Social Networks, Social Network Theory, Master

JEL Classification: J15, L14, L26

KUYUMCULUK SEKTÖRÜNDE SOSYAL AĞLAR: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ETNİK/AZINLIK GİRİŞİMCİLER ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Çalışma ile Türkiye'de İstanbul ilinde etnik/azınlık girişimcilerinin ağırlıklı kümelenmiş olduğu, sosyal ağ kullanımının kolaylıkla tespit edilebildiği sektörlerden biri olarak kabul edilen kuyumculuk sektöründe, azınlık girişimcilerinin sosyal ağlardan nasıl faydalandığının, sosyal ağların rolünün ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda nitel bir araştırma yöntemi olarak fenomenoloji tasarımı kullanılmış olup, araştırma verileri, İstanbul Kuyumcular Odası (İKO) ve İstanbul Ticaret Odası Kuyumculuk Komitesine (İTO) kayıtlı 24 azınlık girişimcileriyle önceden hazırlanmış yarı yapılandırılmış soru formu ile bireysel yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde betimsel ve kodlamaya dayalı nitel içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Verilerin görselleştirilmesinde ise, MAXQDA nitel veri analiz programından faydalanılmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda kuyumculuk sektöründeki azınlık girişimcilerin kaynaklara ulaşmak için sosyal ağlarından (özellikle eş etnik gruptan oluşarlardan) büyük ölçüde faydalandıkları tespit edilmiştir. Kuyumculuk sektörünün kendine özgü yapısı ve azınlıkların iç dinamikleri çerçevesinde girişimcilerin güçlü ve yakın ağları arasında yer alan aile/akraba, arkadaşlarına ilave "usta" kavramının da sosyal ağları üzerindeki etkisi izlenmiştir. Çalışmanın yaratıcı endüstri kollarında yer alan sektörlerde "usta" kavramını ele alan, kavramı literatüre kazandıran tek çalışma olması, öneriler sunması ile alana katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Girişimcilik, Azınlık Girişimciliği, Sosyal Ağlar, Sosyal Ağ Teorisi, Usta

JEL Sınıflandırması: J15, L14, L26

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¹Dr.Öğr.Üyesi, İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası Ticaret ve Finansman Bölümü, m.taksideveciyan@iku.edu.tr, ORCID:0000-0001-9206-0315

² Prof. Dr., İstanbul Üniversitesi, İktisat Fakültesi, İşletme Bölümü, sebnama@istanbul.edu.tr, ORCID:0000-0002-2923-2994

1.Introduction

The minority entrepreneurs in Türkiye are different from immigrant entrepreneurs since they are not people who have settled in the country after migration, but they are people who were born or have lived in those lands for many years, and despite being forced to migrate for various reasons, they try to adapt to the current conditions and preserve their identities as much as possible. Therefore, they are people who know the language and culture of the country.

After World War II, a wave of migration among minorities occurred due to some discriminatory practices. Those who resisted to this wave and chose to stay and adapt to the conditions are mainly from Anatolia and have come to the coastal regions and Istanbul. The 37th and 45th articles of the Lausanne Treaty regulations were all made for minorities. Therefore, the relevant articles of the treaty apply to the minorities. According to the legal and political status established by this treaty, the minorities recognized as such are the Greeks, the Armenians and the Jews (Bournoutian, 2016). In Istanbul, the ethnic origin of the majority of the artisans who are specialized in the jewelry sector are ethnic minorities, so they constitute the sample of this study. Since the minorities living in Istanbul are not considered as diaspora (it is known that there was a large Armenian colony in the city before the Ottoman Empire's arrival in Istanbul in 1453) the study will not deal with the type of entrepreneurship related to migration, called diaspora entrepreneurship, but will focus on the minority entrepreneurship. The study aims to reveal the role of social networks in the jewelry sector one of the sectors where minorities are primarily active. From this perspective, the study is based on "social network theory", theory in question suggests that social relations are a fundamental determinant in explaining both individual and collective actions and outcomes. According to the framework of social network theory, every facet of economic behavior is intricately interwoven within a localized social milieu (Granovetter, 2005) and an individual's or actor's social connections hold a particular significance for their individual as well as collective performance. This theoretical perspective conceptualizes society as an intricate web of interlapping social relationships, serving as conduits that link individuals, groups, and organizations. At its core, the foundational assumption of social network theory maintains that via their personal network, the proprietor-manager of a venture gains entry to vital resources that the firm lacks internally (Ostgaard & Birley, 1994). In terms of the study's contribution to the literature, the fact that it is the only study that deals with the concept of

"master" in the creative industry sectors and introduces the concept to the literature shows the originality of the study. The value given to the master and the importance attributed to him cause him to be in the first circle of the family in social networks. This adds originality to the study as an important difference originating from the Ahi culture in Anatolia.

2. Conceptual Framework

The ethnic minority entrepreneurship is "a series of connections and regular interaction models among people sharing a common national history or migration experience" (Waldinger et.al,1990). This definition emphasizes the importance of interaction and network among ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Social network defined as the resources that individuals can draw upon through their social networks is an important aspect of the ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Social network has been found to have a positive impact on the success of minority-owned businesses. This study aims to understand the role of social networks in the jewelry sector, where ethnic minority entrepreneurs are concentrated in Istanbul, Türkiye.

2.1. Ethnic Resources

For minority entrepreneurs within the same ethnic group, the resources they need help to reduce the risks and uncertainties they may encounter when starting a new business. They also help to reduce the costs of labor and financial market transactions. On the other hand, the existence of ethnic resources can help explain why minority groups are more successful than smaller groups of the same ethnic origin (Lee, 2009:43).

The following elements are included in the ethnic resources used in the minority entrepreneurship:

Family, in ethnic groups is an important institution in the pursuit of economic development often obtaining social capital especially in the early stages after migration. As a social structure, the family embodies the mutual obligations and trust of small support groups (Danes, Stafford & Heck 2008). For instance, intra-family loans are a vital source of funding for new businesses. When it comes to becoming self-employed to raise start-up capital, the family is the first choice for immigrants (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011).

2.2. Ethnic Labor

Co-ethnic (co-ethnic) group is defined as a community where the majority of employees are of the same ethnic minority background as the owner. Co-ethnic workers mean that a significant part of the employment of a specific business is from the same ethnic minority group. Empirical evidence shows that a significant number of businesses owned by ethnic minorities also have a large proportion of their workforce composed of co-ethnic workers (Zhou, 2004:1047).

2.3. Co-ethnic Knowledge

Knowledge about markets and business environment is important for entrepreneurs to capture opportunities. In minority entrepreneurship, co-ethnic knowledge plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of a business (Kerr & Mandorff, 2015). Minority entrepreneurs have strong ties and extensive informal networks, which gives them a better chance to grow than local businesses. The co-ethnic knowledge resources that minority entrepreneurs have provide a more reliable and accurate flow of information than local businesses (Fong & Chan 2010:128).

2.4. Co-ethnic Market

Ethnic markets are markets where ethnic entrepreneurs operate. These markets are characterized by small scale, low capital requirements, low educational requirements, high labor intensity, low barriers to entry, and low value-added characteristics (Volery, 2007:31). The co-ethnic market and the market conditions in that market support ethnic business owner entrepreneurs by ensuring that ethnic business owners (entrepreneurs) have a protected market position, or by supporting the environment to act with lower risk than normal (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990:117).

2.5. Co-ethnic Social Networks

Co-ethnic social networks play important roles in the process of the ethnic entrepreneurship. Ethnic-based employees (through social networks) facilitate the recruitment process, and ethnic-based goods and services (especially in ethnic ghettos) are easily obtained (through ethnic-based connections). In addition, co-ethnic social networks create rich role models and mentors as emotional support sources for ethnic entrepreneurs (Lee, 2009:112).

2.6. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Labor market disadvantages faced by non-majority populations in developed economies trigger a more aggressive pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities (Nwankwo, Gbadamosi & Ojo., 2012:149). The Ethnic/minority entrepreneurship can benefit from the individual, society, region, economy and the world. Therefore, it is really helpful for all stakeholders to understand the importance of ethnic/minority entrepreneurship. The unique culture and value system of ethnic/minorities are generally considered to be the most sought after qualities for a successful entrepreneur. Many industrial countries such as the USA, England and Germany have used ethnic minorities to build their economies (Mavoothu, 2013:46). The advantages and disadvantages of ethnic/minority entrepreneurship are discussed below by evaluating them from the individual, social, economic, regional and international perspectives.

- Co-ethnic social networks owned by ethnic entrepreneurs are vital for the development of ethnic businesses, largely by providing network access to members (Nwankwo et al., 2012:151).
- Entrepreneurship is one way of creating job opportunities for people of co-ethnic origin.
- Minorities achieve higher social mobility through entrepreneurship. After all, they are able to achieve a better life and prosperity through entrepreneurship.
- Minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector, who are the subject of our research, have existed for a long time in an oligopolistic structure due to the harmony among themselves and the order that requires expertise. This situation has provided minorities with great advantages in the jewelry industry for many years.
- Minority-owned businesses that operate in a boutique, non-aggressive style have been able to stay afloat in the market for a longer period of time (especially small merchants and artisans). However, business owners who lack social networks, small merchants and artisans have been unable to show much presence and have been forced to shut down their operations.

International advantages of ethnic/minority entrepreneurship include the ability of ethnic entrepreneurship to open the way for expansion in both domestic and international trade. Regional advantages include the ability of ethnic entrepreneurs to capture local market niches and succeed in host countries. Additionally, ethnic entrepreneurship can be implemented in "settlement places" consisting of common ethnic members that serve for economic recovery (Mavoothu, 2013:50).

Disadvantages of ethnic/minority entrepreneurship include:

- Ethnic/minority entrepreneurs can only gain access to social networks through birth and marriage, thus the economic advantages are limited to a small minority within the population. Due to the minority's small numbers within the general population, the overall positive economic impact is limited.
- The minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector may face difficulties in obtaining employment due to their ethnic origins.
- Limited access to official job markets is considered to be the most basic disadvantage of ethnic/minority entrepreneurs.

2.7. Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship and Social Networks

Research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship highlights the importance of "social" networks that are composed of two components: the personal network and the cultural dimension of the business owner, which is related to a specific group of individuals (co-ethnic) of the same ethnic origin. Essentially, the concepts of "family" and "community" are at the center of ethnic minority social networks. Co-ethnic social networks that encompass society and family also play an important role in the operation of ethnic businesses (Masurel, Nijkamp, Tastan & Vindigni 2002:242). In accordance with Social Network Theory, it is posited that the connections upheld within a social network possess inherent value in the form of resource provisioning and performance enhancement (Caniels & Romijn, 2008). Entrepreneurial endeavors, through the process of networking, entail the cultivation of both bonding and bridging relationships (DeCarolis & Saporito, 2006). These relationships serve as instrumental conduits through which entrepreneurs gain access to indispensable resources unattainable via alternative channels (Aldrich & Martinez, 2001). In minority entrepreneurship, contacts may not be absolutely continuous for business purposes, but these types of networks are considered as a vital element in the development of ethnic businesses. Social networks in ethnic entrepreneurship are seen as an important potential strength of ethnic minority businesses (Fadahunsi, Smallbone & Supri, 2000). On the other hand, the important element of social network relationships with co-ethnic groups is the exchange of labor and input variables. It is argued that social networks have the potential to provide a critical ethnic-related quality and structure that can facilitate the implementation of a new economic activity (Curran, Jarvis, Blackburn & Black, 1993). Co-ethnic social networks are

multi-faceted and provide flexible and efficient opportunities for personnel recruitment and capital acquisition. Generally, ethnic businesses rely more on labor from common ethnic groups and families (Zhou, 2004:1040).

Although ethnic groups have different attitudes and behaviors, similar personal characteristics are found in ethnic businesses and ethnic entrepreneurs. The most important personal characteristics identified in ethnic entrepreneurs are that they have low education levels and operate in the service sector. Due to low education and high unemployment rates, they are forced to choose less preferred jobs/sectors in entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the presence of ethnic and social networks also plays an important role in the motivation of ethnic entrepreneurs. Administrative and regulatory barriers, lack of capital and credit, lack of information, lack of education, and limited access to official jobs are the most fundamental problems among ethnic entrepreneurs (Baycan, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003:391).

3. Methodology

This study uses the phenomenology design from qualitative research patterns and focuses on the jewelry sector as the research area. The phenomenology pattern focuses on phenomena such as events, experiences, perceptions and situations that we notice but do not have in-depth and detailed information about (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Other in other words, it is to reduce personal experiences to phenomena in order to describe the nature of universal reality, events or beings (Creswell, 2007). The jewelry sector is a commonly chosen and clustered sector among minority entrepreneurs in Türkiye. The research is limited to 24 minority entrepreneurs operating in the jewelry sector in Istanbul and the data is collected through individual face-to-face in-depth interviews with minority entrepreneurs who are registered with the IKO (istanbul chamber of jewelers), ITO (istanbul chamber of commerce). The study employs purposive sampling. How minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector benefit from social networks is the research problem of the study. The role of social networks in minority entrepreneurship and how opportunities are created and used are also questions and discussed

3.1. Data Analysis

In this study, descriptive and coding-based qualitative content analysis was used for data analysis. The data collected by the researcher were first recorded in a notebook and then transferred to an

office program and read several times, notes were taken. The notes taken by the researcher were also used to convert recurring statements into codes by using literature analysis. To aid in discipline and ease, the MAXQDA 2020 Qualitative Data Analysis program was also used for coding, creating themes and sub-themes. To ensure the reliability of the data, the records were reviewed and discussed with a consultant faculty member by comparing the researcher's records. Afterwards, the codes created by the researcher were gathered together to form the main themes (categories) that will make up the findings of the study.

3.2. Validity and Reliability

In the study, expert review and participant confirmation were used along with interviews with minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector, and the duration of the interviews were kept as long as possible to ensure long-term interaction and internal validity (credibility). On the other hand, the consistency of the findings obtained from the data was checked to increase the reliability of the data. For this purpose, the compatibility of the findings with the conceptual framework used in the formation of the interview form was constantly controlled. During the interviews, the researcher managed the interview on one hand, and on the other hand, observed the process and asked additional questions as necessary to provide additional explanations. This way, possible data losses were prevented and the data was tried to be adapted to the research questions. In addition, direct quotations were asked from the minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector to increase the credibility of the research. To increase the external validity (transferability) of the study, the research process and what was done during this process were described in details. In addition, in the data analysis part of our research, the data diversification was used. That is, both content analysis and descriptive analysis were used and the validity of the study was increased.

The study aimed to increase the internal validity (consistency) of the study by directly reporting all of the findings without interpretation. Additionally, the researcher and a consultant faculty member made separate coding on the data collected from the interviews and consistency was attempted to be achieved by comparing the codes. To increase the external validity (verifiability) of the study, details such as the researcher's position in the jewelry sector, ethnic background, experience related to the sector, participants interviewed in the research, social environment in which the research was carried out, conceptual framework used in analyzing the data, and data analysis methods were included in the study.

4.Findings

In this section of the study, the data collected from interviews with minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector is compiled, repetitive statements are identified, codes, subcodes, subthemes, and themes are created and analyzed.

Demographic Data of Participants

Out of the 24 participants in the study, 8 have completed primary and secondary education, 5 have completed middle school, and only 3 entrepreneurs have a university degree. Additionally, except for two individuals, all participants are of Armenian nationality. This is in line with the knowledge that the majority of the minority population in the jewelry sector is Armenian. In terms of gender distribution, only two participants are female. Given that the jewelry profession is a male-dominated sector, it is not surprising that the number of minority female entrepreneurs participating in the study is so low.

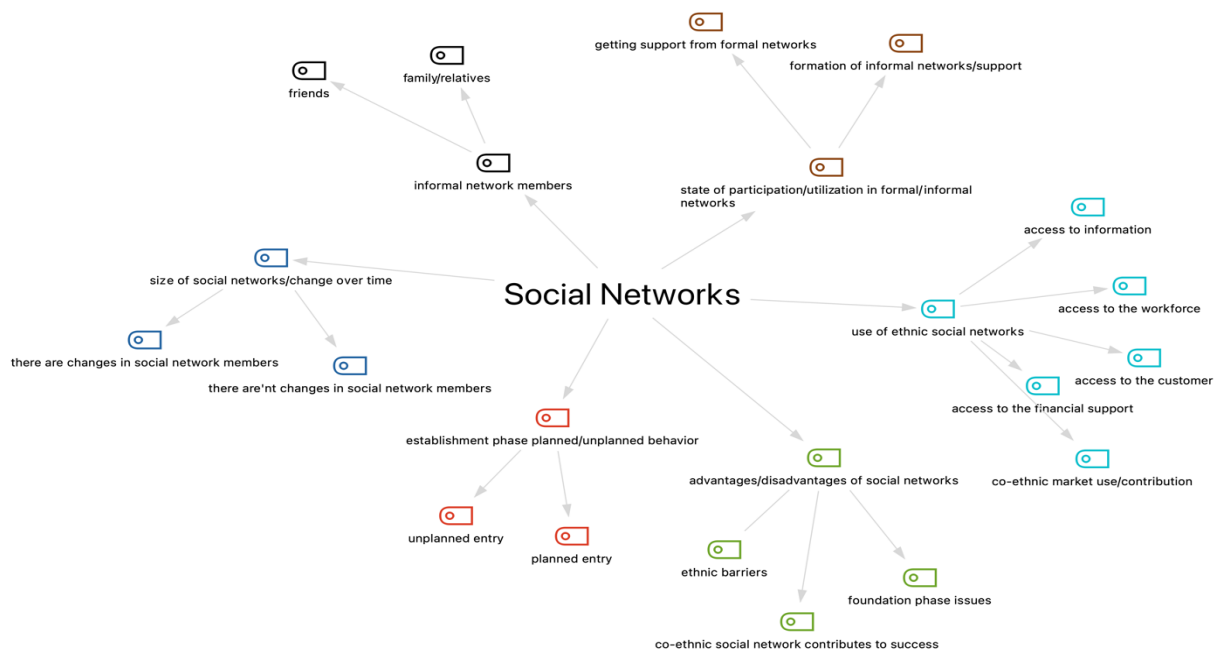


Figure 2. Model of Code-Subcode Sections for Social Network Theme

The figure 2 above shows the mapped version of the sub-codes under the theme of social networks, based on the responses from the participants in the research, using the MAXQDA 2022 program. Six sub-themes were created under the theme of social networks: establishment phase planned/unplanned behavior, advantages/disadvantages of social networks, use of ethnic social networks, state of participation/utilization is formal/informal networks, informal network members, size of social networks/change over time.

4.1. State Of Participation/Utilization Is Formal/Informal Networks

When analyzing the sub-theme of state of participation/utilization is formal/informal networks, the responses from the interviewees were coded as "Getting Support From Formal (Professional Association/Institution/Organization) Networks" and "Getting Support From Informal Networks" and summarized as follows: Minority entrepreneurs do not seem to have much need for formal networks, despite facing some barriers, due to the traditional structure of the jewelry sector and the micro-scale, handcrafted-based appearance of minority businesses that work as subcontractors to larger companies. The barriers that minority entrepreneurs face in "**getting support from formal networks**" include not being aware of formal networks/support services, lack of time to participate in support activities, and uncertainty about services offered.

"I don't have much dependence, but for example I am registered as a person/expert in ITO. When I have work, I go to these organizations, but not very much. I don't really benefit from it. When my goods come, I go to IKO, we do the controls, that's our biggest benefit, in fact." M1

"I'm registered with the Chamber of Commerce. I don't have much interaction with institutions." M4

Upon analyzing the responses of participants for the code "Getting Support from Informal Networks", it is clear that all minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs interviewed receive support from informal networks.

4.2. Informal Network Members

During the interviews with the minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs, a question was asked about who their ethnic social networks were mostly composed of. The informal network members theme was researched by examining who the members of their informal social networks were and who they benefited the most from (close/distant). Upon examination of the responses to this theme, it was found that the most commonly repeated answers were "family/relatives" and

"friends". Entrepreneurs in the minority jewelry sector who believe that family/relatives are very important in the formation of social networks have shown that their family/relatives are the starting point and helpful in their profession.

In a minority jewelry business that we consider the family/relatives to be moderately important in the formation of social networks, the entrepreneur has utilized the family/relatives as helpful in the beginning or continuation of the venture, but has not identified them as a significant first ring in the formation of social networks. In a minority jewelry venture that we consider the family/relatives to be weakly important in the formation of social networks, the entrepreneur has not identified family members/relatives as a significant component of the social network that they benefit from in their profession.

"When I was setting up my business, I was actually in Thailand. I first told my brother, let's start a business in Türkiye. Later, because of my daughter's school, I had to go back to Türkiye. If you ask if there was anyone else besides my brother at the beginning, I did get some information support from a couple of friends." M1

In this interview, the participant mentions the importance of family in their business as they mention that they are working with their brother.

"To be honest, I have never been a supporter of working with my relatives, family, and friends. I have never been interested in that, and I have never had the desire for it, because working with relatives and acquaintances can be difficult. If you do business with them, if there's a problem later, the legal relationship gets damaged. I have never looked favorably on that, to be honest." M10

In this statement, the participant emphasizes that family is not important in their social network for business and that they have never been interested in working with them.

The concept of "friends" as social network members who are thought to have a strong impact and from whom we have received such responses in the interviews was also discussed in depth in this part. To determine the power of friends within the ethnic social network members, the following method was followed:

In a minority jewelry business venture where the importance of a friend/friends in the formation of social network is considered to be high; the entrepreneur has used a friend/friends as a tool in

the initial stages of the formation of the social network. In a minority jewelry business venture where the importance of a friend/friends in the formation of social network is considered to be moderate; the entrepreneur has mentioned a friend/friends as beneficial in the formation of the network, but not as the first and most important connection for the business. In a minority jewelry business venture where the importance of a friend/friends in the formation of social network is considered to be low; the entrepreneur does not see a friend/friends as a significant aspect of the formation of the social network. Below, important responses given by the minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs regarding their concept of "friend" in relation to their social network members are presented in a mixed manner according to the level of importance they assign to the concept of "friend" in their business.

"For example, thanks to a friend of mine from my ethnic background, I decided to rent a shop in the market where I currently operate. Because my friend had been working in jewelry making for years, I have trusted him. With his word, I thought it would be good in this market where there are also wholesale dealers and I rented a shop. I'm glad I listened to him. It was very good. I didn't really get much support from anyone. You know, I only have my brother. If you want help, there's a lot of it, but there's not much support. That help aspect is mostly due to my own ethnic background." - M1

In this interview, the participant states that they did not receive much support from their friends, indicating that the social network in their business formation is actually of weak importance.

"I had one person from my family. The rest is mostly from my friends. Friends and the environment are directing each other. We help each other. We're networking. All my friends in the Grand Bazaar are working in the jewelry sector. I have learned the art in the Grand Bazaar, my relatives were my jewelers. My entry into the Grand Bazaar is through family, wife, friends." - M2

The participant describes their jewelry-making friends as extremely important in the formation of their social network. They mention only one relative being a jeweler, but generally, their surroundings are jewelers and they know the sector through their friends. When asked, "Can you rank the proximity of the first 5 people you discuss and share ideas with during the establishment

or continuation of your business?" They answer by also emphasizing their friends, which supports our observation.

4.3. Size Of Social Networks/ Change Over Time

As a result of the interviews, it has been determined that the majority of minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector (11 people) have experienced changes in their ethnic social networks over time. The theme of "there are changes in social network members" and "there aren't changes in social network members" was formed.

"There is no difference. Only our friend who is now supporting us and working with us is of the same ethnic origin as us." M1

"When I started my business, my environment was small, now I have a large environment." M15

"It has decreased now. I used to have a lot of ethnic origin in this market. I think it has decreased, for example. Now, there are people in the market that we don't know. Even people who came from the Laleli market and entered the jewelry." M24

As a result of the interviews, it was determined that the majority (11 people) of minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector have experienced changes in their ethnic social networks over time, with two sub-themes emerging: "there are changes in social network members" and "there aren't changes in social network members". Some participants reported that their social networks had decreased, likely due to generational transition, which resulted in some losses.

4.4. Advantages/Disadvantages of Social Networks

As a result of the research questions including "How effective are kinship and friendship networks in the success of minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector? If so, how?" the "co-ethnic social network contributes to success", "foundation phase issues", and "ethnic barriers" sub-themes were formed.

When the responses under the sub-theme of "co-ethnic social network contributes to success" were examined, the following was found:

"Of course there is an effect, most of my business was from my own ethnic origin. I went to them, even if it was just for a memory, they bought the product and then others started to as well." - M2

"The people who provided me with work were actually from my own ethnic origin. Because I knew them and had connections with them." - M3

Under the sub-theme of "foundation phase issues", the following was found:

"The most challenging thing for me was capital, because I was working with gold. No one from my family gave me capital, so I used my own savings." - M2

"In the business we do, it is necessary to initially overcome the customer's prejudice and prove it to them. It is very important to gain the customer's trust." - M23

According to the responses given, the frequency distribution table of statements related to "ethnic barriers" includes economic/capital issues (13 people), trust-building issues (3 people), problems related to ethnic origin (1 person), difficulties of being a woman in the sector (1 person), difficulty in getting style accepted (2 people), continuity of business (3 people), no difficulties/problems (2 people), difficulty in accessing workforce (2 people), and being alone in the sector (1 person). Thirteen of the people interviewed emphasized finding capital as a difficulty they faced during the establishment phase. This is an expected outcome given the nature of the jewelry sector, which is based on valuable metals and stones. On the other hand, only one of the people interviewed cited "problems related to ethnic origin" as a difficulty they faced during the establishment phase. Similarly, only one person mentioned the "difficulty of being a woman in the sector" and another person mentioned the difficulty of "being alone in the sector."

"Ethnic barriers"

Regarding the question "Has your ethnicity ever caused you to lose a job in the jewelry industry?", the responses from the interviewed minority entrepreneurs are as follows:

"Yes, it has. I am always the last choice. I have to go around the whole market. When they can't find anyone else, they come to me. Even in my own social circle, they ask me why I hire from this minority but not from Muslims. Unfortunately, these kind of people are considered as normal in the market. Because everyone is protecting their own ethnicity" (M1)

“Yes, it has happened. Even if it wasn't said directly, I have felt it many times. They chose someone else when they found an alternative” (M19)

Out of the interviewed entrepreneurs in the jewelry industry, 13 reported experiencing job loss due to their ethnicity, 5 reported not experiencing job loss, and 8 reported not feeling or knowing if they had experienced job loss. The barriers they reported experiencing were being the last choice (M1, M10), not being able to find work (M11, M13, M14, M15, M16, M19), and being given difficult tasks as a form of discrimination (M22).

4.5. Planned/unplanned behavior based on social networks

Two sub-themes, “planned entry” and “unplanned entry”, were created for the theme of Planned/unplanned behavior based on social networks. Some of the responses received from the interviewees regarding these two sub-themes are given below.

“No, I didn't go in with a plan. The conditions actually led me to these points”. M1

“Of course, it seems to be planned. My father and his friend weighed in and got me into the jewelry business”. M3

In literature, Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) have stated that social networks can form both deliberately-conscious and unconsciously-unplanned ways. However, in our research, it is seen that the majority of minority jewelry industry entrepreneurs have established their businesses in a deliberate and planned way (13 people). This can also be explained by the master-apprentice relationship dynamics in the jewelry industry and the early age at which entrepreneurs enter the sector.

4.6. Use Of Ethnic Social Networks

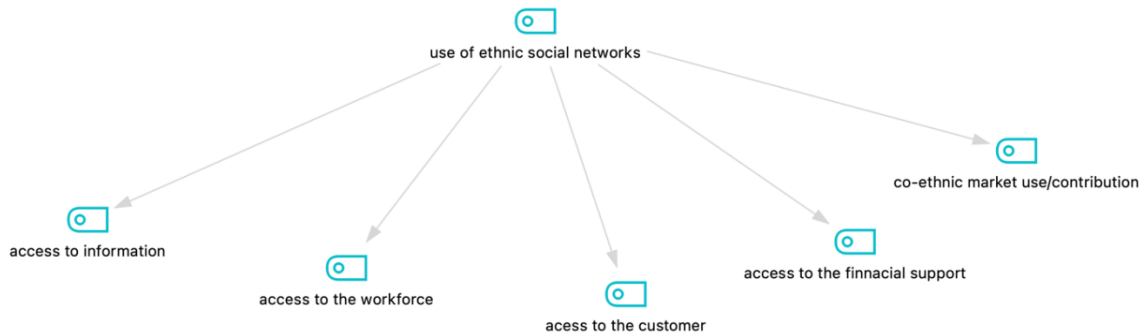


Figure 3. Sub-Codes of Social Networking (Accessing Resources) Theme

As can be seen from the above figure, in relation to access/use of ethnic social networks, five sub-themes were reached: "access to information", "access to the workforce", "access to the customer", "access to financial support" and "co-ethnic use/contribution".

Regarding the sub-theme of access to information, it is understood from the responses of the interviewees that they have reached the necessary information from "their masters" due to their early entrance to the sector through apprenticeship, "past experiences" and also, to a lesser extent, from "close ethnic social networks (father, brother, colleague, etc.)". This situation is interpreted as a result of the ongoing master-apprentice relationship in the jewelry sector.

When the sub-theme of access to the workforce is examined, the most common (sub-codes) phrases in the responses given by the interviewees are: "Employing workforce from the same ethnic origin (15 participants)", "Choosing to work with/referral of trusted and familiar people (20 participants)", "Selecting employees of mixed ethnic origin (3 participants)", "Not needing to employ extra workforce/managing the business alone (7 participants)", "Employing workforce not from the same ethnic origin (5 participants)".

"I was with my brother until now. We did not need another employee. Now we have another friend from the same ethnic background continuing with us". M1

"In fact, I chose both ethnic and non-ethnic employees. I also took what I knew from the people who worked with me. It was from friends. I bought the honest and good ones. There are also Muslims working with me". M2

Research participants on "Access to the workforce" are mostly; They stated that they "choose a trusted, familiar work,/selection of employees by reference".

Looking at the "Access to the customer" sub-theme, "How did you reach the customer base you needed during the establishment of your business" to the minority entrepreneurs of the jewelry industry interviewed? From the answers we received to the question we posed, it was determined that all interviewees reached the customer through their "social networks". In the jewelry industry, since they entered the industry with an apprenticeship at an early age, the majority of the interviewees replied that I gained customers as they were heard and known, due to the social networks I gained from my master's and my past experience. Some of the answers given by the

minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs interviewed below to our question on this subject are presented in an “in vivo” manner.

“As we heard from word of mouth that we have these sought-after goods, my circle of customers increased. At first my entire clientele was of my own origin”. M1

“I took advantage of the environment my mother-in-law had. Over time, I became permanent with my honesty and made a circle”. M5

When "Access to the financial support" theme is considered it has been observed that the sub-themes of "not needing financial support / providing resources by own means" and "providing financial support from social networks" have emerged. On reaching financial support; 15 of the participants of our study stated that they provided financial support from social networks, and 9 of them stated that they did not need financial support (providing resources through their own means).

“I didn't ask anyone, I just used my own savings. I have been working since I was 10 years old”. M2

“I studied and did it all myself”. M4

When the “Co-ethnic market use/contribution” sub-theme is examined, it is observed that there are sub-themes such as “Contributed” and “I am not sure / did not contribute”.

In our interviews with the interviewed minority entrepreneurs, the contribution of the co-ethnic markets in which they are located was tried to be examined. Eighteen of the participants who answered as the contribution of the same ethnic social environment. It was answered that three of them had a moderate contribution (repeated statements of the interviewees, such as whether they contributed or not, were evaluated as moderate contribution). Responses stating that there was a moderate contribution were also included under the code of contributed. Of the two interviewees; It was answered that there was no contribution.

If we look at the answers given by those who say it contributed

“Of course, having the same origin together in our Grand Bazaar has a positive effect. Gathering there brings us a plus. I think it's because we're together, because our market is there. But it doesn't seem to me like it's because of our ethnicity”. M10

“As my circle of friends is mostly of Armenian origin, of course I saw the benefit, they were sending customers. I do not know what is done to minority entrepreneurs operating in the sector, whether my origin would be beneficial if I were in another business branch. Since you grew up in the bazaar from childhood, they know you and recommend you, the environment has been beneficial in this sense”. M15

The findings in this part of the study are important because they present the advantages and disadvantages of the use of social networks in minority entrepreneurship in a holistic framework in the literature, and they are listed below:

- It has been determined that all of the jewelers interviewed have benefited from informal social networks (whether they have co-ethnic social networks or not) at any stage of their entrepreneurial process. This result shows parallelism with the ethnic entrepreneurship literature. Studies such as Robinson (2010); Aliaga-Isla (2014); Šimić, Škokić & Alpeza (2022) can be given as examples. Robinson 2010 emphasizes the significance of informal social networks for entrepreneurs stating that strong networks provide access to resources and create a competitive advantage. Aliaga-Isla 2014 finds that knowing other entrepreneurs personally and having access to angel investors positively impact start-up entrepreneurs in Spain. Šimić, Škokić & Alpeza (2022) highlights the importance of social relationships, particularly informal co-ethnic social networks in gauging entrepreneurial success.
- It is observed that minority participants in the jewelry sector find their family/relatives from their close social networks, especially informal social network members, to be “very important” among social network members. This situation, the jewelry industry BC. It is considered as an indicator of the fact that the sectoral discourse “passed from father to son”, which is one of the dynamics dating back to ancient times, still maintains its validity.
- Among the informal social network members of the participants, most social networks other than family/relatives; It was found that the social network was made up of his friends. It has been determined that friends are seen as “very important” for minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs participating in the interview in social networking.
- Regarding the size of social networks/change over time, which is one of our sub-themes of the social networks theme. The majority of the participants stated that there were differences,

mainly in the direction of increase in their social networks over time. This situation can be explained by the increase in both co-ethnic social networks and other social networks over time. Schøtt, Cheraghi, Rezaei, & Vang (2014) which study the size of social networks in minority entrepreneurship are also suggested that the size of networks in minority entrepreneurship can have an impact on social capital, success rates, and access to resources.

- It has been determined that social networks have a strong effect on the business success of the research participants. This result is similar to the studies in the literature (Thandi & Dini, 2009; Ram,1994; Fadahunsi et al., 2000).
- Participants mentioned some of the barriers and establishment problems they encountered as disadvantages of informal social networks. They showed the capital/economic problems the most among the establishment phase problems. Within the barriers, they mentioned that they experienced job loss due to the ethnic origin. In the literature Rahman, Ullah & Thompson (2018) and Sepúlveda, Lyon, Botero & Syrett, (2007) mentioned about the disadvantages of social networks in minority entrepreneurship. Rahman (2018) found that access to labor, influenced by immigration rules and visa restrictions, was a significant constraint for ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the UK. Sepúlveda (2007) focused on the informality of ethnic entrepreneurship and the challenges it poses to business support policies.
- The majority of the participants stated that they entered into entrepreneurship in the jewelry industry in a planned/conscious way, considering their informal social networks. In the sub-theme of using ethnic resources, the statements of the respondents were categorized by using codes in terms of accessing information, reaching the workforce, reaching customers, using ethnic markets, and reaching financial support. The interviewed minority entrepreneurs mainly rely on knowledge from their masters. On the other hand, it was determined that they reached the workforce through trusted acquaintances and references as they know. It was determined that all interviewees reached the customer groups they needed during the establishment phase, thanks to their co-ethnic social networks. The use of ethnic markets; According to the statements of the majority of the interviewees, it contributed to them. Thanks to their social networks, it was determined that the interviewees did not have any difficulties in reaching financial resources. Our results in this section are in parallel with the results of ethnic entrepreneurship studies in the literature. Our point, which differs from the studies in the literature here, is that minority jewelry

sector entrepreneurs have easy access to information due to the "master", one of the dynamics of the jewelry sector.

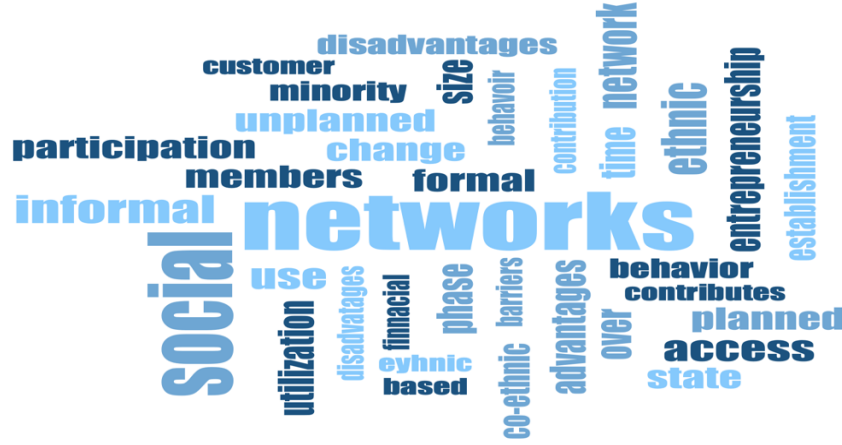


Figure 4. Word Cloud

As it can be understood from the word cloud created using the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative data analysis above and the density of the most repeated/participant expressions, the words shown in larger font are our more repeated words. It is not surprising that the words "networks" and "social", which are among the variables of our study, are the most repeated.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The role of social networks in the activities of minorities in the jewelry sector in Istanbul, Türkiye, was investigated in the study carried out using the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research method designs. As a result of the study, it was determined that minority entrepreneurs in the jewelry sector benefit greatly from their social networks (especially co-ethnic ones) to reach resources. It is also one of our determined results that the benefits of social networks in business success are high. This result is similar to the studies in the literature (Thandi & Dini, 2009; Ram, 1994; Fadahunsi et al., 2000; Sithas & Dissanayake, 2019). However, Blanchett, Chen, Rubach, & Duggins (2019) found that social networking was not related to external success (income and size of the company) among minorities. Tesfom (2009) offers a nuanced perspective, arguing that immigrant network relationships play only a minor role in the business success of Vietnamese and East African entrepreneurs in the Seattle area. It has been determined that the most common advantage of social networks for minority jewelry

entrepreneurs is that minority jewelers reach the capital they need during the establishment of their business. Within the framework of the unique structure of the jewelry sector and the internal dynamics of the minorities, the subject has focused on the concept of family/relatives, friends and master, who are among the strong and close networks of entrepreneurs. However, unlike the literature, research on African-Caribbean and South Asian businesses in Britain challenges the idea that family influence is greater in minority businesses than in 'mainstream' businesses (Ram & Jones, 2002). In addition to the undeniable importance of the concept of master in the jewelry industry, the fact that has been known for years among minorities in the jewelry industry is that the concept of master who is the father half of the same ethnic background is seen as a vocational trainer., this person is one of the family members, in some cases closer than a relative, characterized by strong connection, close relationship and high emotional intensity. As for the concept of "Master"; In order to fill the existing gap in the literature, the following two propositions can be developed:

Proposition 1- It can be investigated how the concept of "master", which is one of the points where the study contributes to the literature in terms of terms, finds its place in different sectors including jewelry, which is also called creative industries, and how important it is.

Proposition2-Master-apprentice relationship exists, and whether the concept of "master" exists among social network members can be examined.

As a result of the research, it has been determined that the minority jewelry sector entrepreneurs have used their entrepreneurial decisions in favor of the jewelry sector due to the fact that minority entrepreneurs have entered the sector at a very young age, the profession where the majority of their co-ethnic social networks are located, and they have easy access to resources. The study is also applicable to different sectors (especially labor-intensive/artistic areas in Türkiye where Armenians are heavily active) in terms of laying the groundwork for future studies. From this point of view, for academics who want to work in this field, generation and gender effects on ethnic entrepreneurship; stand out as potential research areas.

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